# Table of Contents

Summary ..............................................................................................................................................................1  
Biography .............................................................................................................................................................4  
Themes .................................................................................................................................................................6  
Characters ...........................................................................................................................................................9  
Critical Essays ...................................................................................................................................................13  
Analysis ............................................................................................................................................................891  
Quotes ...............................................................................................................................................................896
Summary

Polixenes, the king of Bohemia, is the guest of Leontes, the king of Sicilia. The two men were friends since boyhood, and there is much celebrating and joyousness during the visit. At last Polixenes decides that he must return to his home country. Leontes urges him to extend his visit, but Polixenes refuses, saying that he has not seen his young son for a long time. Then Leontes asks Hermione, his wife, to try to persuade Polixenes to remain. When Polixenes finally yields to her pleas, Leontes becomes suspicious and concludes that Hermione and Polixenes must be lovers and that he is cuckolded.

Leontes is generally of a jealous disposition, and he seeks constant reassurance that his son, Mamillius, is his own offspring. Having now, out of jealousy, misjudged his wife and his old friend, Leontes becomes so angry that he orders Camillo, his chief counselor, to poison Polixenes. All Camillo’s attempts to dissuade Leontes from his scheme only strengthen the jealous man’s feelings of hate. Nothing can persuade the king that Hermione is true to him. Eventually Camillo agrees to poison Polixenes, but only on condition that Leontes return to Hermione with no more distrust.

Polixenes notices a change in Leontes’ attitude toward him. When he questions Camillo, the sympathetic lord reveals the plot to poison him. Together, they hastily embark for Bohemia.

Upon learning that Polixenes and Camillo fled, Leontes is more than ever convinced that his guest and his wife are guilty of carrying on an affair. He conjectures that Polixenes and Camillo were plotting together all the while and planning his murder. Moreover, he decides that Hermione, who is pregnant, is in all likelihood bearing Polixenes’ child and not his. Publicly he accuses Hermione of adultery and commands that her son be taken from her. She herself is imprisoned. Although his servants protest the order, Leontes is adamant.

In prison, Hermione gives birth to a baby girl. Paulina, her attendant, thinks that the sight of the baby girl might cause Leontes to relent, so she carries the child to the palace. Instead of forgiving his wife, Leontes becomes more incensed and demands that the child be put to death. He instructs Antigonus, Paulina’s husband, to take the baby to a far-off desert shore and there abandon it. Although the lord pleads to be released from this cruel command, he is forced to put out to sea for the purpose of leaving the child to perish on some lonely coast.

Leontes sends two messengers to consult the Oracle of Delphi to determine Hermione’s guilt. When the men return, Leontes summons his wife and the whole court to hear the verdict. The messengers read a scroll that states that Hermione is innocent, as are Polixenes and Camillo, that Leontes is a tyrant, and that he will live without an heir until that which is lost is found.

The king, refusing to believe the oracle, declares its findings false and again accuses Hermione of infidelity. In the middle of his tirade, a servant rushes in to say that young Mamillius died because of sorrow and anxiety over his mother’s plight. On hearing this, Hermione falls into a swoon and is carried to her chambers. Soon afterward, Paulina returns to announce that her mistress is dead. At this news Leontes, who begins to believe the oracle after news of his son’s death, beats his breast with rage at himself. He reproaches himself bitterly for the insane jealousy that led to these unhappy events. In repentance, the king swears that he will have the legend of the deaths of his son and wife engraved on their tombstones and that he himself will do penance thereafter.

Meanwhile, Antigonus takes the baby girl to a desert country near the sea. Heartsick at having to abandon her,
the old courtier lays a bag of gold and jewels by her with instructions that she should be called Perdita, a name revealed to him in a dream. After he does this, he is attacked and killed by a bear. Later, his ship is wrecked in a storm and all hands are lost. Although no news of the expedition reaches Sicilia, the kind shepherd who finds Perdita also sees the deaths of Antigonus and his men.

Sixteen years pass, bringing with them many changes. Leontes is a broken man, grieving alone in his palace. Perdita grows into a beautiful and a charming young woman under the care of the shepherd. She is so lovely that Prince Florizel, the son of Polixenes and heir to the throne of Bohemia, falls madly in love with her.

Unaware of the girl’s background, and knowing only that his son is in love with a young shepherdess, Polixenes and Camillo, now his most trusted servant, disguise themselves and visit a sheep-shearing festival, where they see Florizel, dressed as a shepherd, dancing with a lovely young woman. Although he realizes that the shepherdess is of noble bearing, Polixenes in great rage forbids his son to marry her. Florizel thereupon makes secret plans to elope with Perdita to a foreign country. Camillo, pitying the young couple, advises Florizel to embark for Sicilia and to pretend that he is a messenger of goodwill from the king of Bohemia. Camillo supplies the young man with letters of introduction to Leontes. It is part of Camillo’s plan to inform Polixenes of the lovers’ escape and to travel to Sicilia to find them, thus taking advantage of the situation to return home once more.

The poor shepherd, frightened by the king’s wrath, decides to tell Polixenes how, years before, he found the baby and a bag of gold and jewels by her side. Fate intervenes, however, and the shepherd is intercepted by the rogue Autolycus and put aboard the ship sailing to Sicilia.

Soon Florizel and Perdita arrive in Sicilia, followed by Polixenes and Camillo. When the old shepherd hears how Leontes lost a daughter, he describes the finding of Perdita. Leontes, convinced that Perdita is his own abandoned infant, is joyfully reunited with his daughter. When he hears this, Polixenes immediately gives his consent to the marriage of Florizel and Perdita. The only sorrowful circumstance to mar the happiness of all concerned is the earlier tragic death of Hermione.

One day, Paulina asks Leontes to visit a newly erected statue of the dead woman in Hermione’s chapel. Leontes, ever faithful to the memory of his dead wife—even to the point of promising Paulina never to marry again—gathers his guests and takes them to view the statue. Standing in the chapel, amazed at the wonderful lifelike quality of the work, they hear strains of soft music. Suddenly the statue descends from its pedestal and is revealed as the living Hermione. She spent the sixteen years in seclusion while awaiting some word of her daughter. The happy family is reunited, and Hermione completely forgives her repentant husband. He and Polixenes are again the best of friends, rejoicing in the happiness of Perdita and Florizel.

**Summary: Act Summary**

**Act I**
In Sicilia, King Leontes attempts to persuade his boyhood friend King Polixenes of Bohemia to extend his nine-month visit. Polixenes objects, stating that he has pressing business at home. Leontes then requests that his wife, Hermione, intercede. At the pregnant Hermione’s insistence, Polixenes agrees to stay. Leontes then reveals that he believes Hermione and Polixenes to be secretly having an affair. After questioning his advisor Camillo about his suspicions, which Camillo does not believe, Leontes orders Camillo to poison Polixenes. Camillo agrees, but later informs Polixenes of Leontes’s plot instead. Polixenes assures Camillo that in Bohemia the Sicilian lord would enjoy the same status and privileges he now knows, and Camillo agrees to guide Polixenes and his entourage out of Sicilia.

**Image Pop-Up**
Leontes, Polixenes, Florizel, Perdita, Camillo, Paulina, Lords, Attendants, and Hermione, by William
Hamilton

Act II
Leontes learns that Camillo has betrayed him and Polixenes has fled. The report fuels Leontes's jealous rage. He confronts Hermione, accusing her of adultery. Leontes removes Mamillius from Hermione's presence and sends his wife to prison. Antigonus objects to Leontes's actions, but Leontes dismisses him. The King sends Cleomines and Dion to consult the oracle at Apollo's temple at Delphi; the messengers are to return with the oracle's proclamation regarding the truth about Hermione and Polixenes. After Hermione gives birth to a baby girl, the child is taken by Paulina, Antigonus's wife, to Leontes in the hopes that the sight of the baby will soften Leontes's attitude toward Hermione. Paulina is a strong advocate for the baby and Hermione, and Leontes accuses Antigonus of being hen-pecked for being unable or unwilling to silence his wife. After Paulina departs, Leontes demands that Antigonus take the baby to some remote destination and abandon her.

Act III
Hermione is brought to trial on the charge of adultery. After offering words in her own defense, in which Hermione claims her innocence, Cleomines and Dion return with the oracle's proclamation: "Hermione is chaste" (III.i.132). Leontes, however, pronounces the oracle false. At this point, a servant enters and announces that Mamillius has died. Hermione is escorted from the room after fainting, and Leontes asks that she be ministered to. Leontes privately asks for the god Apollo's forgiveness and promises to make amends to Polixenes. Paulina then enters to announce that Hermione has died of grief. At the end of Act III, Antigonus abandons the baby girl in a remote part of Bohemia, leaving a bundle with her, which contains money and her true identification. Fleeing an oncoming storm, Antigonus exits, "pursued by a bear" (III.iii.58). A shepherd discovers the baby, and his son reports having seen a ship sink off the coast and a bear devouring a man.

Act IV
The act opens with Time proclaiming that sixteen years have passed since the end of Act III. In the Bohemian court, Camillo tells Polixenes that he wishes to visit Leontes, but Polixenes convinces Camillo to remain in Bohemia. Polixenes and Camillo attend the sheep shearing festival at the home of the old shepherd who has raised Perdita. Perdita is dressed as the mock queen of the festival, and Florizel is dressed like a rustic. The audience learns that they are in love and that Florizel intends to keep the relationship a secret from his father. Polixenes and Camillo enter in disguise and eventually discover Florizel's secret. Polixenes scolds Florizel and threatens to scar Perdita and punish her shepherd father as well. At Camillo's urging, Florizel and Perdita escape to Sicilia. The shepherd and his son, who are aided by Autolycus, follow them. Autolycus is hoping to reveal Perdita's true identity to Florizel and thereby profit from this revelation himself.

Act V
In Sicilia, Leontes's advisors urge him to remarry in order to conceive an heir. Paulina reminds Leontes of part of the oracle's prediction that Leontes would have no heir unless his lost child was found. After Paulina scolds Leontes for betraying Hermione's memory, he agrees not to marry unless Paulina finds him a suitable wife. Soon after Florizel and Perdita arrive, a servant announces that Polixenes and Camillo have also returned to Sicilia and that Polixenes is holding the shepherd and the clown captive. Polixenes also demands that Florizel and Perdita be arrested. In a series of events, many of the play's complexities are now untangled. Primarily, Perdita's true identity is discovered, Perdita and Leontes are reunited, and Polixenes and Leontes are reconciled. The shepherd and his son are elevated to the status of gentleman for raising Perdita. Perdita requests to see the statue of her mother, which she is told is in Paulina's possession. Paulina presents the statue, and everyone is amazed at how lifelike it is. Paulina then commands that Hermione descend from her pedestal; the queen is alive. After Hermione addresses her long lost daughter, Leontes announces that Camillo and Paulina will marry. The group exits to discuss the events of the past sixteen years.
Biography

Biography: William Shakespeare Biography

The Life and Work of William Shakespeare
The details of William Shakespeare’s life are sketchy, mostly mere surmise based upon court or other clerical records. His parents, John and Mary (Arden), were married about 1557; she was of the landed gentry, and he was a yeoman—a glover and commodities merchant. By 1568, John had risen through the ranks of town government and held the position of high bailiff, which was a position similar to mayor. William, the eldest son and the third of eight children, was born in 1564, probably on April 23, several days before his baptism on April 26 in Stratford-upon-Avon. Shakespeare is also believed to have died on the same date—April 23—in 1616.

It is believed that William attended the local grammar school in Stratford where his parents lived, and that he studied primarily Latin, rhetoric, logic, and literature. Shakespeare probably left school at age 15, which was the norm, to take a job, especially since this was the period of his father’s financial difficulty. At age 18 (1582), William married Anne Hathaway, a local farmer’s daughter who was eight years his senior. Their first daughter (Susanna) was born six months later (1583), and twins, Judith and Hamnet, were born in 1585.

Shakespeare’s life can be divided into three periods: the first 20 years in Stratford, which include his schooling, early marriage, and fatherhood; the next 25 years as an actor and playwright in London; and the last five in retirement in Stratford where he enjoyed moderate wealth gained from his theatrical successes. The years linking the first two periods are marked by a lack of information about Shakespeare, and are often referred to as the “dark years.”

At some point during the “dark years,” Shakespeare began his career with a London theatrical company, perhaps in 1589, for he was already an actor and playwright of some note by 1592. Shakespeare apparently wrote and acted for numerous theatrical companies, including Pembroke’s Men, and Strange’s Men, which later became the Chamberlain’s Men, with whom he remained for the rest of his career.

In 1592, the Plague closed the theaters for about two years, and Shakespeare turned to writing book-length narrative poetry. Most notable were Venus and Adonis and The Rape of Lucrece, both of which were dedicated to the Earl of Southampton, whom scholars accept as Shakespeare’s friend and benefactor despite a lack of documentation. During this same period, Shakespeare was writing his sonnets, which are more likely signs of the time’s fashion rather than actual love poems detailing any particular relationship. He returned to playwriting when theaters reopened in 1594, and did not continue to write poetry. His sonnets were published without his consent in 1609, shortly before his retirement.

Amid all of his success, Shakespeare suffered the loss of his only son, Hamnet, who died in 1596 at the age of 11. But Shakespeare’s career continued unabated, and in London in 1599, he became one of the partners in the new Globe Theater, which was built by the Chamberlain’s Men.

Shakespeare wrote very little after 1612, which was the year he completed Henry VIII. It was during a performance of this play in 1613 that the Globe caught fire and burned to the ground. Sometime between 1610 and 1613, Shakespeare returned to Stratford, where he owned a large house and property, to spend his remaining years with his family.

William Shakespeare died on April 23, 1616, and was buried two days later in the chancel of Holy Trinity Church, where he had been baptized exactly 52 years earlier. His literary legacy included 37 plays, 154
sonnets, and five major poems.

Incredibly, most of Shakespeare’s plays had never been published in anything except pamphlet form, and were simply extant as acting scripts stored at the Globe. Theater scripts were not regarded as literary works of art, but only the basis for the performance. Plays were simply a popular form of entertainment for all layers of society in Shakespeare’s time. Only the efforts of two of Shakespeare’s company, John Heminges and Henry Condell, preserved his 36 plays (minus *Pericles*, the thirty-seventh).
Themes

Pastoral Elements
A pastoral is a poem or play dealing with shepherds and rural life. Within the conventional treatment of pastoral themes, this rural way of life is idealized. In *The Winter's Tale*, the pastoral scenes, or "pastoral interlude" as it is often referred to, begins in Act III, scene iii, when the action of the play shifts from Sicilia to Bohemia. In Act IV, which begins with Time announcing that sixteen years have passed, the interlude continues through the last scene of this act. With the passage of time and the movement from the Sicilian court to the Bohemian countryside, comes a movement from the tragedy of the first three acts to comedy. The lightness of comedy reaches into the play's final act, in which the pastoral characters journey to the Sicilian court. The pastoral scenes, with their rustic figures, festival, singing and dancing, serve as a sharp contrast to the more somber and cold world of the Sicilian court. Despite this contrast, the pastoral world is not free from the darkness that looms over the courtly world in Sicilia. Commentary on the pastoral scenes focuses heavily on the fact that, unlike the conventional pastoral, Shakespeare's pastoral is not completely idyllic. In the pastoral world, a terrible storm threatens as Antigonus arrives in Bohemia with the baby Perdita. Before Antigonus can escape to his ship, he is chased and later devoured by a bear. Polixenes's angry outburst in Act IV, scene iv, is also cited as another indication that all is not ideal in this pastoral setting, especially since his rage is reminiscent of Leontes's wrath against his wife. Leontes's anger, it will be remembered, sets into motion the events causing the abandonment of the baby Perdita, the death of Mamillius, and the presumed death of Hermione. Other elements in the pastoral scene which tarnish the idealism of the pastoral vision include the suggestion that perhaps the old shepherd who raised Perdita is motivated by greed, the hint that Perdita and Florizel are on the verge of losing their innocence, and the presence at the sheep shearing festival of the thieving Autolycus, as well as that of Camillo and Polixenes, royal individuals foreign to the pastoral setting.

Despite such aspects darkening the lightness of the pastoral interlude, many commentators have noted how the pastoral setting and characters nevertheless engender a feeling of hopefulness. Perdita, some have observed, is portrayed as an idealized pastoral figure, and in her attitude toward life, she helps the audience to embrace the view of time that Shakespeare presents. (Some critics see Shakespeare's view of time as eroding and destructive, in that it moves persistently forward. Others note that it is only after the passage of time—sixteen years—that healing and reconciliation occur in this play.) Additionally, Perdita and the pastoral scenes themselves celebrate the possibility of familial and societal restoration. Perdita is a pastoral figure though of noble birth, and through her return families and friends are reunited and reconciled.

Art and Nature
The debate between art and nature was a common one in Shakespeare's time and in fact had been argued since antiquity. Within this debate, art is understood to be the applying of human intervention, imagination, or knowledge to what nature has created. The central issue is whether or not art can or should perfect nature. Can art make what is natural appear to be more natural? A common point brought up in early debates and relevant today is the notion of using cosmetics to achieve a "natural," fresh look by hiding one's natural imperfections. In two scenes in particular in *The Winter's Tale*, this debate is taken up once again. The first scene is Act IV, scene iv, in which Perdita and a disguised Polixenes analyze the practice of crossbreeding of flowers. The statue scene, Act V, scene iii, in which a statue of Hermione is revealed to be Hermione herself, is the other scene in which this debate is revisited. Critical commentary on these scenes focuses on explicating the stances taken up by Perdita and Polixenes and on attempting to determine where Shakespeare may have stood on the issue. In the discussion between Polixenes and Perdita, Polixenes states the view that art *is* nature. One may speak of art perfecting nature, but in a sense, this really means that nature is perfecting itself. Perdita objects
to the art's deceptive, imitative, and artificial nature. It has also been noted that Perdita does not object to the practice of art itself, but to the impulse behind its practice, that is, the desire to produce something more attractive than what nature has created. Many critics have noted the dramatic irony of these speeches. While Polixenes expresses the value of marrying "wild" stock to more noble flowers, he takes the opposite view where his son, Florizel, is concerned, staunchly opposing the marriage of a royal prince to a shepherd girl. Similarly, Perdita defends the view that differing stock should not be interbred; at the same time, she is (to her knowledge) a rustic country girl seeking to marry a prince. While many critics agree on the ironic tone of these speeches, one has pointed out that perhaps these lines are not as ironic as many make them out to be. Just because a person believes something is right for flowers does not mean he needs to consistently apply this belief to himself or his children. In any event, Perdita is of noble blood; art is not necessary to perfect her nature to make her worthy of marriage to Florizel. It is often pointed out, as well, that in the statue scene what seems to be art in the form of Hermione's statue is in fact nature; the statue is Hermione. Some critics have concluded that Shakespeare either adheres to the view that art is, in itself, nature, or that the playwright does not advocate the primacy of art or nature.

Others have found that the play seems to say that art is necessary to perfect, or "mend," nature. In Act IV, scene iv, Perdita presents flowers to Polixenes and Camillo. The flowers are meant to be appropriate to the men's ages, as seasons of the year were viewed as corresponding to the seasons of a person's life. Perdita appears to see through Polixenes's disguise, for she apologizes for not having the appropriate flowers for his age, those blooming in late summer, or appropriate for late middle age. The reason she has no such flowers is because these flowers are grown by the procedure of grafting or crossbreeding, which Perdita finds to be unnatural. The metaphor some critics see in this exchange is that artificially bred flowers are those which correspond to an age in a man's life. Art must be employed to produce such flowers and is therefore necessary to mend nature and to allow man to pass from one season of life to the next. Similarly, it is often held that art's interference is necessary for Leontes to move on in his life. Human intervention interferes with the natural order in several ways. Camillo interferes by influencing Florizel to take Perdita to Sicilia. Paulina interferes by counseling Leontes in his repentance and in advising him not to marry again. Hermione pretends she is dead and then is later restored. By this reading of events, human intervention upon nature or natural order is necessary to bring about the play's happy ending.

Gender Issues
The relationship between gender roles and power is often explored in The Winter's Tale. The societies of Sicilia and Bohemia in the play are patriarchies. A patriarchal society is one in which a father, or father-figure, represents the society's supreme authority. Commentary on this subject often centers around Leontes's effort to maintain his power, as well as on the role of women within Leontes' patriarchy. Patriarchal power is passed on from father to son. It has been suggested that Leontes's jealous attack on Hermione stems from his fear of disturbing the patriarchal succession. In order to produce male heirs to his power, Leontes needs his wife to be faithful to him. The transfer of male power is further disabled when Leontes fails to properly care for his son, Mamillius. Hermione has not been able to care for her son since she has been imprisoned and kept apart from Mamillius. As a result, Mamillius dies. Patriarchal power is also upset through the character of Paulina. She challenges Leontes, pleading on behalf of Hermione and the baby Perdita. Although she is dismissed by Leontes, whereas male courtiers who have challenged him have been tolerated, Paulina later develops a level of control over him. After berating him repeatedly for his actions, Paulina becomes Leontes's confessor and advisor, counseling him to repent his sins and not to remarry. Despite Paulina's power, patriarchal authority appears to be stronger. Leontes and Polixenes reconcile, notably before the reconciliation takes place between Hermione and Leontes. As male bonds are renewed, Leontes also announces that Paulina will marry Camillo. Some critics note that while Leontes has learned to view women with some respect, Paulina, Hermione, and Perdita are transformed from threatening figures who challenge male authority into nurturing, supportive figures. By the play's end, the women are restored to their "proper" places within the patriarchy.
Commentators also observe that the women who challenge male power in the play are all slandered. Hermione is accused of being an adulteress, and she is punished for it, losing both of her children in the process. Also, Leontes names Paulina a "mankind witch" (II.ii.68). Perdita, too, is accused of witchcraft when Polixenes claims that Perdita has seduced Florizel. Polixenes calls her "fresh piece / Of excellent witchcraft" (IV.iv.422-23). It has been suggested that what seems to be male anxiety about female sexuality, both in the play and in Shakespeare's England where there were strict laws regulating female behavior and sexuality, is really male fear of female power.
Characters

Characters: Characters Discussed

Leontes

Leontes (lee-ON-teez), the king of Sicilia. For many years a close friend of King Polixenes of Bohemia, Leontes, curiously, becomes insanely jealous of him. Afraid of becoming a cuckold, he imprisons Hermione, wrests her son away from her, and attempts to murder Polixenes. When he learns that Hermione is pregnant, he rails; he calls his daughter a bastard and forces Antigonus to leave the child alone in a deserted area. Finally, coming to his senses, he realizes the awful truth. Through his jealousy, he loses his child, wife, and friends.

Polixenes

Polixenes (poh-LIHKS-eh-nee), the king of Bohemia. The innocent victim of Leontes’ wrath, he flees to his kingdom, bewildered by his friend’s outburst. Many years later, he is to meet Leontes under much happier circumstances.

Hermione

Hermione (hur-MI-uh-nee), the queen to Leontes and one of the noblest women in Shakespearean drama. Like Polixenes, she is baffled by Leontes’ jealousy. Imprisoned, with her children snatched away from her, she remains in hiding with Paulina, his devoted friend, until she is reunited with her family after sixteen years.

Perdita

Perdita (PUR-dih-tuh), the daughter of Leontes and Hermione. Luckily for her, after she is abandoned she is found by an old shepherd, who protects her as his own child until she is of marriageable age. Meeting young Prince Florizel of Bohemia, she falls in love with him. Later, she and her repentant father are reunited.

Paulina

Paulina (poh-LEE-nuh), the wife of Antigonus and lady in waiting to Hermione. Realizing the absurdity of Leontes’ accusations, the courageous woman upbraids him unmercifully for his blind cruelty to Hermione, whom she keeps hidden for sixteen years. Finally, through her efforts, husband and wife meet on a much happier note.

Camillo

Camillo (ka-MIHL-oh), a lord of Sicilia and Leontes’ trusted adviser, who realizes that Hermione is completely innocent of adultery. When ordered by Leontes to kill Polixenes, loyal, steadfast Camillo cannot murder a good king. Instead, he sails with Polixenes and serves him well for many years. Later, he returns to his beloved Sicilia.

Antigonus

Antigonus (an-TIHG-uh-nee), a lord of Sicilia and Paulina’s husband. Much against his will, this unhappy man is forced to abandon Perdita in a deserted wasteland. Unfortunately for this good man, who is aware of
the king’s irrationality, he is killed and eaten by a bear; hence, the fate and whereabouts of Perdita remain unknown for many years.

**Autolycus**

Autolycus (oh-TOL-ih-kuhs), a rogue. A ballad-monger, he is a delightful scoundrel. Quick with a song, he is equally adept at stealing purses and, in general, at living by his quick wit.

**Florizel**

Florizel (FLOR-ih-zehl), the prince of Bohemia. In love with Perdita, he refuses to give her up, even though, in so doing, he angers his hot-tempered father, who does not want to see his son marry a girl of apparent low birth.

**An old shepherd**

An old shepherd, the reputed father of Perdita.

**A clown**

A clown, his oafish son.

**Dion**

Dion (DI-on) and

**Cleomenes**

Cleomenes (klee-OM-eh-neez), lords of Sicilia.

**Mamillius**

Mamillius (ma-MIHL-ee-uhs), the young prince of Sicilia, the son of Leontes and Hermione.

**Characters**

**Archidamus**

A Bohemian lord. He appears in the first scene and tells Camillo that Bohemia could not offer its guests the same magnificence that Sicilia has offered to the Bohemian entourage. He also speaks of the bond between Leontes and Polixenes.

**Camillo**

A Sicilian lord and Leontes’s trusted advisor. He is ordered by Leontes to poison Polixenes but instead informs Polixenes of Leontes's plot against him. Camillo guides Polixenes from Sicilia and accompanies him to Bohemia. Sixteen years later, Camillo laments his lost friendship with Leontes. After Camillo and Polixenes discover Florizel's relationship with Perdita, Camillo advises the young couple to flee for Sicilia. At the play's end, Leontes selects Camillo to be Paulina's husband.

**Polixenes**

King of Bohemia, boyhood friend of Leontes. Polixenes announces that after a nine-month stay in Sicilia, he
must return to Bohemia. He refuses Leontes's request that he extend his visit; but after Hermione entreats him as well, he agrees. Polixenes flees for Bohemia when Camillo informs him that Leontes suspects Polixenes and Hermione are having an affair. Sixteen years later, Polixenes is infuriated by his son Florizel's desire to wed a young shepherd girl, who is really Perdita, Leontes' daughter.

**Leontes**
King of Sicilia, boyhood friend of Polixenes. Leontes suddenly becomes convinced that Hermione and Polixenes are intimately involved. In his jealousy, he plots to poison Polixenes and imprisons Hermione. In his mother's absence, Mamillius dies. Leontes also banishes his infant daughter, sending her to a remote area of Bohemia to live or die. Following Mamillius's death, it is announced that Hermione, whom Leontes has convicted of adultery, has also died. After presuming Hermione to be dead for sixteen years, Leontes is reunited with her and with his daughter in the last act of the play.

**Hermione**
Leontes's wife, the Queen of Sicilia. At Leontes' request, Hermione successfully entreats Polixenes to extend his visit in Sicilia. As a result, Hermione is tried and convicted of adultery, despite the fact that the oracle has exonerated her. Hermione conceals herself for sixteen years. She next appears in the last scene of the play, when a statue of her apparently comes to life.

**Mamillius**
Young son of Leontes and Hermione. When Leontes becomes convinced of Hermione's infidelity, he removes Mamillius from his mother's presence. Mamillius becomes sick and dies.

**Antigonus**
A Sicilian lord, husband of Paulina. Antigonus opposes Leontes's treatment of Hermione and Hermione's infant daughter. When threatened by Leontes' charge of treason, Antigonus takes the baby to Bohemia and abandons her. Before doing so, he places a bundle next to her. The bundle proclaims the baby Perdita's true identity. With a storm coming, Antigonus heads for the ship waiting for him but is pursued and devoured by a bear.

**Paulina**
Wife of Antigonus. Paulina speaks out boldly against Leontes's treatment of Hermione and the baby Perdita. After Hermione's apparent death, Paulina refuses to let Leontes forget about his wife or his actions. She advises Leontes not to remarry. In the last scene, Paulina presents the "statue" of Hermione. Leontes, Hermione, and Perdita are then reunited.

**Jailer**
Having custody of Hermione after Leontes' sends her to prison, the jailer refuses to allow Paulina to see Hermione. He does, however, let Paulina speak with Emilia, Hermione's lady-in-waiting. He eventually agrees to allow Paulina to take the baby Perdita from the prison.

**Emilia**
Lady-in-waiting to Hermione. Emilia accompanies Hermione to prison and tells Paulina that Hermione has given birth to a baby girl. Emilia agrees with Paulina's plan to take the baby to Leontes.

**Perdita**
Daughter of Leontes and Hermione. As a baby, Perdita is abandoned by Antigonus at the request of her father. She is given her name, which means "the lost one," by Antigonus, who dreams that Hermione appears to him and instructs him to so name the child. Perdita is raised in rural Bohemia by the shepherd who discovers her. After sixteen years have passed, Perdita falls in love with Polixenes's son Florizel. Perdita escapes with Florizel to Sicilia after Polixenes learns of their relationship.
Cleomines and Dion
Sicilian lords. Cleomines and Dion are sent to Apollo's temple in Delphi to bring back the proclamation of the oracle, the god Apollo's revelation. The oracle's proclamation is thought to contain the truth concerning Leontes's accusation against Hermione, yet Leontes dismisses this revelation which exonerates Hermione.

Mariner
The mariner captains the ship which transports Antigonus to Bohemia. Worried about the threatening storm, the mariner pleads with Antigonus to be quick. The mariner is drowned when the storm sinks his ship.

Shepherd
Perdita's adoptive father. He finds Perdita after Antigonus has abandoned her and raises her as his own. At the end of the play, he is made a gentleman.

Clown
Son of the Shepherd. He recounts to his father, the shepherd, that a bear has eaten a man (Antigonus) and that a ship has sunk in the storm. At the end of the play, the Clown is made a gentleman.

Time
The Chorus, appearing at the beginning of Act IV as the personification of Time. Time informs the audience that sixteen years have passed since the last scene.

Autolycus
A rogue, rover, and thief. He picks the clown's pocket and successfully robs a number of people at the sheep shearing festival. Autolycus trades clothes with Florizel at Florizel's command, enabling the prince and Perdita to escape to Sicilia. He also directs the old shepherd and his son to Sicilia, where they reveal the truth of Perdita's identity.

Florizel
Son of Polixenes. Florizel falls in love with Perdita, whom he believes to be a shepherd's daughter. In disguise, Florizel speaks to his also-disguised father and informs him of his plan to marry Perdita. In response to Polixenes's rage and at Camillo's advice, Florizel and Perdita flee to Sicilia. In Sicilia, Perdita's true identity is revealed. Known to be of royal birth, Perdita is now free to marry Florizel.

Mopsa
A shepherdess. She is the Clown's sweetheart, and she dances with him at the sheep shearing festival. After the Clown buys sheet music from Autolycus, Mopsa, Dorcas and Autolycus sing a ballad together.

Dorcas
A shepherdess. She dances at the sheep shearing festival and is eager to buy ribbons from Autolycus. After the Clown buys sheet music from Autolycus, Mopsa, Dorcas and Autolycus sing a ballad together.
Written after *Cymbeline* (pr. c. 1609-1610, pb. 1623) and before *The Tempest* (pr. 1611, pb. 1623), *The Winter’s Tale* is as hard to classify generically as is the fully mature dramatic genius of its author. Partaking of the elements of tragedy, the play yet ends in sheer comedy, just as it mingles elements of realism and romance. William Shakespeare took his usual freedom with his source, Robert Greene’s euphuistic romance *Pandosto: The Triumph of Time* (1588). Time remains the most crucial element in the play’s structure, its clearest break with the pseudo-Aristotelian unities. The effect of time on Hermione, moreover, when the statue is revealed to be wrinkled and aged, heightens the pathos and credibility of the triumphant discovery and recognition scene. To allow that final scene its full effect, Shakespeare wisely has Perdita’s discovery and recognition reported to the audience secondhand in act 5, scene 2. In keeping with the maturity of Shakespeare’s dramatic talent, the poetic style of this play is clear, unrhetorical, sparse in its imagery as well as metaphorically sharp. Verse alternates with prose as court characters alternate with country personages.

Mamillius tells his mother, who asks him for a story, that “a sad tale’s best for winter.” Ironically the little boy’s story is never told; the entrance of Leontes interrupts it, and Hermione’s son, his role as storyteller once defined, strangely disappears. In his place, the play itself takes over, invigorated by Mamillius’s uncanny innocent wisdom, which reflects a Platonic view of childhood. The story that unfolds winds a multitude of themes without losing sight of any of them. It presents two views of honor, a wholesome one represented by Hermione and a demented one represented by Leontes. Like many of Shakespeare’s plays, the narrative concerns the unholy power of kings who can be mistaken but whose power, however mistaken, is final. However, the finality, here, is spared, the tragic ending avoided. The absolute goodness of Hermione, Paulina, Camillo, the shepherd, and Florizel proves to be enough to overcome the evil of Leontes. Moving from the older generation’s inability to love to the reflowering of love in the younger, the play spins out into a truly comic ending, with the reestablishment of community, royal authority, and general happiness in a triple *gamos*. The balance of tension between youth and age, guilt and innocence, death and rebirth is decided in favor of life, and the play escapes the clutches of remorseless tragedy in a kind of ultimate mystical vision of human life made ideal through suffering.

Leontes is a most puzzling character. His antifeminism, as expressed in his cynical speech on cuckoldry, seems more fashionable than felt. In his determined jealousy, he resembles Othello, and in his self-inflicted insanity, Lear. In fact, the words of Lear to Cordelia resound in Leontes’ great speech, beginning, “Is whispering nothing?” and concluding, “My wife is nothing; nor nothing have these nothings,/ If this be nothing.” It is almost impossible to sympathize with him further when he condemns even his helpless child in the face of Paulina’s gentle pleas; and it is not surprising that he at first even denies the oracle itself. However, his sudden recognition of culpability is no more convincing than his earlier, unmotivated jealousy. It is as if he changes too quickly for belief; perhaps this is the reason for Hermione’s decision to test his penitence with time, until it ripens into sincerity. Certainly his reaction to his wife’s swoon shows only a superficial emotion. Leontes is still self-centered, still regally assured that all can be put right with the proper words. Only after the years have passed in loneliness does he realize it takes more than orderly words to undo the damage wrought by disorderly royal commands. His admission to Paulina that his words killed Hermione paves the way for the happy ending.

Even the minor characters are drawn well and vividly. Camillo is the ideal courtier who chooses virtue over favor. Paulina, like the nurse Anna in Euripides’ *Hippolytos* (428 b.c.e.; *Hippolytus*, 1781), is the staunch helpmate of her mistress, especially in adversity, aided by magical powers that seem to spring from her own determined character. Her philosophy is also that of the classical Greeks: “What’s gone and what’s past help/
Should be past grief.” This play does not have the tragic Greek ending, because Paulina preserves her mistress rather than assisting her to destroy herself. Even the rogue Autolycus is beguiling, with his verbal witticisms, his frank pursuit of self-betterment, and his lusty and delightful songs. His sign is Mercury, the thief of the gods, and he follows his sign like the best rascals in Renaissance tradition: Boccaccio’s Friar Onion, Rabelais’s Panurge, and Shakespeare’s own Falstaff.

In Hermione and Perdita, Shakespeare achieves two of his greatest portraits of women. Hermione’s speech reflects her personality, straightforward, without embroidery, as pure as virtue itself. Her reaction to Leontes’ suspicion and condemnation is brief but telling. “Adieu, my lord,” she says, “I never wish’d to see you sorry; now/ I trust I shall.” She combines the hardness of Portia with the gentleness of Desdemona; in fact, Antigonus’s oath in her defense recalls the character of Othello’s wife. Like Geoffrey Chaucer’s patient Griselda, Hermione loses everything, but she strikes back with the most devastating weapon of all: time. However, in the final scene of the play, it is clear that her punishment of Leontes makes Hermione suffer no less. Perdita personifies, though never in a stereotyped way, gentle innocence: “Nothing she does or seems/ But smacks of something greater than herself/ Too noble for this place.” Indeed, when Polixenes’ wrath, paralleling Leontes’ previous folly, threatens Perdita’s life for a second time, the audience holds its breath because she is too good to be safe. When Shakespeare saves her, the play, sensing the audience’s joy, abruptly ends on its highest note.

In its theme and structure, The Winter’s Tale bears a striking resemblance to Euripides’ Alkistis (438 b.c.e.; Alcestis, 1781). In both plays, the “death” of the queen threatens the stability and happiness of society and, in both, her restoration, which is miraculous and ambiguous, restores order to the world of the court. Shakespeare, however, widens the comic theme by adding the love of the younger generation. The Winter’s Tale defies the forces of death and hatred romantically as well as realistically. The sad tale becomes happy, as winter becomes spring.

Critical Essays: The Winter’s Tale

One of Shakespeare’s last plays, this work has the wisdom of age. The play’s first half is wintry, with harsh, violent actions bringing about suffering, loss, and death. The second half, sixteen years later, offers a rural springtime festival and culminates in a moving, unsuspected bestowal of grace.

Like Shakespeare’s earlier tragic hero Othello, Leontes becomes insanely jealous of a chaste wife, but Leontes’ jealousy is far more sudden and unsubstantiated, so that Shakespeare can focus on its results: Leontes’ loss of wife, children, and friends. Unlike Othello, Leontes lives on, in penitence.

The first half, nevertheless, ends in hope, for the baby daughter he had sought to abandon is taken in by an old shepherd. Sixteen years later, she is being courted by a disguised prince, son of Polixenes, whom Leontes had accused of adultery with his wife. Polixenes’ rash outrage at discovering that his son’s beloved is a commoner echoes Leontes’ earlier foolishness. Thanks to two faithful courtiers, however, all is made right by the end. Leontes, Polixenes, and their children are reunited, and even Leontes’ wife Hermione, presumed dead, is restored to him in the magical final scene.

This is one of the most beautiful endings in Shakespeare and shows a move beyond his earlier bleak, despairing tragedies, HAMLET, OTHHELLO, and KING LEAR, into a true spirit of rebirth. Perhaps not coincidentally, the three principal women in this play are among Shakespeare’s most sublime creations.

Bibliography:


**Criticism: Overview**

**Jack A. Vaughn**

*In this essay, Vaughn offers an introduction to *The Winter's Tale*, commenting on the date the play was written and the source material Shakespeare used. Vaughn discusses in more detail the structure, plot, characters, and themes in the play. Additionally, Vaughn notes that many critics focus on inconsistencies in the play, but Vaughn himself views these problems as minor.*

In *The Winter's Tale* (1610-11) Shakespeare brought to near perfection the form of tragicomic romance—the genre with which he had been experimenting in *Perides* and *Cymbeline*. This play is the most successful of the three, particularly in terms of theatrical viability. *The Winter's Tale* can be a deeply affecting work on the stage when well acted and directed with sensitivity.

Shakespeare's source for this play was a fictional romance by Robert Greene called *Pandosto, the Triumph of Time*, published in 1588. It provided the basic ingredients that Shakespeare required in fashioning his tragicomic plot: the oracle of Apollo, a shipwreck, an abandoned infant of royal blood, recovery of lost royalty, and so on. Many such elements appear also in *Perides* and *Cymbeline*, but never in those plays with the degree of narrative credibility, structural unity, and theatrical power as are found in this play. *The Winter's Tale* is romantic in the best Elizabethan sense of the word, "dealing with love in people of high estate, events controlled by supernatural agency and by chance, and heroic adventure in both courtly and arcadian settings."

The play's title provides a clue as to the sort of story we can expect. A "winter's tale" is an old wives' tale—a story of perilous adventures, of "sprites and goblins," told but to while away a winter's evening. And as the young prince Mamillius tells us: "A sad tale's best for winter" (II, i). Ultimately, of course, the tale ends happily, but it contains considerable sadness along the way, including the death of Mamillius himself.
It is the nature of the genre that tragicomic romance necessarily includes some rather implausible and even farfetched story elements, and critics have been quick to point out this play's shortcomings in that respect. How, for example, could Paulina have successfully hidden Hermione away for sixteen years? Why does Hermione say that Paulina told her of the oracle (V, iii) when she herself had heard it read (III, ii)? How can we accept the anachronisms of the Emperor of Russia and the Renaissance painter Julio Romano in a pre-Christian setting? And should not Shakespeare have known that Bohemia has no seacoast? All of these "defects" are, of course, trivial. Such minor inconsistencies may emerge in the reading, but they vanish on the stage. And that is the ultimate test of any drama.

Structurally, *The Winter's Tale* is divided into three main parts. The first part runs through Act III, scene ii, and is an almost totally self-contained drama. By itself, it constitutes a Greek tragedy in miniature, ending with Leontes' realization of his tragic error after the deaths of his queen and son. The single unresolved thread of plot that leads to the second part is the casting out of the infant princess by Antigonus; that is the episode (III, iii) with which the second part begins. This central section of the play provides a pastoral interlude in Bohemia and ends at the conclusion of Act IV. The third part then takes us back to Sicilia for the recovery of the lost princess Perdita and her happy reunion with Leontes and the "resurrected" Hermione. In the progress of this action, sixteen years of dramatic time are presumed to have passed.

Time plays an important role in each of Shakespeare's last four romances; the passage of time serves as a reconstructive or conciliatory influence. In this play especially time is essential in effecting both growth and decay. Time provides the soil that nurtures change, allowing the maturation of Perdita and burying the sorrows caused by Leontes' mad jealousy. The subtitle of the source story by Greene is significant: "The Triumph of Time."

In Cymbeline and The Tempest time in the story has passed before the play begins; past events are recounted through narrative exposition. In *Pericles* and *The Winter's Tale*, however, the early events of the story are presented on stage, necessitating an interruption in the flow of events. *The Winter's Tale* especially has been criticized for the frankly artificial way in which Shakespeare disposes of sixteen years: the speech, in rhymed couplets, of "Time, as Chorus" at Act IV, scene i:

I, that please some, try all, both joy and terror
Of good and bad, that makes and unfolds error,
Now take upon me, in the name of Time,
To use my wings. Impute it not a crime
To me or my swift passage, that I slide
O'er sixteen years and leave die growth untried
Of that wide gap.

This major time lapse in the structuring of the plot, although it violates neoclassical ideals of unity, serves a useful purpose in *The Winter's Tale*. It enhances the play's appeal in the theater. How intriguing it is to see both the passionate young Leontes and the older, repentant Leontes; the young Hermione abused, then the mature Hermione serene and triumphant; the dual figures of Paulina, of Camillo, of Polixenes! Much of the theatrical appeal of *The Winter's Tale* would be lost if we were merely to hear recounted in narration the tragic events that constitute the first section of this play. Shakespeare's handling of dramatic time and plot structure here is unconventional—perhaps even "unliterary"—but it makes for first-rate theater.

The tragicomic method of *The Winter's Tale* is quite different from that of *Perides* and Cymbeline. The comic aspect of *Pericles* is minimal and resides almost solely in its happy denouement. The serious and comic
elements of Cymbeline are fully integrated, occurring simultaneously. In The Winter's Tale the tragic action is confined to the first part of the play, while the comic material dominates the second and third parts. The first part of the play is almost unrelievedly solemn, but for the occasional innocent chatter of Mamillius. The tragic tone prevails until Act III, scene iii, a scene that Shakespeare used to good effect in bringing about a transition from the tragic to the comic.

This transitional scene, although set in Bohemia, opens with an extension of the tone and plot of Sicilia: the soliloquy by Antigonus, in which he recounts the visitation of Hermione's ghost. The soliloquy itself signals a shift in tone; its language, unlike the fairly realistic verse of the first part, is fanciful and extravagant. Hermione's ghost, we hear, approached Antigonus "in pure white robes," and, "gasping to begin some speech, her eyes / Became two spouts." After chastising him for casting out the babe, "with shrieks, / She melted into air." The tone of the soliloquy is that of a "winter's tale," spooky and fanciful.

Antigonus' soliloquy is brought to an abrupt conclusion by what is perhaps the most famous stage direction in Shakespeare: "Exit, pursued by a bear." However much we may pity the fate of poor Antigonus, the visual effect of this exit is undeniably comic—especially so if the "bear" is an actor in an animal suit. (Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch suggested that Shakespeare conceived this exit to take advantage of an actual trained bear, available from the Bear-Pit in Southwark, near the Globe Theatre.)

The appearance of the bear provides a hilarious piece of visual comedy, which is then quickly followed by the appearances of the Shepherd and the Clown—the former to discover the abandoned princess and the latter to describe the drowning of the sailors and the death of Antigonus in the clutches of the bear. The Clown's description is grotesquely comic as he tells how the "bear tore out his shoulder-bone" and how the "poor gentleman roared and the bear mocked him." Finally the Clown leaves his father to go see "if the bear be gone from the gentleman and how much he hath eaten. ... If there be any of him left, I'll bury it." By this point Antigonus is no more than a memory, the audience is laughing heartily, and the gaiety of Bohemia is upon us.

Once the scene has shifted to Bohemia, the play never again returns to the tragic tone of the first part, although there are some dark moments in the pastoral scene (IV, iv). Polixenes' angry denunciation of his son's love for Perdita and his threat to disinherit the prince briefly cast a shadow on the jollity of the sheep-shearing festivity. But for the most part Bohemia is a happy place. And the final return to Sicilia is even happier with its joyful reunions and reconciliations.

Although it draws upon the same fanciful story elements of fictional romance that render Pericles and Cymbeline rather farfetched, The Winter's Tale is surprisingly realistic in many respects. Its language and versification especially contribute to the effect of realism. Nearly a third of the dialogue is in prose, and there is no rhyme in the verse passages (the songs and Time's speech excepted). Moreover, the meter of the play's blank verse is unobtrusive; broken lines, incomplete sentences, and involved syntax occur regularly. The people of this play speak as though their minds were at work:

ARCHIDAMUS. Wherein our entertainment
shall shame us we will be justified in our
loves; for indeed—

CAMILLO. Beseech you,—

ARCHIDAMUS. Verily, I speak it in the
freedom of my knowledge: we cannot
with such magnificence—in so rare—I
know not what to say.
There is realism, too, in Shakespeare's rendering of the Sicilian court. This is no fairy-tale kingdom like those of *Pericles* and *Cymbeline*. There is an emphasis upon domesticity in Leontes' court. Paulina henpecks her husband Antigonus and feels free even to rail at the king if occasion serves (II, iii). Leontes plays with his son and wipes some dirt off his nose (I, ii). Hermione is pestered by her little boy (II, i) but entertains his childish prattle. The Sicilia scenes convey the sense that their characters—Leontes, Camillo, Paulina, Antigonus, Hermione—know and respond to one another as people, not as picture-book kings and queens.

The realistic tone is not, however, confined to Sicilia. The rustic scenes in Bohemia also go beyond the artifice of conventional pastoral romance. The sheep-shearing celebration of Act IV, scene iv (the longest single scene in Shakespeare), is not simply the arcadian idyll of so many pastoral romances. It is, rather, a fairly realistic picture of a contemporary Elizabethan festivity. In reference to this scene, E. M. W. Tillyard has written: "Shakespeare never did anything finer, more serious, more evocative of his full powers, than his picture of an earthly paradise painted in the form of the English countryside."

It is true that Florizel and Perdita, in their roles of disguised and undiscovered royalty, respectively, play conventional parts in the sheep-shearing scene. But they play against the dominant mood of the festivity—the mood established by the Clown and his two bickering girlfriends Mopsa and Dorcas, by the dancers and musicians, by the old fussbudget Shepherd, and, most importantly, by the roguish Autolycus, confidence man par excellence.

Autolycus (roughly "very wolf") is a true original. Like Jaques in *As You Like It*, he is always there but really does nothing to advance the plot. He recalls Feste (Twelfth Night) in his singing, his jesting with the audience, and his freedom from personal ties with the other characters. He bears some kinship with Sir John Falstaff (Henry IV) in that he considers lying and cheating to be normal modes of behavior. He is a self-proclaimed rogue and thief:

> My traffic is sheets; when the kite builds, look to lesser linen. My father named me Autolycus; who being, as I am, littered under Mercury, was likewise a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles, "with die and drab I purchased this caparison, and my revenue is the silly cheat."

(IV, iii)

He then proceeds to prove his claim by picking the pocket of the dull-witted Clown. This scene provides a delightful opportunity for slapstick; it must be seen to be appreciated.

Autolycus and his low-comedy antics help to counteract the fairy-tale tone of *The Winter's Tale* and emphasize the realistic background before which the other characters play. The last scene (V, ii) with Autolycus, in which he humbles himself before the Shepherd and the Clown, serves as a thematic underscoring of Leontes' humility in the play's moving final scene. (It has been suggested, in fact, that Shakespeare intended the roguery of Autolycus to be the comic counterpart of the malevolence of Leontes in the tragic action.)

The jealousy of Leontes is probably the least realistic and most purely conventional feature of *The Winter's Tale*. Much has been written of the implausibility with which his jealous suspicions abruptly overtake him, as well as of the tenacity with which he clings to them against all reason. The question of plausibility would not have arisen, however, with the Jacobean audience, who understood well the literary convention of "hornmadness" (irrational fear of being cuckolded).

Leontes has been compared to Othello, but the two are quite different. In *The Winter's Tale* there is no villainous conniver such as Iago to spur the hero to jealousy. Leontes' passion is self-induced and self-sustained. It is to be understood as a sickness—a madness that deprives its victim of the ability to reason.
Bertrand Evans called Leontes "Shakespeare's lone example of unqualified self-deception."

Aside from his jealous passion, Leontes is characterized with consistency and with some degree of realism. He is not a great man, not a story-book king like Cymbeline. He behaves more like a husband and father than a ruler, and he shows human failings by his immaturity, bad temper, and feelings of persecution. Despite his irrational behavior in the first part of the play, Leontes is normally well liked by his courtiers. Camillo is a faithful friend to him and prefers to flee rather than acquiesce to his temporary madness. Paulina's seeming shrewishness is motivated by a fervent desire to bring her sovereign and friend back to his senses, and in the latter part of the play she is still affectionately (if a trifle naggingly) ministering to him. Hermione, in the face of Leontes' outrageous accusations and cruelty to her, never once abandons her love for him.

The reappearance of Hermione in the play's final scene is one of the most amazing bits of theatrical legerdemain [sleight of hand; trickery] in Shakespeare. Whatever its implausibility at the level of realism, it creates a stunning effect in the playing and provides a supreme moment of wonder and spirituality to which no audience can fail to respond.

There is no similar instance in Shakespeare's plays of an audience's expectations being deliberately led astray—no other event so devoid of preparation or foreshadowing. (In *Much Ado about Nothing* Hero is said to have died after the altar scene, but the audience knows that she is alive. Not so with Hermione.) It is not simply that the audience is allowed to believe Hermione dead; we are repeatedly made to believe it.

Paulina tearfully and convincingly reports Hermione's death in Act III, scene ii, immediately after the queen has swooned and been carried from the courtroom. When the First Lord expresses incredulity, Paulina responds: "I say she's dead: I'll swear't. If word nor oath / Prevail not, go and see." At the close of the scene Leontes exits, presumably to view the body: "Prithée, bring me / To the dead bodies of my queen and son: / One grave shall be for both." In the very next scene Antigonus recounts the visitation of Hermione's ghost. Every reference to Hermione gives positive assurance that she has indeed died.

It is not until the first scene of Act V that a few hints of Hermione's survival begin to surface. Paulina has exacted from Leontes a promise never to remarry "unless another, / As like Hermione as is her picture, / Affront his eye." If he is to remarry, states Paulina, his new bride "shall be such / As, walk'd your first queen's ghost, it should take joy / To see her in your arms." In the following scene the Third Gentleman speaks of the statue of the dead queen, sculpted by Julio Romano who "so near to Hermione hath done Hermione that they say one would speak to her and stand in hope of answer." The Second Gentleman then tells of Paulina's daily visits over the past sixteen years to the house where the statue is kept. By this point the spectator may begin to suspect that some unusual and significant event will center on this mysterious statue.

It is not until the statue is revealed, however, that the audience knows that Hermione lives. There is no stagecraft that can make us believe we behold a statue, once the actress playing Hermione is revealed. All those on stage (except, of course, Paulina and Hermione herself) are deceived, but we are not. And that is precisely Shakespeare's intention. His management of theatrical effect here is masterful. From the moment the curtain is drawn aside until Hermione steps down from her pedestal, some eighty lines of dialogue are spoken—approximately four or five minutes of playing time. This is the time during which the audience, now at last superior in knowledge to the characters, anticipates the "resurrection" of Hermione and the reconciliation that must surely follow. It is an interval of pure suspense, during which the dramatic tension builds. Had we known all along of Hermione's preservation, the emotional effect of this moment would be dissipated. Shakespeare has concentrated and intensified our anticipation of Hermione's rebirth. When it finally comes, to the accompaniment of solemn music, so comes our joy; the tears fall freely. No one who has experienced this moment in the theater can question its affective power, its spirituality, and its supreme joy.
The reunion of Hermione and Leontes, too profoundly moving for words, is effected in a silent embrace; her single speech is to her daughter Perdita:

You gods, look down  
And from your sacred vials pour your graces  
Upon my daughter's head! Tell me, mine own,  
Where hast thou been preserved? where  
lived? how found  
Thy father's court? for thou shalt hear that I,  
Knowing by Paulina that the oracle  
Gave hope thou wast in being, have preserved  
Myself to see the issue.

In this final scene Shakespeare's principal theme - reconcilement - is made manifest in the most moving of actions. It is a theme that is stated also in Pericles and Cymbeline, but not so powerfully or affectingly as in The Winter's Tale. Through the healing ministration of "this great gap of time," "that which is lost [is] found," past sins are forgiven and sorrows forgotten, and we are shown a world redeemed—a world "in which the sins of the fathers are not visited on the children." . . .


**Criticism: Pastoral Elements**

Peter Lindenbaum

[In the essay that follows, Lindenbaum examines the pastoral elements of the play, noting how pastoral life in Bohemia offers a sharp contrast to the world of the Sicilian court. Lindenbaum argues that although Perdita is presented as an idealized figure and serves as the primary spokesperson of the pastoral world and its values, the pastoral world itself is not romanticized. Lindenbaum maintains that Shakespeare presents a time of time as destructive, but through his depiction of pastoral life and Perdita's attitude toward life, we, the audience, are able to accept such a view of time in a calm, perhaps even an enthusiastic manner.]

Time in The Winter's Tale is not merely cited as a force man has to reckon with in his life, but is even given its moment on stage. It appears in the middle of the play as a personified figure in what is first of all a brilliant solution to the potentially difficult dramatic problem of accounting for a gap of sixteen years in the action. In keeping with the final outcome which is to develop in the play, this Time is a thoroughly benevolent and polite chap, anxious to please and careful not to offend: he wishes the audience may never spend its time less agreeably than it does while watching the play. He speaks in slightly archaic rhymed verse and himself admits to being old-fashioned; but even while admitting that, he in effect warns that he is not one to be snickered at or ignored. His admission comes in lines which show that he sees himself not merely as a Chorus—the role assigned to him by the Folio's stage direction— but as the author of the play in which he appears:

Let me pass  
The same I am, ere ancient'st order was,  
Or what is now receiv'd. I witness to  
The times that brought them in; so shall I do  
To th' freshest things now reigning, and make stale  
The glistening of this present, as my tale  
Now seems to it. (IV.i.9-15 New Arden Edition of The Winter's Tale, ed. by J. H. Pafford (London and
He is Shakespeare's agent in calling attention to the deliberate departure from realism in the play, to the ways in which the play is like an old tale or romance. But at the same time he is also asserting the play's realistic bias. For he notes the similarity between the world of his play and the world outside the play, he claims not only that he controls the lives of his characters but that his power extends over the audience as well; he can and will make the "glistening present" in which the audience finds itself just as stale and old-fashioned as this play. Benevolent and good-natured as he is, then, he reminds the audience of his very real power, of his ability to please some but try all, to make and unfold error, and to "o'erthrow law, and in one self-born hour / To plant and o'erwhelm custom" (IV.i.8-9).

Most modern critics of The Winters Tale have been unwilling to grant Time the amount of power in the play's world that he claims for himself. The "triumph of time"—to borrow the subtitle from Shakespeare's source—usually seen is one which amounts to a triumph over time. For the play presents a fall and a redemption which is climaxed by a return to life of a figure apparently long dead. And a lost child is found again and is reconciled to her father in a scene which onlookers witness as if they were hearing of "a world ransomed, or one destroyed" (V.ii.15). This redemptive scheme, along with the high frequency of obviously theological terms, especially that of "grace" applied to Hermione and Perdita, has made the play particularly subject to allegorical and theological interpretation. S. L. Bethell, for instance, sees the play as adumbrating the Christian scheme from the fall of man to his ultimate restoration in heavenly bliss. A different but parallel interpretation looks instead to the seasonal references in the play and finds it a reflection of the pagan fertility myth: the play begins in winter and ends in summer; Perdita herself refers to Proserpina when she is handing out flowers; and she and Florizel are as welcome in Sicily "As is the spring to th' earth" (V.i.151). Both of these interpretations of the play—as embodying the Christian scheme of man's fall and redemption, or as re-enacting the pagan fertility myth's cycle of death and rebirth—lead almost inevitably to the assertion that time is finally not important in the play and has been conquered, either by Christ or by great creating Nature.

Certainly there are resonances of both the vegetation myth and the Christian drama of redemption in the play, and I am not about to deny that this scheme of death and rebirth or fall and redemption is to be found in it. Leontes does sin against Hermione by doubting her chastity and fidelity, and he commits blasphemy against heaven by denying that there is any truth in Apollo's oracle, acts for which he is evidently punished by the loss of his son and the apparent loss of his daughter and wife. He goes through a period of "saint-like sorrow" or penance under the tutelage of a figure significantly named Paulina; and when he awakes his faith, he is rewarded with the miraculous return of his "gracious" wife, Hermione. Yet Shakespeare points out that the Hermione who is redeemed is sixteen years older than the woman Leontes accused of infidelity. And no matter how much of a miracle Hermione's resurrection appears to be when it is played on stage, Shakespeare is careful to present us with a more prosaic explanation of how and why she has survived all these years: a gentleman of the court notes that Paulina has visited her "removed house" two or three times a day since Hermione's apparent death (V.ii.104-107), and Hermione herself tells us that she has remained alive so as to see the daughter who the Oracle gave her reason to believe had survived (V.iii.125-28). The recognition by Leontes himself that Hermione has more wrinkles now than she did sixteen years earlier forces us to the realization that Time has not been routed after all. In the soliloquy in IV.i, Time notes that he is the same as he was "ere ancient'st order was"; he is, then, beyond the control of his own ravaging power. But he is the only figure in the play who is. The final scene, despite its emphasis on the marvelous and the miraculous, does not bring its characters back to the point at which they began. And a full and accurate reading of The Winter's Tale must recognize the contradictory conceptions within the play of time being triumphed over and of time still triumphing and having its inevitable eroding effect on man's life and strength.

Just as there are two contradictory conceptions of time in the play, so are there two patterns or structures accommodating them. Beneath or running counter to the symbolic scheme of death and rebirth, or fall and redemption, is a simpler scheme of a steady development or growth. This second structure does not postulate...
an ideal state, then a fall, and then a redemption in which time's effects are suddenly reversed or nullified, but rather entails a direct movement from what might best be called a state of disease to one of health. It is a structure that the differing versions of pastoral in the play mark out or adumbrate. There are two major glimpses of Arcadia or Arcadian retreats in the play: the picture of Polixenes' and Leontes' pastoral youth presented in I.ii and the sheepshearing scene of IV.iv. The two conceptions of Arcadia are very different, and in their difference lies much that the play as a whole has to tell us. For while the first of these pictures of pastoral life is described in Edenic terms and is remembered with fondness by Polixenes, and presumably by Leontes as well, the action of the whole play brings us to a recognition that there is something basically wrong with that picture, with Polixenes' attitude toward it, and, by extension, with Polixenes' whole attitude toward life and the world of time around him. A trip to the real countryside becomes a crucial step in the education or cure of Polixenes, Leontes, and, to the extent that he resembles his elders, Florizel. As this second structure, what I would call its "pastoral structure," accommodates the conception of time moving relentlessly forward, it also helps to account for the great amount of realistic detail to be found in a play so often viewed as "symbolic" or as an allegory.

When in the second scene of the play Polixenes is asked by Hermione to describe his and Leontes' youth together, he calls upon imagery from the pastoral world to convey the particularly innocent quality of their experience:

We were as twinn'd lambs that did frisk i' th' sun,  
And bleat the one at th' other: what we chang'd  
Was innocence for innocence. . . .  
(I.ii.67-69)

It is not just any pastoral scene he is evoking, however, but a specifically Edenic one, for the picture he presents is one that denies the effects of time and the fall on the two young princes. The denial of time occurs in lines describing how he and Leontes felt when they were still young:

We were, fair queen,  
Two lads that thought there was no more behind,  
But such a day to-morrow as to-day,  
And to be boy eternal.  
(62-65)

Such an attitude is typical of youth perhaps, and is by no means objectionable. More troublesome though is the way Polixenes now looks upon that past experience, for as he continues his description, he betrays a wish to be a child again and live in what he considers to have been an unfallen state:

we knew not  
The doctrine of ill-doing, nor dream'd  
That any did. Had we pursu'd that life,  
And our weak spirits ne'er been higher rear'd  
With stronger blood, we should have answer'd heaven  
Boldly 'not guilty", the imposition clear'd  
Hereditary ours.  
(69-75)

Not only is he giving vent to escapist sentiments in this speech, but he is on unsure theological ground as well. For the "hereditary imposition" he refers to here can only be original sin, and he is suggesting that had he and Leontes remained in their childhood state, they would have escaped that taint. 'With the reference to "stronger blood," he is implying further that it was sexual passion which brought about their fall from grace, an
implication Hermione is quick to seize upon. She humorously challenges Polixenes with "By this we gather / You have tripp'd since" (75-76), thus inviting him to be more explicit, and he complies:

O my most sacred lady,
Temptations have since then been born to 's: for
In those unfledg'd days was my wife a girl;
Your precious self had then not cross'd the eyes
Of my young play-fellow.
(76-80)

But Polixenes is being slightly careless with his words and is still not completely aware of some of the implications of his own statements. In effect, he is accusing Hermione of being the cause of Leontes' fall from grace, while at the same time he uses courtly formulas and refers to her as "my most sacred lady."

Hermione, on her part, shows that she is more aware of those implications, and she takes Polixenes to task for them. Her initial outburst to this explanation of Polixenes is the cryptic "Grace to boot!" (80), the spirit of which might best be expressed by a paraphrase like "Some thanks we get!" A more literal translation, though, would read "Grace in addition to the bargain," and by the remark Hermione could well be pointing to the discrepancy in being addressed as "sacred" while being called a satanic or Eve-like temptress. But she does not stop here; for the moment apparently accepting Polixenes' definition of sexual love as sin, she announces that she is perfectly willing to assume responsibility for the "fall" Polixenes describes:

Of this make no conclusion, lest you say
Your queen and I are devils. Yet go on;
Th' offences we have made you do, we'll answer,
If you first sinn'd with us, and that with us
You did continue fault, and that you slipp'd not
With any but with us.
(81-86)

Throughout this extremely gay and lighthearted interchange, Polixenes has been unconsciously betraying a disapproval or even a fear of sexual love. It is a fear that Hermione clearly does not share. For in telling Polixenes to go on, she even welcomes the charge of being a devil or temptress, if it is only her participation in sexual love which makes her an offender. With such a definition of sin as that of Polixenes being applied by a prosecutor, she is confident of her ability to account for her actions before her judge. Her own implication here is that she does not consider sexual love between marriage partners as itself a sin. Just as a moment earlier she questioned Polixenes when he suggested that he and Leontes might have escaped the taint of original sin, so here she is on firmer theological ground than he is.

Hermione's manner since she began talking with Polixenes has been that of one who is confidently and wittily, yet warmly, cutting through the veneer of complex and courtly expression to the real meaning to be found beneath. Her remark, "By this we gather / You have tripp'd since," for instance, reduces to a stark, explicit statement Polixenes' implication about his and Leontes' present moral state. If we are willing to grant that "Grace to boot" is more than a casual expletive, we can see the phrase as a mark of the same habit of mind. It was her ability to see through polite expression and the use of words simply to create an impression which earlier told her that Polixenes did not really have to leave for home just yet. Correctly seeing the use of the feeble and rather unmasculine oath "verily" as betokening a lack of real commitment to an immediate return, she proceeded to trap him into agreeing to stay on longer. And at the end of the dialogue with Polixenes, she turns these same powers of perception on to the examination of her husband's words. 'When she tells Leontes that Polixenes will stay on, and is complimented with "thou never spok'st / To better purpose" (88-89), she queries the remark, implying that it is overstated; she will not rest until she hears the
full and explicit truth from Leontes:

Leon. Hermione, my dearest, thou never spok'st
To better purpose.
Her. Never?
Leon. Never but once.
Her. What have I twice said well? when was't before?
I prithee tell me: cram 's with praise, and make's
As fat as tame things: one good deed, dying tongueless,
Slaughters a thousand, waiting upon that.
Our praises are our wages. You may ride 's
With one soft kiss a thousand furlongs ere
With spur we heat an acre.
(89-96)

Such a speech as this last gives evidence not only of Hermione's wit, but also of her essential health. She is apparently belittling women in the speech, and when she says "cram 's with praise, and make 's / As fat as tame things," the primary level of her metaphor equates women with pets that one feeds. But she is eight months pregnant and plainly pleased with herself as she speaks these words, and the very exuberance, bordering on harshness or even grossness, of the word "cram" here expresses what we might call the very opposite of squeamishness. Unlike Polixenes, she is fully willing to accept the flesh and all that some might consider the gross part of man's nature. Her demand to be made fat and her later suggestion of being ridden by a man are a far cry from the repressed mode of sexual innuendo: they are openly and enthusiastically sexual.

The fear of sexual love that Polixenes, on the other hand, betrays in this scene amounts to an inadvertent confession that he and Leontes simply could not deal with sexual passion without disastrous results. That confession is given immediate verification in the sudden outbreak of Leontes' perverted sexual passion, his jealousy. While there is no direct evidence from the text that Leontes overhears the interchange between Hermione and Polixenes, that interchange is in several ways closely connected with Leontes' sudden seizure. Leontes later objects to private conversations between Hermione and Polixenes, conversations which he claims involve paddling of palms, pinching of fingers, and practiced smiles (I.ii.115-16), and this interchange between the two is the only one we see. And it is only after, and right after, this conversation between Hermione and Polixenes that we come upon the first definite sign of Leontes' jealousy—his aside of "Too hot, too hot!" (108). It is not unreasonable to assume that it is the conversation between Hermione and Polixenes about the princes' Edenic youth, whether Leontes overhears that conversation or not, which provides the immediate stimulus for the outburst of Leontes' sexual jealousy. And I would argue further that the attitude toward sexual love that Polixenes expresses in that conversation is a more distant but basic cause of that outburst and of Leontes' disease. With the definitions of innocence, sin, and the fall which Polixenes gives in that interchange, it is not surprising—in fact it is almost inevitable—that one or the other of the princes should be subject to an uncontrollable outburst of misplaced sexual feeling. The sufferer in this case happens to be Leontes, while it was Polixenes who expressed the fear and distrust of sexual experience; but the two princes are in many ways similar, and there is every reason to believe that Polixenes' feelings about his youth and loss of innocence represent those of Leontes as well.

In the opening scene of the play, we are told that the two princes were "trained together in their childhoods, and there rooted betwixt them then such an affection which cannot choose but branch now" (I.ii.22-24). Derek Traversi has pointed to the double and contradictory use of "branch" in this sentence, conveying the meaning both of "the unity of living growth" and "a spreading division within that growth." But "affection" also has multiple meanings in this context. Its principal use here is to point to the strong emotional attachment the princes have for one another. Yet it can suggest also that the two princes have the same emotional make-up. A stronger suggestion of this and of their similar attitude toward their youth is to be found later in I.ii, when
Leontes himself brings up the subject of his childhood:

Looking on the lines
Of my boy's face, methoughts I did recoil
Twenty-three years, and saw myself unbreech'd,
In my green velvet coat; my dagger muzzl'd
Lest it should bite its master, and so prove,
As ornaments oft do, too dangerous.

(153-58)

Leontes, like Polixenes, quite understandably looks back to his youth as a time of joy and safety, and he is quite consciously expressing a wish to be back in that happier period; he too wishes he could stop time's movement. But the lines denote something else as well. First of all, the reference to his "muzzl'd dagger" has definite sexual suggestions, and if we follow them out, we can find the idea expressed that the male sexual organ was originally only an ornament, not designed to be used, but potentially very dangerous to its possessor. Leontes is no doubt largely or totally unaware of this meaning in his lines; he is, he thinks, talking about his dagger, though that in itself is evidence that at some level of his consciousness he is unwilling, even while thinking of himself as "unbreech'd," to confront the fact of his own sexuality. While he may not himself intend any comment on his early sexual experience or fear of it here, the lines with their buried sexual meaning do associate Leontes with the fear and distrust of sexual love which Polixenes voiced a moment earlier in his conversation with Hermione.

In addition, there is a general parallel in the actions of Polixenes and Leontes. As Traversi has noted, Polixenes' furious attack on Perdita in IV.iv is the exact complement to Leontes' outburst earlier in the play: Polixenes' threat to scratch Perdita's beauty with briars (IV.iv.426) is strikingly similar in its violence to Leontes' brutality against Hermione and even the young Perdita. Other critics have noted that this parallel is part of a structural similarity between the two halves of the play. After a sixteen-year gap, Polixenes participates in much the same sequence or actions as Leontes did earlier. The outbursts of rage in both figures follow immediately upon the presentation of a picture of life in a pastoral world, and the result of each outburst is that Perdita is put at the mercy of the sea; Camillo is each time called upon to advise and help the victim of the tyrannous rage. The effect of the structural parallelism and the similarity in the actions, sentiments, and temperaments of Polixenes and Leontes is to make the two characters virtually interchangeable. It is the general and emphasized similarity between the two princes which makes it possible to say that Polixenes' visit to Arcadia is an essential part of the education and regeneration of Leontes, who himself never leaves the court, And this similarity makes it all the safer to assume that Polixenes speaks for Leontes as well, when he yearns for an existence unaffected by time's movement and provides that definition of primal innocence which implies that sexual love could be no part of man's experience in his unfallen condition.

Just as Leontes has his complement in Polixenes, so does Hermione have a complement, in the second half of the play, in her daughter Perdita. The word "grace" with its many meanings appears very frequently in the play, most often to denote a quality in Hermione: Leontes, looking back to the past, refers to his presumably dead wife "as tender / As infancy and grace" (V.iii.26-27); it is a word frequently on Hermione's own lips (I.ii.80, 99, 105), and when she goes off to prison, she announces that her action is for her "better grace" (IL.i.122). When Time reintroduces Perdita, sixteen years older than the babe we have just seen left on the coast of Bohemia, he uses the same term to describe the daughter as was used for the mother: Perdita is "now grown in grace" (IV.i.24). Perdita, who has been raised in the country, is by no means as sophisticated as her mother: unlike Hermione, for instance, she is made uncomfortable by praise. But she shares her mother's distrust of courtly rhetoric and extravagant statement, and she has Hermione's ability to examine such expression critically. "When Camillo very lamely flatters her with "I should leave grazing, were I of your flock, / And only live by gazing" (IV.iv.109-10), she, after the manner of her mother, rebukes him for his
words by reducing them to their literal meaning instead of accepting them merely as a vague compliment:

Out, alas!
You'd be so lean that blasts of January-

Would blow you through and through.
(110-12)

Perdita consistently shows that she, like her mother, is quite able to acquit herself well in conversation and debate.

The most important similarity between Perdita and Hermione, though, is their attitude toward sexual love. Hermione's willingness to acknowledge being a devil in the definition of the fall that Polixenes provides in I.ii implies that she accepts sexual love as a good and natural practice for man. Perdita brings back to the earth not only spring for Leontes, but that attitude toward sexual love as well. She is the repository of Hermione's thoughts in the next generation, and, while thoroughly chaste and modest, she is particularly frank and open about her sexual desires. And they are desires which exist not in a timeless world but in a time-governed one. It is the insistence on time passing and on the full acceptance of sexual love which most differentiates Perdita's pastoral vision from Polixenes' vision of his "Eden" earlier in the play. Whereas Polixenes sought to stop time and be free of sexual passion, Perdita fully accepts the first and rejoices in the second.

Her consciousness of time is shown to us initially in her words and actions as she distributes flowers to the various guests at the sheepshearing feast. It was her desire to find flowers appropriate to each recipient which involved her in the famous debate with Polixenes on nature and art. She first gave Polixenes and Camillo the winter flowers of rosemary and rue, which were chosen, Polixenes assumes, as a gift suitable for aged men (IV.iv.78-79). Concluding from Polixenes' remark that he was insulted by this initial offer, Perdita goes on to explain why she gave them flowers betokening old age:

Sir, the year growing ancient,
Not yet on summer's death nor on the birth
Of trembling winter, the fairest flowers o' th' season
Are our carnations and streak'd gillyvors,
Which some call nature's bastards: of that kind
Our rustic garden's barren; and I care not
To get slips of them.
(79-85)

These lines are frequently misread as a reference to the present time of the scene as being not yet on summer's death nor on the birth of winter. But the time of this scene is most likely late June, when sheepshearing feasts traditionally take place; and these lines are simply an explanation of why Perdita could not give Polixenes and Camillo the late summer flowers that would have been more appropriate for them: because the fairest late summer flowers suggest to her unchastity and work by an artist's hand, she does not have any of them in her garden. After the debate with Polixenes she proceeds to give Polixenes and Camillo midsummer flowers instead—hot lavender, mints, savory, marjoram, and marigolds—and in handing them over is consciously flattering her guests for a moment:

these are flowers
Of middle summer, and I think they are given
To men of middle age. Y'are very welcome.
(106-108)
And following this, she turns to Florizel and her younger friends and expresses a desire to give them flowers of spring. In her choice of and reference to flowers, Perdita has been moving gradually backward in time—from winter to late summer to middle summer to spring. In this backward movement, she is re-enacting or recapitulating in small the redemptive scheme of the play as a whole. But at the very moment that time is symbolically redeemed by Perdita's actions and words, Perdita herself reasserts the concept of time as constantly moving forward. For she has to admit that she does not have those spring flowers she would like to hand out, and she points to a way, then, in which she is unlike Proserpina:

Now, my fair'st friend, [To Flonzl]
I would
I had some flowers o' th' spring, that might
Become your time of day; and yours, and yours,
[To Mopsa and the other girls]
That wear upon your virgin branches yet
Your maidenheads growing: O Proserpina,
For the flowers now that, frightened, thou let'st fall
From Dis's waggon!
(112-18)

There is a strong note of melancholy here and of regret over the fact that she cannot really bring spring back to the earth, In handing out her flowers, Perdita is very conscious of the limitations placed on man's life by time's movement.

Perdita would appear, for the moment, to be like Polixenes in seeking a life in which one would not be limited by time's inevitable movement onward. But while Polixenes moved from a vision of a timeless world to a desire to retreat and avoid sexual involvement, Perdita quickly snaps out of her melancholic mood and moves instead to a triumphant assertion of her dedication to active, living, sexual love:

Per. O, these I lack,
To make you garlands of; and my sweet friend,
To strew him o'er and o'er!
Flo. What, like a corse?
Per.No, like a bank, for love to lie and play on:
Not like a corse; or if—not to be buried,
But quick, and in mine arms.
(127-32)

She pauses on "or if" most likely because she has in her mind struck upon the root meaning of "corpse"; she would very plainly, then, be thinking about love which makes full use of the body.

There is, no doubt, a smile on Florizel's face as he teases Perdita with his question "What, like a corpse?" But the question points to a way in which Florizel has not yet reached Perdita's level of appreciation of the type of love she advocates. He is generally, next to her, a rather unsure figure. Like his father, when he wants to give the highest possible praise to something, he places it beyond time's control; in expressing his love for Perdita, he in his own way tries to deny time and make her action eternal:

What you do,
Still betters what is done. When you speak, sweet,
I'd have you do it even when you sing,
I'd have you buy and sell so, so give alms,
Pray so, and, for the ord'ring your affairs,
To sing them too: when you do dance, I wish you
A wave o' th' sea, that you might ever do
Nothing but that, move still, still so,
And own no other function. Each your doing,
So singular in each particular,
Crowns what you are doing, in the present deeds,
That all your acts are queens.

(135-46)

G. Wilson Knight has commended this speech as a praiseworthy "striving after eternity," and another critic has called it "one of the most moving passages in the whole of Shakespeare." The sentiment expressed is beautiful, but if Shakespeare had wanted us to accept these lines without qualification, he probably would not have had Perdita object to them. Perdita has earlier had to chide Florizel for his extremes in dressing her up as the goddess Flora for the feast (1-14), and here she finds his words too extravagant. His praise gives evidence of a verbal art which she distrusts and which disguises what she takes to be his true nature:

O Doricles,
Your praises are too large: but that your youth,
And the true blood which peeps fairly through 't,
Do plainly give you out an unstain'd shepherd,
With wisdom I might fear, my Doricles,
You woo'd me the false way.

(146-51)

Even in her mild rebuke, she retains her wit. For she knows very well that Doricles is a prince and not simply an unstained shepherd. But prince and representative of the court and its art that he may be, Florizel eventually justifies Perdita's confidence and trust in him. At the moment he must choose between his succession and his love, he stands by Perdita; and in doing so he allies himself with all of nature as well:

It cannot fail, but by
The violation of my faith; and then
Let nature crush the sides o' th' earth together,
And mar the seeds within! Lift up thy looks:
From my succession wipe me, father; I
Am heir to my affection.

(477-82)

It was Leontes' diseased "affection" (I.ii.138-46) which so blinded him to the truth and caused him to commit the unnatural act of seeking the death of his own seed, Perdita. It is a mark of Florizel's health here that he can rely upon and dedicate himself fully to just those emotions and passions which Polixenes and Leontes found so dangerous and disruptive. For Florizel not to follow the dictates of his "affection" would, in his view, be as bad as marring all the seeds germinating in the earth. He is speaking in overly exalted terms perhaps, but there is some reason to take his exclamation seriously. Perdita has by this time— as a result of her stand in favor of unadulterated nature in the nature and art debate, her distribution of flowers, and her identification "with Flora— been fully associated with nature and natural life. On this level of association and symbol, Florizel in standing by her is helping to insure nature's continuance from generation to generation. And in allying himself with nature and the country as opposed to the court, Florizel is assuming, for his own, the vision of human life in which time has a definite effect and in which sexual love or affection plays a good and vital role.

Though born at court, Perdita is the chief spokesman for the pastoral world in the play. She is clearly an idealized figure. The other country figures, with their banter, their dances, and their delight in song, present a
picture in sharp contrast with the world of the court of Acts I-III. But the natural world, with its storms and its hungry bears, is not portrayed merely as an idyllic haven in the play. Bohemia, in fact, provides one of Shakespeare's harsher pastoral landscapes: the bear of this play succeeds in satisfying its hunger, whereas the lion of As You Like It did not. And Shakespeare is careful, as he was in As You Like It also, to show that living close to nature does not automatically or necessarily make a person intelligent, sensitive, healthy, attractive, or chaste. Autolycus at his first entrance sings of tumbling in the hay with country beggar women (IV.iii.12); and though Perdita speaks of her friends who "wear upon your virgin branches yet / Your maidensheads growing" (IV.iv.115-16), her foster brother has evidently tripped with several and has not yet retired from the field (239 ff.). The rustic shepherds are like sheep themselves, unthinking easy prey for that wolf Autolycus, who enjoys his own kind of sheepshearing feast. The country figure besides Perdita who possesses the most dignity is the Old Shepherd, her reputed father. He is differentiated from the rest by being given poetry rather than prose to speak, and that poetry shows him to be hospitable, warm, and genial, with a firm love of the land and of tradition. Unaware of the true identity of either Perdita or Florizel, he at first warmly approves of the match. But at the moment Polixenes unmasks, the old man is selfishly concerned only for his own neck. And after his meteoric rise in social status, he becomes just as comic a butt for laughter as his mindless son. Perhaps more damaging yet is the fact that he is used to provide a parody of Polixenes' response to the onset of sexual passion in youth. His solution of how to deal with that passion has simplicity to recommend it, but that is about all; he would merely eliminate the years between ten and twenty-three from young people's lives:

\[ \text{I would there were no age between ten and three-and-twenty, or that youth would sleep out the rest; for there is nothing in the between but getting wenches with child, wronging the ancieny, stealing, fighting} \ldots \]

(III.iii.59-63)

He is primarily expressing his anger at the young men who have been hunting in bad weather and have driven two of his sheep away from the flock, but his words here are enough to present on a totally comic level one of the major concerns of the play.

With such rustics as these in it, Shakespeare is plainly not offering up the country as an escape from, or as a blissful alternative to, life at court. And Perdita's attitudes toward sexual love and time's movement cannot simply be called those of the country, since she is the only one in the country to voice them. Further, it is not absolutely necessary that one go to the country to find and develop a vision like that of Perdita: Hermione possessed that vision without ever having left the court. But Shakespeare, while not romanticizing the country, is filing up all the usual associations of life in the country, with its beauty, peace, and health, so as to marshal them behind Hermione's vision and to give force and greater attractiveness to those views he wishes to endorse. By having a specifically country figure as well as Hermione hold those views, he is suggesting that Hermione's attitude toward sexual love is good, proper, healthy, and perfectly natural to man, an attitude, then, he would easily arrive at were his own mental balance and life in the complex world to allow him to do so. The trip to the country with the discovery of Perdita's insistence on time's movement and attitude toward sexual love presents the final repudiation of Polixenes' definitions of innocence, sin, the fall, and even of the ideal human existence—those definitions and attitudes which were so closely connected with, and even the ultimate cause of, Leontes' diseased outburst of sexual jealousy.

While the trip to the country is only one of two possible ways the play presents as a means of moving from the disease of Acts I-III to the health and happiness of the conclusion—the other way being the path of penance Leontes follows at court under the moral guidance of Paulina—the action of the final scene is thoroughly imbued with the lessons taught by the country. The recognition that Hermione's statue has wrinkles which Hermione herself did not have sixteen years earlier reasserts the vision of time presented by Perdita when she confesses to her inability to bring back spring and to distribute spring flowers out of season. The play ends with a rather stark insistence on time passing. "When the statue first moves, Polixenes raises
the question of what exactly Hermione has been doing all these years (V.iii.114-15). As Hermione begins to answer it and explain to her daughter why she kept herself alive, she is interrupted by Paulina with:

There's time enough for that;  
Lest they desire (upon this push) to trouble  
Your joys with like relation.  
(128-30)

Had the question been pursued further, it might well have proved embarrassing for Paulina and for Shakespeare. But Shakespeare, by having Paulina interrupt Hermione here, is not simply trying to hurry quickly over a dramatic weakness. By intentionally raising and then not answering Polixenes' question fully, Shakespeare manages to enforce upon our consciousness just how terribly wide a gap of time sixteen years can be.

And finally, the concluding scene offers yet another of the instances in the play in which a character expresses a wish to halt time's and life's movement, only to be corrected or rebuked for that wish. Leontes and Perdita both, when they see Hermione's statue, desire simply to stand there and gaze at it for twenty years (V.iii.84-85). Polixenes proved to be misguided in desiring to return to a realm in which he could be "boy eternal," and Florizel was gently chided for desiring a Perdita constantly repeating the same action, like a wave of the sea. Here, time moving onward brings Leontes and Perdita greater joy than the single moment made eternal. For in the place of a statue, a work of art set in a timeless dimension, Leontes and Perdita are presented with a Hermione warm with life. Polixenes, in his description of his youth, expressed a distrust of his own "blood," by which he meant his passions and particularly sexual passion. In the sheepshearing scene, the word "blood" for Perdita referred to a quality in Florizel that she could rely upon to express his true feelings when she could not trust his extravagant words (TV.iv.148); Florizel's "true blood," then, was cause for confidence and trust. For Leontes in this final scene, the fact that Hermione's statue appears to have veins which bear blood (V.iii.65) becomes cause first for wonder and then, when verified, for rejoicing. "Blood" at this point means not simply the passions but one's lifeblood, that fluid whose movement makes one a living being. The use of the term here is understandable enough and to be expected, but it helps to point out that Polixenes, in his distrust of his own blood and in his wistful look back toward the past and childhood, was denying life. The final scene of the play is a celebration of life. It is, in fact, life itself which Paulina calls Hermione's redeemer when she bids the apparent statue descend from its pedestal:

Come!  
I'll fill your grave up: stir, nay, come away.  
Bequeath to death your numbness; for from him  
Dear life redeems you.  
(V.iii.100-103)

"Life" in this final scene clearly means life as it exists in a moving world, in a world ruled by time. It is Shakespeare's considerable achievement in The Winter's Tale that he can bring us to accept the view of time as constantly moving forward and hence as eroding and destructive, and to accept it not with resignation or depression but with equanimity, confidence, and even enthusiasm. And it is primarily his picture of life in a pastoral setting and the attitude toward life expressed by Perdita, as representative of the country, which enable us to do so.


Thomas McFarland
[In this essay, McFarland traces Shakespeare's treatment of pastoral elements in The Winter's Tale.]
McFarland identifies the ways in which the normally light and carefree pastoral vision is undercut by sadness and ambivalence throughout the play. The first several acts of the play focus on death, attack childhood happiness, and present Shakespeare's emphasis on "human faithlessness," McFarland argues, while the pastoral scenes offer the possibility that society can be reconciled and restored to happiness.

"A sad tale's best for winter." The melancholy words of the doomed child Mamillius (2.1.25) set the tone, and ordain the comic reality, of The Winter's Tale. For demonic forces are loose within this play, and the redemption provided by pastoral is as bittersweet as the idea of winter's beauty itself. Indeed, the very conception of a winter pastoral evokes an ambivalence; the Ovidian golden age was specifically one where "ver erat aeternum"—spring was eternal. A pastoral simplification of winter, no matter what its beauty, must incorporate something less than the perfect fulfillment of the paradisal vision. . . .

In The Winter's Tale, death, and other aspects of diminished being that herald it, dominate the first three acts. In its motifs of restlessness, sudden hatred, troubled journeys, deadly pursuit, and broken faith, the play in these acts affirms the bitter cosmos of Pericles. And death is everywhere: in the King's intentions toward Polixenes, in his attitude toward Hermione's baby, in the wasting away of Mamillius, in the seeming death of Hermione, and, most grotesquely, in the devouring of Antigonus. The sixteen-year hiatus between the third and fourth act, which so fascinated Coleridge, and which so utterly repudiates the dramatic unities of the French classical mode, is a sign of the play's tormented wrenching of comedy out of its normal symmetries, and is also a psychological necessity. For only a generation, and many years to soften old hatred, can make acceptable a comic resolution to the madness of Leontes.

The first enunciation of his inner rage erupts, startlingly, into a seemingly ideal social situation of happy marriage and longtime friendship. Indeed, if this play looks back, in its pastorally redeemed fourth and fifth acts, to a torment sixteen years gone, such curious preoccupation "with the past is not unique. For the torment of Leontes, and the destruction it causes, themselves look back to a still earlier time -when pastoral bliss was the norm. As Northrop Frye says, "We begin with reference to an innocent childhood when Leontes and Polixenes were 'twinned lambs,' and then suddenly plunge from the reminiscence of this pastoral paradise into a world of superstition and obsession" (A Natural Perspective: The Development of Shakespearean Comedy and Remove [New York and London, 1965], p. 114).

This play, in fact, attacks pastoral bliss at its very heart, for childhood is the persistent object of the action's dramatic rage. Leontes repudiates the childhood friendship he bore for Polixenes, frightens the boy Mamilius to death, and abandon her to die. His rejection of his newborn child shockingly epitomizes his madness. Emilia notes that Hermione "is, something before her time, deliver'd. ... A daughter, and a goody babe, / Lust to and like to live" (2.2.25-27). Paulina, relying on society's universal love for children, says, "I'll show't the King, and undertake to be / Her advocate to th' loud'st. We do not know / How he may soften at the sight o'th' child" (2.2.38-40). But this tactic only elicits a language of the most twisted and grotesque hatred: "Give her the bastard"; "Take up the bastard; . . . giv't to thy crone"; "This brat is none of mine"; "My child! Away with't! . . . take it hence, / And see it instantly consum'd with fire"; "Shall I live on to see this bastard kneel / And call me father? Better burn it now / Than curse it then" (2.3.73, 75-76, 92, 131-33, 154-56).

Scarcey less grotesque is his altered decision to stop just short of murdering the infant:

You, sir, come you hither.
You that have been so tenderly officious
With Lady Margery, your midwife there,
To save this bastard's life—for 'tis a bastard,
So sure as this beard's grey—what will you adventure
To save this brat's life? . . .
We enjoin thee,
As thou art liegeman to us, that thou carry
This female bastard hence; and that thou bear it
To some remote and desert place, quite out
Of our dominions; and that there thou leave it,
Without more mercy, to its own protection
And favour of the climate. As by strange fortune
It came to us, I do in justice charge thee. . . .
That thou commend it strangely to some place
Where chance may nurse or end it.

[2.3.157-82]

The attack on childhood signifies everything that is sick, inhuman, antisocial, and opposed to the express values of the paradisal vision. Leontes's rage, indeed, erupts like lava from a nether region, and in its intensity, its awesome suddenness, suggests vast subliminal depths of torment and anguish. Often noted as one of the most startling of all dramatic volte-faces, the change from mellow friendliness to seething hatred never loses its power to shock. We retrace the process:

POLIXENES. ... I have stay'd
to tire your royalty. . . . No longer stay.
LEONTES. One sev'night longer.
POLIXENES. Very sooth, to-morrow.
LEONTES. We'll part the time between's then. . . .
Tongue-tied our Queen? Speak you.
HERMIONE. I had thought, sir, to have held my peace until
You had drawn oaths from him not to stay.
You, sir,
Charge him too coldly. . . .
LEONTES. Well said, Hermione. . . .
HERMIONE. Not your gaoler, then.
But your kind hostess. Come, I'll question you
Of my lord's tricks and yours when you were boys.
You were pretty lordings then!

And this elegant and archetypal situation, of a husband and wife entreating an old friend to prolong a visit, expands in its good feeling to include an Edenic claim of more happiness than life, its childhood paradise lost, can sustain:

POLIXENES. We were, fair Queen,
Two lads that thought there was no more behind
But such a day to-morrow as to-day,
And to be boy eternal. . . .
We were as twinn'd lambs that did frisk i' th' sun,
And bleat the one at th' other. What we chang'd
Was innocence for innocence; we knew not
The doctrine of ill-doing, nor dream'd
That any did. Had we pursu'd that life,
And our weak spirits ne'er been higher rear'd
With stronger blood, we should have answer'd heaven
Boldly "Not guilty," the imposition clear'd
Hereditary ours.
But the Pelagian thought of heavenly innocence in this our life is ironically and mightily rebuked by the eruption from the Augustinian depths of man's corrupt and fallen nature:

LEONTES. Is he won yet?
HERMIONE. He'll stay, my lord.
LEONEES. At my request he would not.

Hermione, my dearest, thou never spok'st
To better purpose,
[1.2.86-89]

And after some banter Hermione answers:

Why, lo you now, I have spoke to th' purpose twice:
The one for ever earn'd a royal husband;
Th' other for some while a friend.
[1.2.106-8]

Then she gives her hand to Polixenes, and Leontes, aside, utters those words of agonized hatred that give the lie to all optimism about human affairs:

Too hot, too hot!
To mingle friendship far is mingling bloods.
I have tremor cordis on me; my heart dances,
But not for joy, not joy. This entertainment
May a free face put on; derive a liberty
From heartiness, from bounty, fertile bosom,
And well become the agent. 'T may, I grant;
But to be paddling palms and pinching fingers,
As now they are, and making practis'd smiles,
As in a looking-glass; and then to sigh, as 'twere
The mort o' th' deer.
[1.2.108-18]

The sexual fury and disgust that seethed in Hamlet when he thought about Claudius and his mother are echoed in these words; and as Leontes goes on, he begins to croak in the tones of Othello's Iago-induced prurience and suspicion:

Is whispering nothing?
Is leaning cheek to cheek? Is meeting noses?
Kissing with inside lip? Stopping the career
Of laughter with a sigh?—a note infallible
Of breaking honesty. Horsing foot on foot?
Skulking in corners? Wishing clocks more swift;
Hours, minutes; noon, midnight? And all eyes
Blind with the pin and web but theirs, theirs only,
That would unseen be wicked—is this nothing?
[1.2.284-92]
The most persistent theme in all Shakespeare, in fact, is that of human faithlessness. It is the very substance of the history plays, the most tormented preoccupation of the tragedies, the chief ingredient of the bitterness in the middle and late comedies, all haunted by the theme of sonnet 92: "Thou mayst be false, and yet I know it not." Othello's suspicions, like those of Leontes, are in the instance unjustified, but they derive motive power from the high probability of a young wife's betrayal; and Othello is, indeed, betrayed, by his friend Iago if not by his wife Desdemona, just as Desdemona, though faithful to her husband, betrays her father. Elsewhere the probability of betrayal is more directly realized. The pain suffered by Troilus corresponds to his actual betrayal by Cressida, and the language of that play mocks all human idealism as alternating between illusion and treachery. Indeed, when Shakespeare deals with the ideas of loyalty and broken faith, the betrayal of human commitment is far more often represented as simple fact than as mistaken suspicion. The betrayal of friendship by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, of love by Ophelia, of wifehood by Gertrude, of brotherhood by Claudius—their motifs form the central meaning of Hamlet. Macbeth's betrayal of Duncan, Enobarbus's of Antony, Rome's of Coriolanus, Caesar's of Rome and the conspirators of Caesar, Angelo's of the Duke, Prince Hal's of Falstaff, and above all, Lear's betrayal by his daughters—these and other instances testify to the prevalence of the themes of betrayal and broken faith in Shakespeare's art. . . .

The mysterious rage of Leontes is another expression of this persisting view of the probability of baseness in human relationships. The dual potentiality of man, either to be like the animals or like the angels, was often insisted on by Shakespeare's philosophically minded predecessors in the Renaissance. As Pomponazzi, for instance, says, "Man is clearly not of simple but of multiple . . . nature, and he is to be placed as a mean between mortal and immortal things. . . . And to man, who thus exists as a mean between the two, power is given to assume whichever nature he wishes" (De immortalitate animae, Cap. I.). Leontes's rage, following so suddenly on the benign scene appropriate to comedy, is a sort of reflection of the Renaissance emphasis on man's multiple possibility. To it, moreover, must be added darker thoughts, from Augustine and Calvin, about man's inherent corruption. All such thoughts receive their validation from experience: in Shakespeare's life, about which we can only speculate, or in our own, about which we can be certain.

The eruption of Leontes's suspicion represents a kind of absolute standard of the anticomic; and it is therefore the means by which the magnetic attraction of people to one another, the comic cohesiveness, is reversed. Things fall apart. Society disintegrates under the blasting reality of Leontes's rage. Polixenes the friend becomes Polixenes the fugitive. Camillo the loyal retainer becomes Camillo the traitor, rather than accept Leontes's command and remain as Camillo the murderer. Antigonus the trusted counselor becomes Antigonus the doomed wanderer. Mamillius the prince and heir becomes Mamillius the pining child. Hermione the faithful wife becomes Hermione the accused whore and Hermione the prisoner—finally, Hermione the seeming-dead. And all these things are wrought by Leontes's paranoid rage. As Paulina tells him in the cathartic moment of truth:

That thou betray'dst Polixenes, 'twas nothing;
That did but show thee, of a fool, inconstant,
And damnable ingrateful. Nor was't much
Thou wouldst have poison'd good Camillo's honour,

To have him kill a king—poor trespasses,
More monstrous standing by; whereof I reckon
The casting forth to crows thy baby daughter
To be or none or little, though a devil
Would have shed water out of fire ere done't;
Nor is't directly laid to thee, the death
Of the young Prince, whose honourable thoughts—
Thoughts high for one so tender—cleft the heart
That could conceive a gross and foolish sire
Blemish'd his gracious dam. This is not, no,
Laid to thy answer; but the last—O lords,
When I have said, cry "Woe!"— the Queen, the Queen,
The sweet'st, dear'st creature's dead; and vengeance for't
Not dropp'd down yet. . . .
But, O thou tyrant!
Do not repent these things, for they are heavier
Than all thy woes can stir; therefore betake thee
To nothing but despair. A thousand knees
Ten thousand years together, naked, fasting,
Upon a barren mountain, and still winter
In storm perpetual, could not move the gods
To look that way thou wert.

[3.2.182-211]

The cleansing release afforded by Paulina's denunciation is some measure of the amount of desolation caused by Leontes's maddened thoughts. Such a lengthy and bitter excoriation is necessary to discharge the outrage that Leontes's actions have provoked; and it prepares the way for the possibilities of comic reclamation.

Haying delivered herself of her counterrage, Paulina subsides into an attitude more inviting to the prospect of ultimate reconciliations:

Alas! I have show'd too much
The rashness of a woman! He is touch'd
To th' noble heart. What's gone and what's past help
Should be past grief. Do not receive affliction
At my petition. . . . Now, good my liege,
Sir, royal sir, forgive a foolish woman.

[3.2.217-24]

The volcanic flow of Leontes's rage having erupted and subsided by the second scene of the third act, the action of the play moves in place (to the seacoast of Bohemia) and in time (sixteen years) to allow further cooling to occur. The last symbol of the molten world is the grotesque exit of Antigonus, the babe Perdita now safely deposited on the shore:

A savage clamour!
Well may I get aboard! This is the chase;
I am gone for ever. [Exit, pursued by a bear.]

[3.3.57-59]

The bear, which appears as suddenly and ferociously as the rage of Leontes, clears the coast for a new entrance— one equally unlikely in a sea's environment— that of a shepherd. And at that moment the balm, of pastoral begins to be applied to the burning wounds inflicted by the action so far. As the clown reports the sinking of the ship at sea, and the death of Antigonus on land ("how the poor souls roar'd, and the sea mock'd them; and how the poor gentleman roared, and the bear mock'd him" [3.3.96-98]), the shepherd replies with words that justify the play's division into two worlds of space and time:

Now bless thyself; thou met'st with things dying,
I with things new-born. Here's a sight for thee;
look thee, a bearing-cloth for a squire's child!

[3.3.109-12]
The first two scenes of the fourth act establish the passage of sixteen years, and connect the new present with
the past by means of the conversation between Polixenes and Camillo. At the beginning of the third scene,
Autolycus appears, singing the carefree words that we recognize as the symbol of transformation to the ideal
realm of pastoral:

When daffodils begin to peer,
With heigh! the doxy over the dale,
Why, then comes in the sweet o' the year,
For the red blood reigns in the winter's pale.
[4.3.1-4]

The figure of Autolycus, the pastoral thief, serves in some ways the same function as Jaques in As You Like
It. Like Jaques, Autolycus indicates a slight falling off from the golden ideal. Such an indication is a reminder,
however harmless, of the searing possibilities opened up by Leontes. The division of the two worlds of space
and time, though it must be sharp, cannot be absolute; continuity of theme and interest must be preserved. The
child Mamillius lost in the first world finds a counterpart in the babe Perdita saved for the second; the rage of
Leontes finds a counterpart in the activity, harmless though it be, of Autolycus. Unlike Jaques, however,
Autolycus is not a cerebral critic of the pastoral world, but a kind of life-force, which reinforces the theme of
"things new-born" at the same time that it prevents us from wholly forgetting the troubles that accompany
remembrance of the past. Though benign, he is nonetheless a thief, which is not socially acceptable; so his
role confirms the hint of malaise found in the conception of winter, rather than spring, as the pastoral matrix.
But he sings, and proves, that "red blood reigns in the winter's pale." Traversi speaks well on this matter:

Autolycus, indeed, has a part of his own to play in the complete conception. His comic
function is that of one who is regarded as a little apart from the main structure, whose
behaviour is in some sense irreducible to the social values of the play, calculated to throw
upon the symbolic symmetry itself a touch of relativity, a sense of the incalculable
individuality of the processes of life. . . . The key to Autolycus, and to his peculiar position in
the action, can, indeed, be defined in the phrase from his own song that "the red blood reigns
in the winter's pale." The reference to winter implies at once a contrast and a point of
reference. It connects the episode now before us with the play's title, and establishes a
relationship between the birth of spring in the heart of winter and the affirmation of the warm,
living "blood" of youth against the jealousy and care-laden envy of age, an affirmation shortly
to be confirmed in the contrast between the young lovers and their elders. In Autolycus
himself, of course, this outpouring of spontaneous life moves on the margin of social forms. It
has indeed a predatory aspect comically expressed in his first action, the picking of the
Clown's pocket; but this itself is, to some degree, a devaluation of his victim's newfound
riches and the social pretensions which these have aroused in him (Shakespeare: The Last

It should be noted, furthermore, that the picking of the Clown's pocket mockingly prefigures the
"sheep-shearing" scene that follows.

That scene represents one of the most concentrated expressions of pastoral ever achieved by Shakespeare. Its
essence lies in the extended imagery of the giving of flowers; for by giving flowers here, healing blossoms are strewn
over the entire desert seared by Leontes:

PEKIDITA. You're welcome, sir.
Give me those flow'rs there, Dorcas. Reverend sirs,
For you there's rosemary and rue; these keep
Seeming and savour all die winter long.
Grace and remembrance be to you both!
And welcome to our shearing.
[4.4.72-77]

The tropes of welcoming, of giving, of grace, all float in upon these words; and the perfumed scent and beautiful sight of flowers are heaped, almost overpoweringly, over the vast desolate anxiety established by the play's beginning:

POLIXENES. Shepherdess—
A fair one are you—well you fit our ages
"With flow'rs of winter.
PERDITA. Sir, the year growing ancient,
Not yet on summer's death nor on the birth
Of trembling winter, the fairest flow'rs o' th' season
Are our carnations and streak'd gillyvors,
Which some call nature's bastards. Of that kind
Our rustic garden's barren; and I care not
To get slips of them.
POUXENES. Wherefore, gentle maiden,
Do you neglect them? . . .
Then make your garden rich in gillyvors
And do not call them bastards.
[4.4.77-99]

The torment of Leontes's earlier ravings about his supposed "bastard" child is transformed into the loveliness of flowers and the acceptance of kings. And Perdita provides more fragrance and color:

Here's flow'rs for you;
Hot lavender, mints, savory, marjoram;
The marigold, that goes to bed wi' th' sun
And with him rises weeping; these are flow'rs
Of middle summer, and I think they are given
To men of middle age. Y'are very welcome.
[4.4.103-8]

And from the cornucopia of symbolic well-being, in seemingly inexhaustible abundance, issue flowers that blanket and perfume all things:

Now, my fair'st friend,
I would I had some flow'rs o' th' spring that might
Become your time of day— and yours, and yours,
That wear upon your virgin branches yet
Your maidenheads growing. O Proserpina,
For the flowers now that, frightened, thou let'st fall
From Dis's waggon!—daffodils,
That come before the swallow dares, and take
The winds of March with beauty; violets, dim
But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes
Or Cytherea's breath; pale primroses,
That die unmarried ere they can behold
Bright Phoebus in his strength—a malady
Most incident to maids; bold oxlips, and
The crown-imperial; lilies of all kinds,
The flow'r-de-luce being one. O, these I lack,
To make you garlands of, and my sweet friend,
To strew him o'er and o'er!

[4.4.112-29]

That Shakespeare here achieves a kind of absolute in the invocation of symbolic bliss is attested by Milton's reworking of "O Proserpina, / For the flowers now that, frighted, thou let'st fall / From Dis's waggon" into his description of the Garden of Eden itself:

Not that fair field
Of Enna, where Proserpin gath'ring flow'rs
Herself a fairer Flow'r by gloomy Dis
Was gather'd
. . . might with this Paradise
Of Eden strive. . . .

[Paradise Lost, 4.268-75]

Milton's lines also equate the splendor of Eden with the quintessence of pastoral, for his reworking of Shakespeare's Proserpina-and-Dis passage immediately follows a specifically Ovidian and Virgilian description of Eden as the golden world:

Thus was this place,
A happy rural seat of various view:
Groves whose rich Trees wept odorous Gums and Balm, . . .
Flow'rs of all hue, and without Thorn the Rose: . . .
The Birds thir quire apply; airs, vernal airs,
Breathing the smell of field and grove, attune
The trembling leaves, while Universal Pan
Knit with the Graces and the Hours in dance
Led on th' Eternal Spring. Not that fair field of Enna. . . .

[Paradise Lost, 4.246-69]

The introduction of "Pan" and "Eternal Spring" identifies Milton's Eden as more than analogously or accidentally the golden world.

Milton thus renders homage to Shakespeare's pastoral vision as evoked by the flower passages in the fourth act of The Winter's Tale. Elsewhere he pays his respects in another way. The "pale primroses, / That die unmarried" provide the code by which Shakespeare's catalog of flowers becomes interchangeable with the catalog set forth in Lycidas:

Bring the rathe Primrose that forsaken dies,
The tufted Crow-toe, and pale Jessamine,
The white Pink, and the Pansy freakt with jet,
The glowing Violet,
The Musk-rose, and the well attir'd Woodbine,
With Cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,
And every flower that sad embroidery wears. . . .

[Lycidas, 142-48]
The homage appears even more explicit in light of the fact that Milton, in the first draft of his poem, used the word "unwedded" rather than the word "forsaken."

Milton's instinct for the essence of the pastoral feeling here joins with his understanding of its central use: to soften the harshness of actuality, especially to soften the fact of death. The delicately mourning flowers in Lycidas are specifically requested "To strew the Laureate Hearse where Lycid lies." The same function is obliquely suggested in The Winter's Tale. When Perdita concludes the passage with the words "To strew him o'er and o'er!" Florizel says:

What, like a corpse?
PER

**Criticism: Art and Nature**

*Edward William Tayler*

In the following essay, Tayler contends that the symbols and patterns used in The Winter's Tale emphasize Shakespeare's interest in the philosophical problem of the apparent opposition between nature and art. Tayler demonstrates the way in which the movement of the play flows through cycles of "harmony and alienation," and "integration and disruption." As the play progresses, Tayler states, the view that nature is superior to art seems to dominate. Tayler concludes, however, that through the character of Perdita, and scenes such as Perdita's exchange with Polixenes and the statue scene in which Hermione is "resurrected," Shakespeare's emphasis seem to be that "art itself is nature."

. . . [T]he "symbolic" pattern of The Winter's Tale, turning on images of the seasons, of birth and death, of the sea as destroyer and savior, works together with the conceptual pattern of Nature and Art.

The division between Nature and Art occupied Shakespeare throughout his career. It is implicit in the pastoral episodes of As You Like It, and even as early as Venus and Adonis he is toying with the conventional notion of strife between Nature and Art in painting:

Look, when a painter would surpass the life
In limning out a well-proportioned steed,
His art with nature's workmanship at strife,
As if the dead the living should exceed.
(11. 289-92)

And in reference to a painting of the siege of Troy in The Rape of Lucrece:

A thousand lamentable objects there,
In scorn of nature, art gave liveless life.
(11. 1373-74)

The association of "art" with death and "nature" with life persists even so far as the "dead likeness" of Hermione in The Winters Tale; and the commonplace pairing of Nature and Art is alluded to in play after play, reappearing at some length in Timon of Athens, shortly before the writing of the last romances. In the opening scene that advertises the main concerns of that play, the Poet and the Painter are discussing an example of the Painter's work, and the Poet is amiably self-important in traditional terms:

I will say of it,
It tutors nature. Artificial strife
Lives in these touches, livelier than life.
(I.i.36-38)

Such statements are commonplace, and despite some attempt at variation the similarity of wording implies that Shakespeare produced such literary detritus from his memory on demand, without thought and without effort, as the appropriate occasion presented itself.

Although Shakespeare's use of the division in his allusions to the fine arts is entirely traditional, Nature and Art represented a vital and living problem for him in the ethical speculations of the last plays. In Cymbeline the beginnings of what is to be an intense preoccupation may be glimpsed in one of the major ethical contrasts of the play—between the King's stepson, Cloten, and his real sons, Guiderius and Arviragus. Cloten is the product of the "art o' th' court" that Belarius, the guardian of the real sons, continually disparages. Guiderius and Arviragus, having been brought up in savage surroundings apart from the court, represent the triumph of Nature untutored by Art. As Belarius explains it:

O thou goddess,
    Thou divine Nature, how thyself thou blazon'st
In these two princely boys! They are as gentle
    As zephyrs blowing below the violet,
Not wagging his sweet head; and yet as rough,
    (Their royal blood enchaf'd) as the rud'st wind
That by the top doth take the mountain pine
And make him stoop to th' vale. Tis wonder
That an invisible instinct should frame them
To royalty unlearn'd, honour untaught,
Civility not seen from other, valour
That wildly grows in them but yields a crop
As if it had been sow'd.
(IV.ii.169-81)

The opposition between Nature and Art is not absolute for Shakespeare—he allows the Princes to express an awareness that courts may be in many respects superior to caves—but throughout the terms have been manipulated in such a way as to provide a main theme of the romance. As far as the Princes are concerned, Shakespeare agrees with Spenser and the courtesy books in making Nature more powerful than nature; and thus it is appropriate that Nature unaided by Art should figure in the reconciliation scene at the end of the play. Granted the thematic value of the terms, remarks like those of Belarius' attain in context a force beyond that which may be assigned to a commonplace. In Cymbeline, statements about Nature and Art have become part of the dramatic design, so that they function, perhaps a little creakily, as part of the plot and not merely as isolated allusions.

By the time of The Tempest, the process has been developed and intensified, passing from the relatively derivative use of the division to a more subtle and skillfully articulated study of the traditional opposition of Nature to Art. Frank Kermode's elegant Introduction to The Tempest takes full account of Nature and Art and there is no need to rehearse his arguments here; although one may grow restive at his identification of Caliban as the central figure of the play, against which all the other characters are measured, it nevertheless seems clear that Kermode is right in contending that the "main opposition is between the worlds of Prospero's Art, and Caliban's Nature." Hence there is little to be gained by pursuing this survey; enough has been said to establish Shakespeare's interest, early and late, in Nature and Art and to provide a context for detailed consideration of The Winter's Tale, the play that exploits most fully the relationship between the philosophical division and the pastoral genre.
Beneath the romance trappings of *The Winter's Tale* the critics have seen a pattern that, reduced to its essentials and stated in relatively neutral language, is based on cycles or alternations of harmony and alienation, of integration and disruption. Harmony, symbolized in the friendship of Leontes and Polixenes, receives initial emphasis in the first scene as Camillo remarks, perhaps a little ambiguously: "They were train'd together in their childhoods; and there rooted betwixt them then such an affection which cannot choose but branch now." In the next scene Polixenes sounds the same note as he recalls for Hermione what it was like to be "boy eternal" with her husband, Leontes.

> We were as twinn'd lambs that did frisk i' th' sun  
> And bleat the one at th' other. What we chang'd  
> Was innocence for innocence; we knew not  
> The doctrine of ill-doing, nor dream'd  
> That any did. Had we pursu'd that life,  
> And our weak spirits ne'er been higher rear'd  
> With stronger blood, we should have answer'd heaven  
> Boldly, "Not guilty," the imposition clear'd  
> Hereditary ours.  
> (I.ii.67-75)

The idea of carefree harmony and the connotations of spring and birth are in this particular passage subordinated to the theological terms. The harmony recalled by Polixenes is a vision of the integrity of man in Eden, free of the taint of original sin—an association reinforced by the wit of the following lines as he and Hermione joke about the boys having "first sinn'd with" the queens, the implication being that the innocence of former days was lost because of woman.

This is not allegory, of course, nor is *The Winter's Tale* a covert recapitulation of the Fall of Man. But the web of allusion in these lines provides a frame of reference within which the main events of the play can receive meaning: the speech introduces the vision of the green world, the ideal of past harmony, and associates it with birth, innocence, spring, even with the Garden of Eden. To speak technically, this is the "integrity" of Nature before the Fall.

The vision of the Garden, however, is brief and not easily sustained. As Shakespeare's audience was well aware, the harmony of Eden had been lost to man so that his "stronger blood" was no longer free of the hereditary "imposition." Consequently the Elizabethan audience was better prepared than Shakespeare's modern critics for Leontes' sudden and unmotivated jealousy, the towering excess of passion that, appearing in the same scene with Polixenes' speech of remembered bliss, obliterates the initial mood of harmony and introduces the chaos and death for which Leontes is finally to do penance.

Leontes is a man, his Nature impaired by the Fall, so that he is *non posse non peccare*, not able not to err. The terrible consequences of Leontes' passion—alienation from Polixenes and Camillo, the death of his son, the death of Antigonus, the apparent deaths of his daughter and wife—form the main burden of the play until the Chorus of Time that introduces Act IV. Meanwhile the members of Shakespeare's audience have seen the result of an excess of passion and have been able to judge the action in the terms, moral and theological, most meaningful to them. The first phase of the cycle is complete; harmony and integration have been replaced by alienation and disruption.

The pivotal point of the play lies where it should, toward the end of Act III; as in *Pericles* and *The Tempest* it involves a storm at sea, the archetypal image of birth and death. The young shepherd (the clown) witnesses the destruction of the ship and the death of Antigonus, but at the same time the old shepherd comes across the living babe whose restoration figures in the fulfillment of the oracle. The scene thus recalls the disruption and chaos of the earlier action and at the same time anticipates the restoration of harmony in the last act. As the
old shepherd puts it, saying more than he understands: "Now bless thyself! thou met'st with things dying, I with things new-born" (III.iii.116-18).

Act IV includes the pastoral interlude and, as we have come to expect, the main references to the controversy over Nature and Art. Florizel, the son of Polixenes, has fallen in love with the shepherdess Perdita whom we know to be the daughter of Leontes, marooned by his order during a transport of jealousy. The child has grown up without benefit of Art, and yet her demeanor, like that of the Princes in Cymbeline, reflects the irrefragable excellence of royal blood. Throughout the word "queen" is applied to her, for as Florizel says:

   Each your doing,
   So singular in each particular,
   Crowns what you are doing in the present deed,
   That all your acts are queens.
   (IV.iv.143-46)

Both royal children are for the moment disguised as shepherds, the difference being that Florizel knows his true birth whereas Perdita does not. And while they masquerade as pastoral figures, Shakespeare takes care to have us associate the children with more than purity of blood.

Florizel's name—it does not appear in Shakespeare's source—is clearly allegorical, and the association with Flora receives further emphasis in the Prince's description of Perdita in her role as queen of the sheepshearing:

   These your unusual weeds to each part of you
   Do give a life—no shepherdess, but Flora
   Peering in April's front! This your sheep-shearing
   Is as a meeting of the petty gods,
   And you the queen on't.
   (IV.iv.1-5)

Despite the wide difference in (apparent) birth, Shakespeare makes it clear that there is no intention of exercising droit du seigneur; Florizel's "youth" and "blood" are as idyllic and pure as his pastoral surroundings, as Perdita herself recognizes even when his praise of her is so extravagant as to seem suspicious:

   Your praises are too large. But that your youth,
   And the true blood which peeps so fairly through't,
   Do plainly give you out an unstain'd shepherd,
   With wisdom I might fear, my Doricles [i.e., Florizel],
   You woo'd me the false way.
   (TV.iv.147-51)

Florizel makes it explicit:

   my desires
   Run not before mine honour, nor my lusts
   Burn hotter than my faith.
   (IV.iv.33-35)

In short, Shakespeare has taken care to lend Florizel and Perdita the qualities that his audience associated with pastoral figures—idyllic innocence and artless Nature.
The value of Perdita's artlessness is particularly emphasized. Her intellectual simplicity cleaves directly to the heart of a problem, a quality that leads Camillo to acknowledge that he

    cannot say 'tis pity
    She lacks instructions, for she seems a mistress
    To most that teach.
(IV.iv.592-94)

And her modest demeanor does not prevent her from making the pastoral comparison between country and court explicit in referring to Polixenes' rage at discovering his son in love with a "shepherdess":

    I was not much afeard; for once or twice
    I was about to speak, and tell him plainly
    The selfsame sun that shines upon his court
    Hides not his visage from our cottage, but
    Looks on alike.
(IV.iv.453-57)

Even this satiric cut— it is in no sense "democratic"— is of the kind common in pastoral. So far in Shakespeare there is no more than what may be expected from the bucolic tradition: spring, youth, innocence, idyllic love, and the assumption that Nature is superior to Art. But when we have understood the exact function of the pastoral episode in relation to the play as a whole, in relation to its dramatic structure and to its underlying alternation of harmony and disintegration, we will be in a better position to see the individual uses to which Shakespeare has put the traditional materials of Nature and Art.

The pastoral episode immediately precedes the last act, the time of reconciliation and reintegration. The court of Sicily— where the action of the play began— is now the scene of an elaborate series of discoveries in which poetic and other justice is rendered all around. A number of exchanges between Paulina and Leontes have assured the audience that the king is truly repentant; the theological note, sounded so persistently and quietly throughout the play, once more assumes a prominent function, as in the words of Cleomenes:

    Sir, you have done enough, and have perform'd
    A saint like sorrow. No fault could you make
    Which you have not redeem'd; indeed, paid down
    More penitence than done trespass. At the last,
    Do as the heavens have done: forget your evil;
    With them, forgive yourself.
(V.i.1-6)

Redemption is indeed at hand.

Florizel and Perdita, fleeing Bohemia and the anger of Polixenes, appear at the Sicilian court; and Leontes, in words that recall the pastoral interlude, welcomes the lovers as a change from the winter of his discontent: "Welcome hither/ As is the spring to th' earth" (V.i.151-52). The "unstain'd" youth of Florizel and Perdita, their "true blood," symbolizes the restoration of harmony, the coming of spring to the wasteland, and the purification of the "stronger blood" of their fathers that is impaired by the stain of original sin. Perdita, she who was lost, is found, and discovered to be the daughter of the King; Leontes and Polixenes are once more united in friendship; the way is cleared for the young lovers; Hermione is restored to Leontes during the famous (or notorious) statue scene; and the extraordinary network of repeated words and phrases—youth and age, spring and winter, Nature and Art, birth and death, innocence and sin, Nature and Grace, blood and infection, and so on—is resolved in a series of brilliant puns, in the paradoxical wit of the last scenes. The
second phase of the cycle of alienation and harmony, of disruption and reintegration, has been completed.

Enough has been said so that the function of the pastoral scenes in this cycle of—to put it theologically—Fall and Redemption is perhaps obvious. Without these scenes the play would be structurally and symbolically defective, for they reflect, at the appropriate point in the action, the harmony with which the play began: the qualities that Leontes and Polixenes were said to have had as boys are those which Shakespeare gives in turn to Perdita and Florizel. And even the imagery of "twin'd lambs," together with the assumption of innocence unimpaired by original sin, that Shakespeare uses in describing the young princes accurately reflects pastoral conventions; Shakespeare chose appropriately if not "originally" in this respect.

The imaginative force of the paradisiacal intimacy that once existed between Polixenes and Leontes is therefore essentially similar to the pastoral harmony that is now associated with Perdita and Florizel, and it is therefore proper that the two moments in the Garden balance each other structurally, the one preceding disruption and the other preceding integration. Moreover, the two moments serve a similar moral function in the play. In the cycle of disruption and integration the moments of childhood innocence and pastoral integrity provide the audience, in essentially similar ways, with visions of ideal order in terms of which the rest of the action may be meaningfully understood. The pastoral episode is consequently not merely a decorative interlude but the structural and symbolic prelude to the restoration of harmony in the last act.

Shakespeare's use of pastoral as the expression of an ethical ideal, of a simple world by which the more complex one might be judged, is strictly traditional, and yet it is a little more complicated than my statements so far might imply. Shakespeare's idealization of shepherd life, for example, does not extend much beyond Perdita who is, like Pastorella in The Faerie Queene, of shepherd nurture but not of shepherd nature. And while the old shepherd, that "weather-bitten conduit of many kings' reigns" (V.ii.61-62), is allowed to display a certain amount of rude dignity, the Mopsas and Dorcases of Shakespeare's pastoral world are bumpkins, foils for that snapper-up of unconsidered trifles, Autolycus. Perdita's royal blood manifests itself despite her surroundings and not because of them. For Shakespeare, then, shepherds may serve as exemplars of virtue if they are royal shepherds, and Nature may do without the civilizing influence of Art if it is royal Nature. Toward ordinary shepherds Shakespeare's attitude is realistic and gently satirical; his tolerant humor recalls Theocritus but is a long way from Vergil's delicate enthusiasms.

Shakespeare's attitude toward the division between Nature and Art is at least as complicated, but analysis begins most conveniently with his knowledge of traditional materials. Certainly he was aware of the longstanding association of pastoral with Nature and Art, for his pastoral episode includes a fairly thorough debate on the subject. Camillo and Polixenes, disguised, appear at the sheepshearing to investigate the truth of the rumored liaison between Florizel and some humble shepherdess. Polixenes and Perdita discuss flowers, but matters of cultural propriety are always near the surface of what is ostensibly a horticultural argument.

These speeches are worth quoting at length because of their explicit relevance to my thesis, their complex character, and their importance as conceptual statements of the ethical concerns of the play. Perdita begins by apologizing for presenting these men of "middle age" with winter flowers; she has no fall flowers because she will not grow "nature's bastards," and the discussion immediately turns into a highly technical debate on Nature and Art.

Per. Sir, the year growing ancient,  
Not yet on summer's death nor on the birth  
Of trembling winter, the fairest flow'rs o' th' season  
Are our carnations and streak'd gillyvors,  
Which some call nature's bastards. Of that kind  
Our rustic garden's barren, and I care not  
To get slips of them.
Pol. Wherefore, gentle maiden,
Do you neglect them?

Per. For I have heard it said
There is an arc which in their piedness shares
With great creating nature.

Pol. Say there be.
Yet nature is made better by no mean
But nature makes that mean. So, over that art
Which you say adds to nature, is an arc
That nature makes. You see, sweet maid, we marry
A gentler scion to the wildest stock
And make conceive a bark of baser kind
By bud of nobler race. This is an art
Which does mend nature—change it rather but
The art itself is nature.

Per. So it is.

Pol. Then make your garden rich in gillyvors,
And do not call them bastards.

Per. I'll not put
The dibble in earth to set one slip of them;
No more than, were I painted, I would wish
This youth should say 'twere well, and only therefore
Desire to breed by me.

(IV.iv.79-103)

The speeches are obviously meant to be significant in relation to the entire action of the play; they are not merely decorative commonplaces, but their function has never been fully explained.

There is a possibility that Shakespeare intended the actor portraying Polixenes to speak his lines in such a way that the audience will take the horticultural reasoning as a trap, as a device by which Polixenes hopes to expose Perdita as a scheming wench who is after that "bud of nobler race," Florizel. But it is Perdita who first commits herself against "nature's bastards," and Polixenes' tone, now deliberative, now authoritative, does not appear to support such an interpretation. The King seems pretty clearly to be reasoning in earnest.

Admittedly, the contention that an Art that changes Nature is in fact Nature may seem at first blush sophistical, calculated to make a young girl betray her desires for the "gentler scion." Yet Polixenes' stand is perhaps the most dignified and carefully argued in the whole history of possible opposition between Nature and Art. Like Aristotle and Plato Polixenes points out that the "art itself is nature." Aristotle had argued in the Physics that when we claim that Art perfects Nature we do in fact mean in the last analysis that Nature perfects herself: "The best illustration is a doctor doctoring himself: nature is like that." And Plato in the tenth book of the Law had maintained that the good legislator "ought to support the law and also art, and acknowledge that both alike exist by nature, and no less than nature." Although Polixenes' argument may appear sophistical, it is in fact an orthodox statement of the "real" significance of the ancient opposition.

There is of course nothing new in the mixture of horticultural and social vocabularies eider, but the implications of the mixture in Polixenes' argument are shockingly unorthodox:

You see, sweet maid, we marry
A gentler scion to the wildest stock
And make conceive a bark of baser kind
By bud of nobler race.
Translated into purely social terms—Shakespeare's equivocal vocabulary forces the audience to consider the social implications—the argument of Polixenes seems to call for a program of egalitarian eugenics [improvement in the type of offspring produced], a program equally shocking, one suspects, to Polixenes and to the Elizabethan audience. Especially in the given dramatic situation, for the King is at this moment disguised as a shepherd expressly to prevent his "gentler scion" from marrying a "bark of baser kind."

Perdita has throughout revealed a Spenserian appreciation of "degree," and now her reply to Polixenes rejects his (implied) social radicalism along with his horticultural orthodoxy:

I'll not put
The dibble in earth to set one slip of them;
No more than, were I painted, I would wish
This youth [Florizel] should say 'twere well, and only therefore
Desire to breed by me.

Perdita's uneasiness in her "borrowed flaunts" (IV.iv.23), her modest conviction that she is, "poor lowly maid, / Most goddess-like prank'd up" (IV.iv.9-10), has culminated in her final identification of Art with deceit, with false imitation, with "painted" womanhood—a kind of Art morally and otherwise inferior to Nature. Her position is, indeed, as venerable as that of Polixenes, appearing in such diverse places as Plato's concept of imitation in the fine arts, in Castiglione's view of cosmetics, and in virtually the whole of the pastoral tradition. Yet neither Polixenes nor Perdita may be taken to represent Shakespeare's final word on the division between Nature and Art. The two traditions are both philosophically "respectable"; dramatic propriety alone requires that Polixenes maintain the court position and Perdita hold to the pastoral belief in the absolute dichotomy between the two terms.

If Shakespeare's "own" position must remain for the moment conjectural, it is at least possible to understand what he is doing with the ancient division between Nature and Art. Clearly he is using it dramatically, as an oblique commentary on the action of the play. Less obvious is his use of the conceptual terms of the division to reflect the major ethical concerns of the play, using them to sum up with dramatic irony the ethical and social questions of The Winter's Tale.

With Perdita, for example, the debate becomes a comment on the way Shakespeare has characterized her. She is given to us as the creation of Nature who, despite her lack of Art, is "mistress / To most that teach"; she is completely incapable of deceit, and her charming sensuousness is tempered by a clear perception of decorum, of her proper place in the order of things. At the same time her role in the sheepshearing is the creation of Art; her "unusual weeds" make her a "goddess," a "queen," but since these "borrowed flaunts" are deceitful, she resolves finally to "queen it no inch farther" (IV.iv.460). Thus Perdita's stand on the ancient debate accurately reflects her character; it is perfectly consistent with the manner in which she is dramatized. It is this and more. In addition it anticipates ironically the discoveries of the last act, for although Perdita at this point appears to be arguing (in horticultural terms) against a marriage with Florizel, her words describe unwittingly but exactly the final situation of the two lovers: in the last act it will be revealed that Perdita is a "queen" by Nature rather than by Art, that her "borrowed flaunts" are hers by right. At the time when she takes her stand on the question of Nature versus Art, she is by Nature what she conceives herself to be by Art.

Her speech to Polixenes is therefore effective in two main ways: on the one hand it accents her pastoral status as a figure of Nature, free of the corruption and taint of Art, suggesting the Nature of Eden; on the other hand the speech anticipates obliquely the last act of the play in which she and the other characters (the spectator is of course already aware of the dramatic irony of her speech) will understand that Florizel's metaphorical praise—"all your acts are queens"—represents truth on the literal as well as the figurative level.
Polixenes' argument similarly sets up reverberations far beyond the limits of his speech and the immediate context. Polixenes, like Perdita, seemingly argues against his own best interests, for his resolution or the opposition between Nature and Art apparently sanctions the marriage of a noble to a commoner, the "bud of nobler race" to a "bark of baser kind." Thus, as far as Shakespeare and the audience are concerned, it is still another opportunity for dramatic irony, again the spectator is aware of more in a character's words than the character himself. Polixenes appears conscious only of the horticultural application of his words while the spectator is in a position to see that, in the case of Perdita, the "art itself is nature." Thus, Polixenes is also "right," even in the social sense of his words, though he cannot yet see that the queenliness of Perdita's "nature is made better by no mean / But nature makes that mean." It is only in the last act that the disagreement between Perdita and Polixenes is transcended and resolved in the general restoration of harmony.

The last act is worth looking at in connection with Nature and Art because Shakespeare returns to the subject, this time in the sphere of the fine arts, in an attempt to resolve the paradoxical contrarieties generated out of the debate between Perdita and Polixenes. That which was lost has been found in the person of Perdita, and the two kings are reunited. All that remains is for the dead to rise as in Pericles: the "dead" Hermione is still lost to Leontes. Her improbable restoration in the statue scene has been condemned as a vulgar concession to popular taste and cited as an example of the triviality of the romance form. Such criticism quite misses the point, for it ignores the ground swell of harmony and alienation that informs the play and, even more pertinently, it neglects Shakespeare's preoccupation with Nature and Art.

Properly assessed, the "unrealistic" quality of the statue scene is beside the point. Here as elsewhere in the last romances Shakespeare's respect for "truth" lies in the intensity of his verse and in the underlying pattern of the plays. If the statue scene is improbable, it nevertheless conforms with fidelity to the cycle of alienation and harmony, and the verse of this scene possesses a rare imaginative integrity. All the crucial words of the play—summer and winter, "infancy and grace," Nature and Art, life and death—come together in the last scenes in a series of reckless paradoxes. Paulina speaks to the statue:

\[47\]

\begin{quote}
Bequeath to death your numbness, for from him
Dear life redeems you.
(V.iii.102-3)
\end{quote}

The time of Hermione's "better grace" has arrived; her stepping down from the pedestal means harmony, forgiveness, restoration, redemption.

The role played by Nature and Art in this larger resolution is perhaps obvious. Clearly a statue represents Art, and in this case the statue represents living Art, or Nature. Such distinctions were equally clear to Shakespeare, and his language shows that he also expected his audience to have in mind the traditional opposition between the terms. "We first hear of the statue from the Third Gentleman, whose description is marked by the ancient division and avails itself of the ancient analogy;

\begin{quote}
... a piece many years in doing, and now newly performed, by that rare Italian master, Julio Romano, who, had he himself eternity and could put breath into his work, would beguile
Nature of her custom, so perfectly he is her ape.
(V.ii.103-8)
\end{quote}

The artist is the ape of Nature, his imitation practiced so perfectly that he almost outdoes Nature, his final aim being naturam vincere. We have already seen the same notion in Venus and Adonis, the Rape of Lucrece, and Timon; it is the cliche of iconic poetry of the period, summed up in Cardinal Bembo's epitaph on Raphael: "Nature feared that she would be conquered while he lived, and would die when he died." It is in this tradition of friendly contest between Art and Nature that Paulina invites praise of her "statue":

\[47\]
Prepare
To see the life as lively mock'd as ever
Still sleep mock'd death,
(V.iii.18-20)

and it is in this tradition that Leontes praises it:

The fixture of her eye has motion in't,
As we are mock'd with art.
(V.iii.67-68)

Art has successfully imitated Nature, or so it seems to those who do not know that Paulina has preserved Hermione alive.

The symbolic value of the scene is clear: as with Perdita, the imitation or "mock" of Nature turns out finally to be Nature after all. What seems to be Art is in fact Nature, fulfilling Polixenes' assertion that the "art itself is nature" and confirming Perdita's belief in the supremacy of "great creating nature." The statue scene is with all its improbability a dramatic embodiment of Shakespeare's preoccupation with Nature and Art; it transcends the earlier disagreement between Perdita and Polixenes, for the opposition between Nature and Art dissolves in the pageantry of the statue's descent.

The traditional division lies at the center of *The Winter's Tale*. It is used conceptually and as an instrument of dramatic irony in the pastoral episode, and it appears symbolically as part of the total resolution of Act V. Nevertheless, Shakespeare does not seem to be as far committed to the division as Spenser. Although both poets take full advantage of the association of the literary genre with the philosophical division and although both use the pastoral as "an element in the harmonious solution of a longer story" about the court, in Shakespeare the division lacks much of the didactic immediacy it possesses in Spenser. The virtue of courtesy must be placed properly in the order of nature, and Spenser uses Nature and Art to achieve this didactic end; he is thinking with the established terms more than he is about them. Perhaps because *The Winter's Tale* is less obtrusively didactic, Shakespeare thinks about the terms more than he does with them, finding in Nature and Art opportunities for witty debate and verbal paradox; perhaps because of his lack of absolute commitment he can afford to extract from various and conflicting interpretations the full dramatic value of the philosophical division. In *The Winter's Tale* the traditional terms represent, through dramatic irony, a conceptual summation of the ethical and social interests of the play, and in the last act they form a main part of the elaborate series of paradoxes culminating in the statue scene—the pun made flesh.


**Maurice Hunt**

[In this essay, Hunt maintains that the debate in the play between art and nature is informed by a study of the ages of Leontes and Polixenes. Hunt demonstrates how age is significant in some of Shakespeare's other plays and shows that the age of Leontes and Polixenes can be determined by various references in *The Winter's Tale*. Next, Hunt focuses on the pastoral scene in the play in which Perdita presents the disguised Polixenes with the gift of flowers. She appears to see through his disguise, Hunt suggests, in that she apologizes for not having the appropriate flowers to give him (Her gift of flowers is meant to reflect the age of the gift's recipient.) The reason Perdita gives for not having flowers appropriate for late middle age is that such flowers are those which are not found in nature, but which are grafted, or artificially developed by man, and Perdita does not approve of such techniques. Hunt explains that such flowers would have represented the age of Polixenes most accurately, and states that in this sense art is needed to "mend" nature, in order to allow man to pass through the seasons of life.]
Pastoral nature in *The Winter's Tale* stresses the symbolic importance of Leontes' and Polixenes' age, while their age, in turn, illuminates the relationship between art and nature. In the pastoral scene (IV.iv), Shakespeare bases a threefold scheme of mankind's ages upon the progress of the seasons. Within this scheme, Perdita's gifts of flowers help define Polixenes' character and that of Leontes by extension. Critics have only partly understood the significance of Perdita's floral tributes, primarily because they have not calculated Leontes' and Polixenes' late age. Once this age is placed within a natural context, we can more fully appreciate the dramatic value of grafting—of art's special mending of nature. Traditionally, numerology gave schemes of mankind's seven ages their value. Plotting Polixenes' and Leontes' ages within a conventional grid of mankind's years can indicate, by contrast, Shakespeare's unorthodox design of the human lifetime.

While the use and significance of numerology can be profitably studied in such works as Spenser's "Epithalamion" and Dante's *Commedia*, they are discussed in Shakespeare's plays at great risk. Shakespeare's skepticism and the essentially non-allegorical nature of his work account, in large part, for the relative absence of numerical symbolism in his drama. Nevertheless, figures occasionally carry special meanings in his plays. In *King Lear*, for example, the repeated one hundred and zero—the cipher—do represent states of existential wholeness and nothingness. Recently, John E. Hankins has argued that Shakespeare assigned ages to certain characters—among them Juliet, Kent, Iago, and Miranda—which correspond to key years within a basic Renaissance scheme of mankind's seven ages. [Background of Shakespeare's Thought (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1978), pp. 61-67. . . . [The seven ages of man include:] 1 to 7 years, *Infantia*; 7 to 14 years, *Pueritia*; 14 to 21 years, *Adolescentia*; 21 to 28 years, *Juventus*; 28 to 49 years, *In Statu Virili* (Man's Estate); 49 to 63 years, *Senectus* (Age); 63 to 70 or 77, *Decrepita Aetas* (Decrepit Age).] Since the key years marked the passage from one of the seven ages to another, they were considered, according to Hankins, to be momentous and often turbulent and life-threatening. Thus Iago's emotional upheaval can be attributed, in small part, to his stormy journey, at age twenty-eight, from Youth (*Juventus*) to Man's Estate (*In Statu Virili*).

Whatever the case, Shakespeare often did give his characters ages which either reinforce or ironically qualify important ideas in the plays. Fourscore and upward, Lear has crawled to the natural limit fixed by the Psalmist; he can readily bid "the wind blow the earth into the sea, / Or swell the curled waters 'bove the main" ([IYI I.iii.47]), he maintains. His redemptive action—providing Orlando with the means for freedom from Oliver's bondage and accompanying him to Arden—clearly contradicts the senility of Decrepit Age, which Jaques has cynically portrayed as being "sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything" ([IIYI II.vii.163-66]). In general, Jaques' Seven Ages highlight themes in *As You Like It* in *The Winter's Tale*, Shakespeare continues to give his characters ages pertinent to motifs in the play. Understanding the relevance of art for age depends initially upon calculating Leontes' age at crucial moments in the play.

From references to the ages of different characters in *The Winter's Tale*, Leontes' approximate age can be determined. In Act I, Leontes reveals that he is twenty-three years older than his son, Mamillius:

```
Looking on the lines
Of my boy's face, methought I did recoil
Twenty-three years, and saw myself unbreech'd,
In my green velvet coat. . . .
(I.i.153-56)
```

Hence calculating Leontes' age at the beginning of the play depends upon fixing that of Mamillius. In Act V, Paulina declares that Mamillius and Florizel were born within a month of one another:

```
Had our prince
(Jewel of children) seen this hour, he had pair'd
```
Well with this lord: there was not full a month
Between their births.
(V.i.115-18)

By disclosing Florizel's age, Shakespeare makes possible the computation of Mamillius' and Leontes' years. When Florizel first enters his court late in the play, Leontes indicates the prince's present age:

Were I but twenty-one,
Your father's image is so hit in you,
His very air, that I should call you brother,
As I did him. . . .
(V.i.125-28)

In order to be Florizel's peer, Leontes must wish himself to be twenty-one; Shakespeare encourages his viewer to assume that this is the prince's present age. Florizel's and Mamillius' earlier age can be determined in the light of a remark made by Time the Chorus. Time conveniently informs the viewer that sixteen years elapse between the turmoil in Sicilia and the events dramatized in the latter half of the play (IV.i.4-7). Florizel and Mamillius thus must be roughly five years old when the young Leontes makes his compelling speech about recoiling twenty-three years to idyllic childhood. The king must be approximately twenty-eight years old when maddening jealousy overwhelms him and approximately forty-four when he penitently awaits the arrival of Florizel and his mistress.

Does Leontes' later age qualify him to be the winter king? In Sonnet 2, Shakespeare wrote:

When forty winters shall besiege thy brow,
And dig deep trenches in thy beauty's field,
Thy youth's proud livery, so gazed on now,
Will be a totter'd weed of small worth held.

In light of this poetry, the viewer may wonder what relevance Polixenes' image of ruinous age has for the two kings. When Florizel refuses to include his father in his proposed wedding party, Polixenes asks:

Is not your father grown incapable
Of reasonable affairs? is he not stupid
With age and alt'ring rheums? Can he speak? hear?
Know man from man? dispute his own estate?
Lies he not bed-rid? and again does nothing
But what he did being childish?
(IV.i.398-403)

Senility can grotesquely resemble childhood, mocking a major value of the play. In the introductory scene, childhood miraculously appears capable of remedying age. Camillo informs Archidamus that Mamillius is a gallant child; one that, indeed, physics the subject, makes old hearts fresh: they that went on crutches ere he was born desire yet their life to see him a man.

Concerning the crippled men and women, Archidamus asks, "Would they else be content to die?" Camillo replies, "Yes; if there were no other excuse why they should desire to live." And the Bohemian courtier concludes: "If the king had no son, they would desire to live on crutches till he had one" (II. 41-45). Polixenes, nevertheless, powerfully reminds us, in the quotation from Act IV, that age can be childish, challenging the
belief that the child within the man renews falling spirits. For Polixenes, however, the challenge is immaterial. Florizel's reply to his father's questions reveals that Decrept Age does not rule Polixenes:

No, good sin
He has his health, and ampler strength indeed
Than most have of his age.
(IV.iv.403-05)

Clearly, Polixenes' rage over his son's secret love does not spring from physical impotence. An inability to tolerate Time's growth and natural branching (represented here by Florizel's leaving of his father for a wife) appears to be its source. In this respect, Polixenes is Leontes' double, for the Sicilian king's madness proceeds, in one sense, from his failure to give up a boyhood friendship for his married bond. Leontes' male affection and sexual love disturbingly blend when he imagines that Polixenes and Hermione intimately unite.

Throughout *The Winter's Tale*, Polixenes and Leontes often appear to be alter egos. As boys, the two kings, according to Leontes, frisked as "twinned lambs" do; the phrase appears to cover a multitude of shared traits. Shakespeare extends the identification to cover Leontes' and Polixenes' ages. Leontes' speech about reverting to age twenty-one in order to call Florizel his brother—as he once did Polixenes—would have no meaning were the kings not roughly the same age. One can thus assume that both kings are in their mid-forties during the Bohemian episodes. Polixenes' icy rage disrupts Perdita's festival even as Leontes' wrath chills his court. Both can be spiritual, if not physical, winter kings. Their clutching to the past, heard in the refusal to give up any part of youthful experience, typifies spiritual aging. David Brailow's judgment on Prospero also applies to Leontes. "The desire to withdraw from reality, to create a golden world of his own fancy, is in itself reminiscent of the longing of the *senex* for the imagined good old days and of his failure to adapt to the ... world." Leontes' cold, leaden language, blighting festive events like his original wooing of Hermione (I.ii.101-04), flows from an "old heart"—one which requires "freshening."

While the age of forty-four or forty-five can be located within the seven-fold Renaissance scheme, the result is not illuminating. Nonetheless, the physical age of Leontes and Polixenes is symbolically meaningful, and the clue to that meaning lies in a theory of pastoral to which we now turn. Drawing upon the *Kalendar of Shepardes*, an almanac popular in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, William O. Scott has argued that the four-phase movement of the natural seasons best comments upon Leontes' and Polixenes' age and upon Perdita's gifts of flowers to the Bohemian king and to Florizel. In the *Kalendar*, the natural year represents a lifetime: February through April typifies Youth; May through July Strength; August through October Wisdom; and November through January Age. "It is easy at once to fit this scheme of the seasons and human life to some of the major characters in *The Winter's Tale*. The youthful lovers Florizel and Perdita are surrounded by flowers and spring-time, and in the winter of his life the aging Leontes is penitent." Since "Polixenes, like Leontes, is of the winter generation," Scott believes that Perdita's gift of rosemary (remembrance) and rue (penitence) is perfectly apt for the moral situation of an aging king. . . . While Polixenes' mood may be termed wintry, we have seen that neither he nor Leontes has actually entered the winter of his years.

Rather than four seasons, Perdita (and Shakespeare) mention only three—spring, summer, and winter:

Sir, the year growing ancient,
Not yet on summer's death nor on the birth
Of trembling winter, the fairest flowers o' th' season
Are our carnations and streak'd gillyvors
Which some call nature's bastards. . . .
(IV.iv.79-83)
Perdita's omission of autumn can be regarded as evidence of her fierce purity; she will have nothing to do with a season whose flowers are "bastards." Nevertheless, Shakespeare on other occasions failed to mention autumn, describing summer suddenly becoming winter.

In the above passage, Perdita presumably is referring to the autumnal equinox in late September, when day and night are of equal length. Within the astrological context, summer abruptly becomes winter as Libra replaces Virgo on or near September twenty-third. The idea was a Renaissance commonplace. George Sandys, for example, in his commentary on the tenth book of Ovid's Metamorphosis writes:

\[
\ldots \text{the Naturalists call the upper Hemisphere of the Earth, in which we inhabit, } \text{Venus}; \text{ as the lower Proserpina: Therefore they made the Goddess to weep, when the Sun retired from her to the sixe winter signes of the Zodiacke; shortning the daies, and depriving the earth of her delight and beauty: which againe he restores by his approach into Aries.} \ldots \text{So the Winter wounds, as it were, the Sunne to death, by deminishing his heate and lustre: whose losse is lamented by Venus, or the widdowed Earth, then covered with a vaile of clowds.} \ldots \text{But when the Sun retumes to the Aequator, Venus recovers her alacrity; the trees invested with leaves, and the earth with her flowrie mantle.} \ldots
\]

Sandys' fable strikingly resembles the myth of Ceres and Proserpina, which F. D. Hoeniger has found informing The Winter's Tale. More importantly, Sandys provides a contemporary context for understanding Perdita's reference to the seasons. Shakespeare portrays mankind's lifetime as a development from spring through summer directly to winter. In the light of this scheme, twenty-three is a significant number in The Winter's Tale. For example, that is the number of years that Leontes imagines himself to regress in order to find lost innocence. Twenty-three is the number of days required for Cleomenes and Dion to obtain Apollo's oracle, which sets die terms for the play's resolution (II.iii.197-98). Moreover, the Old Shepherd believes that "three-and-twenty" is the age at which youth casts off its vices (III.iii.59-67). Within the biblical span of threescore and ten years, twenty-three most precisely separates the spring from the summer of a man's or woman's life. Doubled, the age most nearly divides die summer from the winter. Nearing the age of forty-six, Leontes and Polixenes approach summer's death and the birth of trembling winter.

Understanding the place of the kings' approximate age within mankind's three seasons helps the viewer to appreciate Perdita's welcoming of her guests by giving them complimentary flowers and herbs. Polixenes and Camillo have disguised themselves in white beards in order to spy upon Florizel at the festival. Perdita thus initially gives them herbs symbolic of the December when the soul should prepare its spiritual accounts. Polixenes capitalizes upon her gift of rosemary and rue to fix his false identity:

\[
\text{Shepherdess—} \\
\text{A fair one are you— well you fit our ages} \\
\text{With flowers of winter.} \ldots
\] (IV.iv.77-79)

Perdita responds to this speech by explaining that, when the year grows ancient, carnations and gillyflowers are the fairest blossoms, and that she abhors them because they are hybrids created by the (to her mind) unnatural process of grafting. Perdita's words have an apologetic tone. She appears to be explaining why she does not have the flowers corresponding to Polixenes' actual age. In The Winter's Tale, disguises often are ineffective. For example, Perdita never does think of Florizel as "Doricles," while the Shepherd and his son, the Clown, easily see the rogue beneath Autolycus' guise as a rich courtier. Perdita subconsciously penetrates Polixenes' disguise and perceives the man of late summer beneath it. After their memorable debate about the relationship of art and nature—a debate in which the viewpoint of each speaker will be ironically qualified—Perdita again appears to apologize to Polixenes for her aversion to grafting. In this instance, her apology takes the form of a second gift of flowers:
Per. I'll not put
The dibble in earth to set one slip of them;
No more than, were I painted, I would wish
This youth should say 'twere well, and only therefore
Desire to breed by me. Here's flowers for you:
Hot lavender, mints, savory, marjoram,
The marigold, that goes to bed wi' th' sun
And with him rises, weeping: these are flowers
Of middle summer, and I think they are given
To men of middle age. Y'are very welcome.
(IV.iv.99-108)

These flowers are not given to nameless characters, presumably shepherds, attending the festival. Perdita has been addressing Polixenes and Camillo, and her gift appears in the context of her speech to them. It would be strange theater for Perdita inexplicably to break off her reply to Polixenes, quickly bestow some flowers upon anonymous bystanders, and then abruptly return to the disguised men. Camillo reacts to her words as though he had been given midsummer flowers:

    I could leave grazing, were I of your flock,
    And only live by gazing.
(IV.iv.109-10)

By giving Polixenes winter herbs and midsummer flowers, Perdita doubly emphasizes her failure to produce the natural symbols for Polixenes' true time of life. It has often been noted that Perdita, in her giving of flowers, reverses the natural course of the seasons. She progresses from winter through midsummer to spring, where she luxuriates in the daffodils and violets that she would give Florizel—if she had them. Ernest Schanzer observes that "sheepshearings in Shakespeare's day always took place around midsummer"—a time which J. H. P. Pafford fixes in late June. By giving Camillo and Polixenes flowers of midsummer, Perdita may be "consciously flattering her guests for a moment." Such flattery would stem from her belief that she has been too insistent concerning artifice, possibly offending the strangers. In any case, Perdita has only the unspectacular herbs of winter, present year-round, and the flowers of midsummer. Unaided nature cannot fulfill human wishes which transcend its rigidly fixed patterns. Neither king nor prince receives a symbolic tribute suitable for his time of life.

Art must mend nature if each age of man is to bloom fully, realizing a latent potential. Carnations and streaked gillyflowers do bloom until the first frosts; as a gift, they are wonderfully apt for reflecting Polixenes' still present virility and reminding him of it. While Polixenes' wrath might reveal a wintry moral mood, for which the rosemary and rue are appropriate, his age still reflects the year's prime and so qualifies for the beautiful hybrids. Polixenes' year—his lifetime—is growing ancient; Perdita's phrase captures a certain ripeness made possible by aging—the aging toward death. During Polixenes' and Leontes' time of life, the midsummer powers do not come as robustly or as easily as they once did. They must be grafted to an older stock.

Such a grafting occurs, for example, when Perdita's radiant beauty causes the man of September to blossom again. When Florizel learns that Polixenes has pursued him to Leontes' court, he begs his host to intercede for him:

    Beseech you, sir,
    Remember since you ow'd no more to time
    Than I do now: with thought of such affections,
    Step forth mine advocate: at your request,
My father will grant precious things as trifles.
(V.i.217-21)

Recollecting his youthful affections, Leontes replies:

Would he do so, I'd beg your precious mistress,
Which he counts but a trifle.
(V.i.222-23)

Leontes' recollection leads him to experience sensual desire. His words are not merely courteous; for a moment (but only for a moment), he covets the lovely Perdita. Shakespeare adapts the motif of incest that mars Greene's *Pandosto* and makes the concept serve an enlightened end. The artisan Apollo through his providence, his bringing together of Leontes and Perdita, is mending nature. In this case, a certain wildness, a youthful passion represented by Perdita, is being married (grafted) to an aging king—the gentle scion:

This is an art
Which does mend nature--change it rather— but
The art itself is nature.
(IV.iv.95-97)

Apollo's art thus makes possible a natural rebirth. Paulina calls attention to Leontes' efflorescence by criticizing his desire for Perdita:

Sir, my liege,
Your eye hath too much youth in 't; not a month
'Fore your queen died, she was more worth such gazes
Than what you look on now.
(V.i.223-26)

"I thought, of her, / Even as these looks I made," the king replies. By thinking of Hermione as he desires Perdita, Leontes unknowingly prepares himself for loving his soon-to-be-reborn wife. When he can fully experience his recovered love by embracing Hermione, the providential grafting—the mending of nature by art—is most wonderful. The man of latest summer who stands near the ominous pale of winter gains a *vita nuova*. As a force in *The Winter's Tale*, Time is almost Apollo's equal. Hermione's wrinkles do disturb Leontes in the statue scene, and Perdita does find herself empty-handed when she tries to reverse the inevitable course of the seasons. Reared by strong blood, Adam's heir cannot regress to a childhood state of innocence; age must be acknowledged and accommodated. Only then can the man of September become a marvelous hybrid, fully realizing the grace of his season.


**Criticism: Gender Issues**

**Peter B. Erickson**

*In the following essay, Erickson explores the emphasis in The Winter's Tale on patriarchy. Erickson traces the transformation of patriarchy in the play from a crude, tyrannical form to one in which women are treated more benevolently and valued. In this discussion, Erickson show how the father-son relationship so crucial to the transfer of patriarchal power fails when Leontes fails to nurture his son in Hermione's enforced absence. Erickson also demonstrates how several other factors—including Paulina's assertion of power over Leontes,*
and the resiliency of the brotherly bond between Leontes and Polixenes—influence the strength of the patriarchal system. By the play's end, Erickson states, Leontes has learned to view women as sanctified and deserving of his respect, but at the same time, the women lose some of their power, shifting from a threatening role to one of nurturing and reassurance.

A critical assessment of *The Winter's Tale* can benefit greatly from a focus on the particular ways that sexual politics shapes the interaction of characters. Here "sexual politics" refers to the characters' assumptions about what it means to be masculine or feminine and to the relative power that accurs to these implicit definitions of gender. Patriarchy forms one basis for the relations within the play, and the need to maintain and renew it amounts to a central motif. The dramatic action consists partly in the fashioning of a benign patriarchy—in the transition from a brutal, crude, tyrannical version to a benevolent one capable of including and valuing women. *The Winter's Tale* enacts the disruption and revival of patriarchy. The male-oriented social order undergoes a series of challenges and crises that reveal how unstable it is until it can be reestablished on a new basis.

The most obvious disturbance in male control is the abrupt manifestation of Leontes' alienation from Hermione. Hermione's visible pregnancy activates a maternal image that seems in and of itself to provoke male insecurity. Leontes' apposition, and thus connection, of "bounty" with "fertile bosom" suggests the maternal role in which he is casting his wife:

This entertainment
May a free face put on, derive a liberty
From heartiness, from bounty, fertile bosom,
And well become the agent; 't may—I grant.
(1.2.111-14)

To adapt Melanie Klein's language, what is called into a question here is the "good breast" ("fertile bosom"): the "bounty" provided by maternal "entertainment" is suddenly suspect and inherently untrustworthy. Once the "free face" of nurturance appears to be a mask falsely "put on," Leontes' belief collapses and his own facial composure disintegrates. Polixenes reports that Leontes "hath on him such a countenance / As he had lost some province and a region / Lov'd as he loves himself" (1.2.368-70). Leontes cannot even follow Camillo's advice to pretend that all is well: "Go then; and with a countenance as clear / As friendship wears at feasts, keep with Bohemia / And with your queen" (343-45). Leontes' aggressive doubt renders "friendship" and "feasts" impossible, and the image of festivity does not reappear until the pastoral scene from which Leontes is absent (4.4).

I. "Interchange of gifts": Gift Giving as a Male Institution

Even before a woman enters the picture, the play dramatizes a problem in male institutions: the opening phase (from 1.1.1 to 2.2.27, when Leontes turns in frustration to Hermione) shows a strain in the politics of male "entertainment" (1.1.8). The verbal exchange between Camillo and Archidamus (1.1), which anticipates the similar exchange (at the beginning of 1.2) between the two men they represent, reveals an uneasiness beneath the elaborate surface politeness. The tension stems from the disparity in the two kings' munificence; mutuality is threatened because the two cannot give equally. Archidamus insists, despite Camillo's efforts to dissuade him, that Bohemia cannot match Sicilia's "magnificence" (12) and that therefore "our entertainment shall shame us" (8). (The play will simply omit the awkward moment of Polixenes' reciprocating Leontes' entertainment: Leontes' visit never takes place, except insofar as Perdita ironically and surreptitiously receives Bohemia's pastoral bounty in her father's stead.) Camillo tries to remove entertainment from the realm of calculation and to view it as pure generosity and love: "You pay a great deal too dear for what's given freely" (17-18). Yet he does not succeed, as the direct exchange between Leontes and Polixenes shows.
In retrospect we note a sharp contrast between past and present circumstances. In Polixenes' paradisal version of his childhood friendship with Leontes, the two traded "innocence for innocence" (1.2.69). This mode of exchange has now been replaced by an "interchange of gifts" (1.1.28), which is expanded to "entertainment," a general display of largesse, when Polixenes' visit temporarily ends "separation of their society" (26). The defects in this form of exchange emerge at the sensitive point when the visit draws to a close. The intricacies of protocol express contentiousness as much as affection. Polixenes, echoing Archidamus, announces his inability to repay (1.2.3-9). Both giving and accepting become obligatory as Leontes' insistence on his liberality grows into an imposition. The barely suppressed tension in the situation comes out in the odd language: "We are tougher, brother, / Than you can put us to 't" (15-16); "which to hinder / Were (in your love) a whip to me; my stay, / To you a charge and trouble" (24-26). Leontes gets his way, but he also gets this "trouble." In Marcel Mauss's formulation, "charity wounds" the recipient; but Leontes' charity wounds Leontes himself.

The initial discord is a product of male interaction rather than of female intrusion. When Leontes draws his wife into this competitive situation, she expresses the preexisting mood in a playful and heightened way, speaking vividly and openly about the emotional ambivalence of the guest-host relation. Her wit is quite blunt about the coerciveness of courtesy: "Force me to keep you as a prisoner, / Not like a guest: so you shall pay your fees /When you depart, and save your thanks" (52-54). Hermione succeeds in breaking the stalemate between the two men because Polixenes is receptive to any woman who can call forth his courtly reflex gesture (56-59). "O my most sacred lady" (J7) is the automatic response to women regarded as the source from whom it is blessed to receive. Although Polixenes' response to women is inconsistent, as Hermione quickly points out (80-82), there is a familiar method in his inconsistency. While Renaissance men aspire to the ideal of the whole man, women are typically divided into opposite extremes, perfection and evil. Thus Polixenes calls Hermione "sacred" at the same time as he implies that women are "devils" (82) who spoil idealized male bonds (67-79). The logic of the play is to excise this antifeminist tendency by eliminating the negative view of woman and magnifying the positive one.

In the final scene Hermione becomes the "most sacred lady" who restores the image of "bounty" (113) that Leontes so drastically questions. The play achieves this restoration by distinguishing male and female kinds of gift giving. Male gift giving is institutionalized, though it has its "natural" source in the pastoral image portrayed by Polixenes. Female bounty, in contrast, is analogous to nature, grounded in giving birth and nurturance to infants. The three women in the play appear to function not according to the logic Mauss outlines but, rather, with the liberality that Wind attributes to the three graces (26-41, 113-21).

These two structures of giving are illustrated by the two kinds of innocence in which they originate. Polixenes asserts the pastoral innocence of his and Leontes' friendship—insulated from women: "What we chang'd / Was innocence for innocence" (1.2.68-69). Once this friendship is poisoned by Leontes' suspicion, another form of innocence emerges in connection with the birth of Perdita. Paulina sees the baby as "pure innocence" (2.2.39). Hermione defends herself by association with her daughter—"My poor prisoner, / I am innocent as you" (26-27)—and protests that her baby "is from my breast / (the innocent milk in it most innocent mouth) Hal'd out to murther" (3.2.99-101). Here is the "fertile bosom" that Leontes' delusory mistrust negates. Finally, the oracle confirms that the child is an "innocent babe" (134). The plot formula contained in the phrase "if that which is lost be not found" (134) suggests that the recovery of Perdita means recovery of the values associated with her: the mutually reinforcing innocence of the newborn and of the maternal bounty symbolized by literal nurturance ("innocent milk"). To summarize, we can say that the plot involves the hopeless corruption of the giving instituted in male entertainment, the reconstitution of the concept of entertainment through festive occasions that center on women (on Perdita in 4.4, on Paulina and Hermione in 5.3) and serve as analogues of maternal nurturance, and the eventual return of entertainment to male control.

II. The Father-Son Relation
The father-son relation is fundamental to patriarchal organization because it implies male control of
reproduction. The mother is ordinarily included only as the vehicle that bears the father's successor. Leontes expresses this view in his first response to Florizel (who will become his own heir): "Your mother was most true to wedlock, Prince, / For she did print your royal father off, / Conceiving you" (5.1.124-26). This mirroring of the father in the son provides the basis for the transmission of property, values, and the self (since the son reincarnates the father). It ensures the continuity and self-perpetuation of patriarchal order. The son is the lifeblood of the system, its source of rejuvenation: "I very well agree with you in the hopes of him; it is a gallant child; one that, indeed, physics the subject, makes old hearts fresh. They that went on crutches ere he was born desire yet their life to see him a man" (1.1.37-41).

It is of course essential that the child be male: "If the King had no son, they would desire to live on crutches till he had one" (45-46). The opening scene sets us up for the loss of Mamillius, a loss that in a negative way underscores the need that he could have filled. The political implications of Mamillius' potential are "an unspeakable comfort" (34) are drawn out when Camillo reminds Leontes that any plan of action must be judged by its consequences for Mamillius ("Even for your son's sake" [1.2.337]), when the oracle poses the threat that Leontes may "live without an heir" (3.2.135), when the lords argue that Leontes should remarry "for royalty's repair" (5.1.24-34), when Leontes himself laments that he is "issueless" (5.1.174).

The patriarchal use of the father-son relation is shown to be problematic. The equation of father and son on which patriarchal continuity depends is the very one that destroys Mamillius. Having apparently lost Hermione and Polixenes, Leontes is left with an emotional vacuum that he tries to fill by turning to Mamillius.

Mamillius becomes his new "twinn'd lamb" (1.1.67), as Leontes invokes the father-son identification enshrined in patriarchal succession and uses it to escape from the intolerable and genital present:

Looking on the lines
Of my boy's face, methoughts I did recoil
Twenty-three years, and saw myself unbreech'd
In my green velvet coat, my dagger muzzled,
Lest it should bite its master, and so prove
(As ornament oft does) too dangerous.
(1.2.153-58)

In thus sanctioning his "recoil," Leontes reverses the equation that promotes continuity: instead of the son's becoming the father, the father becomes the son, swallowing up Mamillius in the process.

Leontes' use of his son as a narcissistic reflector on whom to project his own anxieties becomes the pattern for his actions. After concluding that "I have drunk, and seen the spider" (2.1.45), Leontes immediately moves to protect Mamillius from oral contamination by separating mother and son: "Give me the boy. I am glad you did not nurse him" (56). Leontes use of Mamillius as an unacknowledged mirror image is again evident in his diagnosis of his son's disease:

To see his nobleness,
Conceiving the dishonor of his mother!
He straight declin'd, droop'd, took it deeply,
Fasten'd and fix'd the shame on't in himself,
Threw off his spirit, his appetite, his sleep,
And downright languish'd.
(2.3.12-17)
This description fits the revulsion Leontes feels on "conceiving" Hermione's "dishonor." He has opened the scene complaining of symptoms similar to those of his son, including insomnia; "Nor night, nor day, no rest" (1). He fails completely in his attempt to nurture his son. Preoccupied with himself, he cannot see that his son's "languish" and loss of "appetite" stem from maternal deprivation, which causes the boy's death.

The news of Mamillius' death punctures Leontes' delusion (3.2.146-47), as the oracle's announcement does not (140-41), because it carries the jolt of recognition based on the equation of father and son: this death hits home. Leontes' repentance continues this identification through ritual worship of the maternal dyad: "Prithee bring me / To the dead bodies of my queen and son. / One grave shall be for both" (234-36). It is out of this rejoined symbiotic unit that Leontes will recreate himself: "Once a day I'll visit / The chapel where they lie, and tears shed there / Shall be my recreation" (238-40). His acceptance of Paulina's punishment and guidance provides a living parallel to the buried image: Leontes plays the role of obedient son to mother Paulina, who dictates a period of "fasting" to compensate for the oral deprivation Leontes imposed on Mamillius (211). The play's final scene reenacts the symbiotic unity that Leontes now mourns. Because Hermione lives, Leontes can eventually take the place of the son who has been sacrificed for the father's sacrilege against maternity.

The father-son motif, with all its political implications, is repeated in the conflict between King Polixenes and Prince Florizel in act 4. Polixenes explicitly links his paternal position with Leontes' and states their common unhappiness: "Kings are no less unhappy, their issue not being gracious, than they are in losing them when they have approv'd their virtues" (4.2.26-28). As set up in the second scene of act 4, the Polixenes-Florizel conflict teasingly echoes that between Henry IV and Hal. But the two princes are drawn from the court by quite different antiworlds: Hal dallies with Falstaff in a tavern, but Florizel pursues a woman in a green world, where the Falstaff role is dispersed between the benign figures of Autolycus and Camillo.

Florizel poses a clear-cut threat to patriarchal order. Though Perdita readily acknowledges the image of the father by her expressions of fear (4.4.18-24, 35-37), Florizel is absolute in his commitment to her as against his father: "Or I'll be thine, my fair, / Or not my father's" (42-43). Florizel proves true to his word when he resolutely refuses to consult his father about his choice in marriage (392-416) and when he ultimately renounces his paternal inheritance: "From my succession wipe me, father, I / Am heir to my affection" (480-81). In rejecting his birthright, Florizel violates the principal tenet of patriarchy, loyalty to the father. As Polixenes indicates, the father "should hold some counsel / In such a business" as his son's marriage (409-10) because a father's "joy is nothing else / But fair posterity" (408-09).

In his initial rage, Polixenes disowns Florizel: "Whom son I dare not call" (418). But he quickly tempers this extreme position in order to maintain the bond with his son. He makes disinheritance conditional. A kind of patriarchal defense mechanism goes into operation to protect Polixenes' self-interest, deflected the full force of his anger from Florizel, in whom he has a great investment, to Perdita, who is both female and lower-class. By gently rejecting the either/or thinking on which Florizel's defiance of his father is based, Camillo becomes the architect who puts patriarchy back together again—a feat I examine in section 4.

III. Reversal of Sexual Roles as a Threat to Male Control
The axioms underlying patriarchal order include the hierarchy not only of father over son but also of male over female. Since patriarchy distributes power according to sexual roles, Paulina's illegitimate assertion of power upsets the system. She is automatically labeled "masculine" for usurping male prerogatives: "that audacious lady" (2.3.42) is by Leontes' definition "A mankind witch!" (68).

Leontes is equally concerned about Paulina's husband, who fails to prevent her independent stand: "He shall not rule me" (50). Like Mamillius, Antigonus is a screen on whom Leontes projects his anxieties. We should hear Leontes' accusations against Antigonus as self-accusations and self-doubts: "What? canst not rule her?" (46); "Thou dotard, thou art woman-tir'd; unroosted / By thy Dame Partlet here" (75-76); "He dreads his wife" (80). Leontes' decision not to burn the baby, his willingness to "let it live" (157), coincides with his decision to
punish Antigonus: "You that have been so tenderly officious / With Lady Margery, your midwife there, / . . .
what will you adventure / To save this brat's life?" (159-63). In the long run, Leontes himself learns to be "tenderly officious." In the short run, he assigns "adventure" to Antigonus. Leontes thus delegates his problems to Antigonus, who, like a scapegoat, takes on the suffering that Leontes would have had to go through if the play were a tragedy. "O, the sacrifice," marvel the visitors to Apollo's temple (3.1.6). In the play as a whole, Mamillius and Antigonus are sacrificed to exorcise Leontes' wrath, to propitiate [appease] the terrible mother created by Leontes' fears.

Paulina conforms to this fear by, in effect, impersonating the mother figure that haunts Leontes. In adopting Perdita's cause, Paulina becomes a foster mother, a surrogate for the imprisoned Hermione. The maternal link between Hermione and Paulina, emphasized by Paulina's carrying the baby on stage, helps to explain Leontes' extreme reaction. Paulina continues the mother-child image from which Leontes is estranged: he sees Paulina's nurturance ("I / Do come with words as medicinal as true" [36-37]) as a poison he must resist at all costs.

From the standpoint of sexual politics, the relation between mother and son is a special one not easily integrated into patriarchal order. The reversal of sexual roles to which Leontes strenuously objects in the Paulina-Antigonus relation is normal in the mother-infant bond. In theory, the husband's power over the wife contains and restrains the mother's power over the male child. But this set of checks and balances breaks down if the husband's anxiety leads him to adopt son-like postures (as I argue that Leontes does). In practice, the general patriarchal attitude is "the less said about mothers, the better." Hal is the prototype of what this attitude can achieve when it works. In the best of all possible patriarchal worlds, mothers would be unnecessary. Hence the explicit fascination with that figment of the male imagination, the man not "of woman born." This fantasy defines a supermanliness that makes other men recognize their vulnerability and admit, "[I]t hath cow'd my better part of man" (Macbeth 5.8.18). The Winter's Tale, however, insists on motherhood and therefore requires some accommodation to it.

We see the tenuous beginnings of this accommodation when, after Paulina leaves without the baby, Leontes partially relents, as if her departure had activated some area of self-restraint. First, Leontes modifies his response to Paulina, "Whom for this time we pardon" (2.3.173). Second, he changes his approach to the baby: "That thou may commend it strangely to some place / Where chance may nurse or end it" (182-83). The infant's survival is made to hinge on "nursing." Leontes' decree is a metaphor for the capriciousness of maternal nurturance; yet he no longer rules out the possibility of care. This step can thus be regarded as his tentative attempt to test the nurturance he has so precipitously denied to Mamillius and to himself. Although Shakespeare's pastoral ensures that the nature evoked as "some remote and desert place" (176) will be provident, Leontes must do penance, which takes the form of entrusting himself to the care of the woman (Paulina) whom he has previously resisted. There is even a sense in which he had always expected this outcome: "I charg'd thee that she should not come about me: / I knew she would" (43-44). Not only has he been certain that Paulina could be depended on to come after him, perhaps (like Lear) his deepest desire is to be chased and caught by "kind nursery."

IV. Brothers and Brotherhood
The two key relationships on which patriarchy depends are father-son and brother-brother. While the former is hierarchical, the latter implies equality, and therein lies its value. Patriarchy cannot rest on the father-son relation alone, because of the need for an ideal male love that can transcend hierarchy and dissolve the tensions created by hierarchy. In The Winter's Tale the principal image of brothers is found in Leontes and Polixenes, the original "best brothers" (1.2.148) who at the end can again address each other as "Dear my brother" (5.3.53). But brotherhood, under Camillo's direction, is generalized to the entire network of male relations.
As the connecting link between Leontes and Polixenes, Camillo preserves the possibility of their friendship. His mediating role is suggested in act 4, scene 2, where men's need for one another is plangently articulated, pulling Camillo in two directions. In a replaying of act 1, scene 2, Polixenes anxiously promises Camillo largesse in an effort to suspend his departure. Again a language of payment and calculation demonstrates the emotional bond: "which if I have not enough consider'd (as too much I cannot), to be more thankful to thee shall be my study, and my profit therein the heaping of friendships" (4.2.17-20). But Leontes also needs Camillo: "the penitent King, my master, hath sent for me, to whose feeling sorrows I might be some allay" (6-8). To avoid the new rupture that might result from these ardent, competing claims, Camillo waits until he can "frame" an enabling fiction that will satisfy both needs at the same time (4.4.509, 662-67). Once presented with the opportunity to devise this plan, Camillo vividly expresses his longing for Leontes: "Purchase the sight again of dear Sicilia / And that unhappy king, my master, whom / I so much thirst to see" (511-13); "in whose company / I shall re-view Sicilia, for whose sight / I have a woman's longing" (665-67; "Sicilia" here may be taken as referring to king as well as country). In the context of male ties, the oral and sex-role imagery can be spoken without embarrassment.

Camillo's resolution goes into effect immediately, mending the patriarchal breach between Polixenes and Florizel before it can get out of control and do irreversible damage. In a series of astute moves, Camillo leads Florizel to accept reconciliation with his father in fiction so that it can later occur in fact. In introducing his "advice" to Florizel (505), he has already reconnected father and son: "Well, my lord, / If you may please to think I love the King, / And through him what's nearest to him, which is / Your gracious self, embrace . . ." (520-23). Camillo presses this opening further by imagining Leontes' equation of son with father (549-50), by making the "color" of Florizel's visit that Florizel has been sent by Polixenes (555-56), and by creating a script through which Florizel internalizes Polixenes: "that he shall not perceive / But that you have your father's bosom there, / And speak his very heart" (562-64). Camillo's plan succeeds even before it is carried out, as is indicated by Florizel's manner of accepting it: "Camillo, / Preserver of my father, now of me, / The medicine of our house . . ." (585-87). This conception of one male "house" to which both father and son belong predicates the resolution that quickly follows.

The final act of The Winter's Tale is organized as a series of reconciliations, of which the Leontes-Hermione reunion— crucial as it is— is only one. As Barber emphasizes, Leontes' reconciliation with Polixenes precedes the recovery of Hermione (65-66). While the male reconciliations in the first two scenes of act 5 do not complete the play's work, they impress us with how much men achieve through male relationships. The male network is solid and copious enough not only to withstand the impact of Hermione's return but to supply replacements for Mamillius and Antigonus. Leontes' delusion has resulted in their deaths, but the principle of the identity of "brothers" within the patriarchal system generates adequate substitutes in Florizel (male heir to Leontes) and Camillo (husband for Paulina). The primary indication of the resilience of male bonds in this play is that Leontes does not have to give up his friendship with Polixenes to regain Hermione. The patriarchal context provides both a basic confidence in encountering women and a frame to contain the experience.

V. The Role of Women
Hermione, Paulina, and Perdita are strongly linked with one another. Like the three graces described by Edgar Wind, they seem to have been "unfolded" into three separate characters who can be "infolded" as the facets of a single figure. This figure is the natural bounty imaged by women's bearing and suckling children, as is made clear at the moment when Perdita is born (2.2). Having been rejected by Leontes, Hermione is forced to withdraw into what becomes a separate female society: "Beseech your Highness, / My women may be with me, for you see / My plight requires it" (2.1.116-18). An impressive female solidarity emerges as Paulina joins mother and newborn daughter as "midwife" (2.3.160). She links gender and nature, in the context of reproduction, by proclaiming: "The office becomes a woman best" (2.2.29-30) and "This child was prisoner to the womb, and is / By law and process of great Nature thence / Freed and enfranchis'd" (57-59). Perdita will instinctively express her allegiance to this female alliance in her defense of a "great creating Nature" (4.4.88).
Each of the women takes on the role of hostess, which is an extension of maternal nurturance. Hermione is "your kind hostess" (1.2.60). As "mistress o’ th’ feast," Perdita is quickly educated into the role of a maternal feeder with a never-ending supply of goods and attentiveness:

Fie, daughter, when my old wife liv'd, upon
This day she was both pander, butler, cook,
Both dame and servant; welcom'd all, serv'd all;
Would sing her song, dance her turn; now here,
At upper end o’ th’ table, now i’ th' middle . . .
(4.4.55-59)

Even Paulina, who seems least likely to assume the role, conforms to the pattern by becoming hostess in the final scene, which is held in her "poor house" (5.3.6). Of course Paulina has spectacular refreshments to offer, but they are modeled on the original image of maternal nurturance, as Leontes' expression of satisfaction suggests: "O, she's warm! / If this be magic, let it be an art / Lawful as eating" (109-11). Caring for infants is thus extrapolated to include caring for adult men. "While it is better to have men regard women as enablers than as disablers, we should note that the final harmony between men and women is based on women's acting as caretakers.

The dramatic principle of *The Winter's Tale* has often been described as a logic of transformation. This transformation is of two kinds: the miraculous change in Leontes as he relinquishes his view of women as degraded and learns to see them as sanctified and the parallel but less noticed transformation in the women as they shift from threatening to reassuring figures. While the removal of the threat permits the joyous happy ending, it also occasions a loss, since the women suffer a contraction of power.

Hermione most vividly illustrates the reductive side effects of the play's logic of transformation. In her first appearance she is vibrant, feisty, forceful, but once accused of infidelity she adopts a stance of patience and stoic passivity (2.1.106; 3.2.31). This resignation would be intolerable were it not that the accused woman is in effect split into two women: Paulina is invented to express the angry, active side of the female response to Leontes' outrage. When at last Hermione is revived, her original vitality and vivacity are not recovered. The "feminine" characteristics she incarnates at the end are not the "feminine" qualities she displayed at the outset. She is warm and wrinkled, but she is also thoroughly idealized according to her earlier self-effacing gesture: "This action I now go on / Is for my better grace" (2.1.121-22).

The constriction in Hermione's behavior is tacitly present from the beginning. Early in the play she asserts her power—"a lady's 'verily' is / As potent as a lord's" (1.2.50-51)—and exposes the pretension of Polixenes' nostalgic "boy eternal" (65). Yet ultimately her witty performance calls attention to the limits of her role. Her response to Leontes is exuberant, challenging, but also sarcastic:

What? have I twice said well? When was't before:
I prithee tell me; cram's with praise and make's
As fat as tame things. One good deed dying tongueless
Slaughters a thousand waiting upon that.
Our praises are our wages.
(1.2.90-94)

Hermione can mock and make fun of her role, but she can neither transgress nor change it. The sarcastic undertone of her wit suggests a sense of frustration, of being trapped. She provokes Leontes into naming what constrains her—the conventional utterance by which she made herself her husband's possession: "I am yours for ever" (105). When she loses Leontes' "favor," "the crown and comfort of my life" (3.2.94); she submits her case to an earlier patriarchal authority:
The Emperor of Russia was my father.
O that he were alive, and here beholding
His daughter's trial! that he did but see
The flatness of my misery, yet with eyes
Of pity, not revenge!
(3.2.119-23)

This appeal to the benign father provides a microcosm of the play's resolution: it points ahead to Leontes' conversion from vengefulness to benevolence and establishes the female commitment, not to independence, but to patriarchal power properly used.

Playing the role of dutiful daughter, Perdita continues this motif of female subordination. She readily enters into her socialization as the all-providing female; she instinctively attends to the prerogatives of paternal power; and though she touches briefly on the egalitarian implications of nature, she hesitates to confront Polixenes directly on the issue and quickly accepts the class distinctions that make her "dream" impossible (4.4.443-50). The reconciliation of father and daughter precedes that of husband and wife partially because the former provides a comfortable and stable means of recovering a positive feminine image. The father-daughter relation is clearly hierarchical and therefore less threatening to the male, as Perdita's compliant radiance confirms.

Paulina is less of an exception to the general rule of female obedience than she appears to be. Her challenge to Leontes' tyrannical authority is sharp, but it is also limited. Since her anger is in the service of the maternal function, she does not seriously violate the code for appropriate gender behavior. Despite Leontes' accusation that she is a "mankind witch" (2.3.68), she appoints herself to defend Hermione and the infant because "The office / Becomes a woman best" (2.2.29-30). Given Leontes' delusion and Hermione's repression, Paulina's assertive action is justified; moreover, she is clearly working in Leontes' best interests, as he ultimately acknowledges: "Thou canst not speak too much, I have deserv'd / All tongues to talk their bitt'rest" (3.2.215-16). Finally, her domineering role is only temporary. At the end she removes the mask of punitive and demanding mother, resuming her normal place when she accepts a second marriage, which Leontes arranges for her.

In the last scene Hermione changes from art object to particularized human being as she "descends" and "is stone no more" (5.3.99). Although this rite is important, we overstress it if we do not also perceive that she remains an icon. If Hermione is a living, directly accessible secular madonna, all the better. Because Hermione's and Leontes' respective roles as all-giving and all-worshiping are fixed, their newly won mutuality is stereotypical. The exchange comprises Hermione's conferring sustenance and forgiveness on Leontes and his conferring appreciative idealization on her. His idolatry, however, needs to be placed in its larger context of patriarchal ideology, for such worship does not prevent Leontes from resuming political control.

In good tragic form, Hermione initially suggests that Leontes can never undo the consequences of his deluded accusation: "You scarce can right me throughly, then, to say / You did mistake" (2.1.99-100). The tragic conclusion having been averted, Hermione's surrogate, Paulina, prepares to reward Leontes because he has "paid home" (5.3.4). In King Lear, the tension between accountability and forgiveness breaks in favor of the former. Cordelia's "No cause, no cause" is not permitted to withstand the ruthless working out of consequences for which Lear in large part must be held responsible. In The Winter's Tale, accountability is superseded and ultimately suspended through the mediation of women: an apparently "free" bounty prevails. Yet the commercial metaphor is still needed to describe the final transaction by which female bounty is extrapolated from the image of maternal nurturance and converted into male bounty, whose circulation is the basis of benevolent patriarchal order. In this sense, the patriarchal body politic is founded on the female body. Hermione blesses her daughter with the nurturance that she had previously been forced to withhold: "You gods, look down / And from your sacred vials pour your graces / Upon my daughter's head" (121-23). Yet the
nurturance is displaced, attributed to what we may assume to be a male-controlled heaven under the reign of Zeus or his son Apollo (both of whom are invoked by Florizel [4.4.27-31]). The moment, furthermore, is treated as an interlude that leads to patriarchal closure. In the final speech, Leontes returns to the role of dispenser of bounty and director of entertainment.

An ultimately positive attitude toward procreation is one of the main reasons for the joyous resolution of *The Winter's Tale*. In this late romance, Shakespeare achieves the genuine reconciliation of procreation and art that is missing in the Sonnets. Moreover, it is a reconciliation that favors procreation. While Shakespeare is certainly not apologetic about the artistic construct represented by the last scene, he is humble about his art. There is a sense in which he has given nature a position superior to that of art. In the final paragraph of a superbly formulated essay on transformation in the late romances, Barber sheds light on the conclusion of *The Winter's Tale* by adapting a line from *Pericles* and applying it "to the dramatist himself: 'He that beget'st her that did him beget.'" Thus one can conclude that in Hermione Shakespeare recreates and celebrates the mother who gave birth to him. I should like to return to the original line and its stress on female agency— "She that beget'st him . . ."—in order to emphasize that she also rebegs him. My view is that (though the dramatist obviously created Hermione) Shakespeare's main locus in the final scene is Leontes. Like Leontes, Shakespeare is in the position of declaring and displaying his "faith" (5.3.95). He too depends on Hermione for rebirth and rescue (for which Prospero must turn more uncertainly to the audience). In a paradoxical but not merely rhetorical sense, Shakespeare submits to his own creation and receives its bounty.

To use a phrase spoken prematurely in act 5 but resonant beyond its immediate context, Shakespeare can be seen as "forgiving himself" (5.1.6) in relation to women. What would allow him this forgiveness after such tragic knowledge is his placing himself in a different relation to his art. While the sonnets of immortality often aspire to an aesthetic realm that excludes natural forces, mastery of a more inclusive art requires relinquishing this ideal by relaxing, as it were, the artistic grip. In this new kind of art, Shakespeare aligns himself with nature and women; procreation becomes a model for an artistic process that can lead beyond tragedy. Yet it is a mistake to leap from this observation to the conclusion that Shakespeare was paying homage to women. Such an unwarranted leap is the essence of the sentimental reading of the play, but Shakespeare's tribute to women is complex and deceptive because patriarchal strictures minimize and hedge the risks attendant on his apparent openness to women. What the sentimental reading of *The Winter's Tale* overlooks is that female roles, though significant, are narrow and fixed, arranged to be consistent with the emotional needs and institutional structures of men. Men do not, through a simple identification, adopt the values of nurturance they have had to learn from women; rather, men appropriate these values as they translate them into ongoing patriarchal institutions that place limits on women, albeit in a benign and harmonious atmosphere.

VI. Conclusion

In Antony and Cleopatra, even those of us who are sympathetic to Cleopatra's "dream" of "an Emperor Antony" (5.2.76) are forced to acknowledge the reality principle—no matter how paltry we would like to consider it—that qualifies her artful suicide. While Antony and Cleopatra has to answer to the demands of both transcendence and reality, the resolution of *The Winter's Tale* appears not to be pulled in these two directions but to partake of a world made safe for the total fulfillment of transcendence. Yet, as I have argued, the concept of patriarchy helps to reveal the reality principle operating at the end of *The Winter's Tale*.

The reality principle that qualifies Antony and Cleopatra's achievement is indicated not only by the external facts of their suicides and of Caesar's power but by internal aspects of their relationship. Not everything in the relationship can be transformed. In the midst of Cleopatra's apotheosis, the maternal image that explicitly manifests itself is not what we might have expected or wished for: "Peace, peace! / Dost thou not see my baby at my breast, / That sucks the nurse asleep?" (5.2.308-10). Cleopatra's equation of baby and poisonous asp undercut the nurturant fulfillment, and the poetic atmosphere cannot wholly conceal this negation. Though the context is different, I find this evocation of the maternal breast as disturbing as the allusions by Lady Macbeth and Volumnia. The logic of transformation in Antony and Cleopatra is finally incomplete and
imperfect because the negative image of the mother-infant bond cannot be absorbed. This unassimilable residue enforces an intrinsic limit that is more significant than external circumstances in causing us to have reservations that distance us from Antony and Cleopatra. Much as we are tempted to turn Antony and Cleopatra into a late romance, Cleopatra's image of the breast foils us. At this point, Shakespeare's subsequent work appears to offer a welcome way out: we shift quickly from the conclusion of Antony and Cleopatra to that of *The Winter's Tale*. But in making this shift, I want to qualify the assurance it is usually seen as providing, the assurance that Shakespeare won through to an entirely positive image of maternal nurturance.

Cleopatra and Hermione both preside over a conclusion that consists in the woman's giving herself completely. But, while Antony and Cleopatra may give us "new heaven," *The Winter's Tale* gives us "new earth," creating a real world fully conducive to transcendence, a world in which the logic of transformation proceeds unimpeded to the total fulfillment lacking in the earlier play. The rite that Paulina arranges in the last scene of *The Winter's Tale* celebrates the nurturant life that Cleopatra in her final performance is forced to give up. In seeking the "fire and air" of an imaginary heaven and relinquishing her "other elements" "to baser life" (5.2.289-90), Cleopatra renounces what *The Winter's Tale* calls "Dear life" (5.3.103). The "Dear life" that "redeems" Hermione includes an actual family. The absent Antony and the asp, however intensely imagined as "husband" and "baby," cannot compare with Leontes and Perdita, who are present to receive Hermione's life-giving "blessing." Yet it would be incorrect to end on an exclusively optimistic note. The contrast between the two plays is not so one-sided. The gains in fulfillment in *The Winter's Tale* are achieved at a cost—the imposition of restrictive definitions of gender. To attain the climactic harmony of *The Winter's Tale*, Shakespeare retreats from the experiment in androgyny in Antony and Cleopatra and returns to a traditional conception of polarized sexual roles. The mutuality between men and women dramatized in *The Winter's Tale* is schematic compared with the vibrant (though troubled) give-and-take enacted by Antony and Cleopatra. I conclude that the contrast between the tragedies and the late romances is relative rather than absolute; the romances continue in a different form the exploration of tragic motives, and the late plays remain stubbornly problematic.


**Criticism: Leontes**

Roger J. Trienens

*In the following essay, Trienens examines Leontes's apparently sudden and unfounded jealousy in Act I, scene ii, of *The Winter's Tale*. Trienens observes that most critics view Leontes's jealousy as either a weakness in Leontes's nature, or as improbable, and a flaw in Shakespeare's construction of the play. Unsatisfied with such interpretations, Trienens highlights the problem with both views before presenting his own. Trienens argues that Leontes's jealousy does not appear suddenly, but rather is demonstrated from the play's beginning.]*

Much of the criticism of *The Winter's Tale* hinges upon the characterization of Leontes and upon his startling outburst of jealousy in Act I, scene ii. Most critics have assumed that Leontes is in a normal state of mind when this scene begins but that he suddenly becomes jealous when Hermione persuades Polixenes, the visiting king, to remain longer in Sicily. Yet this has seemed a very inadequate cause for suspicion, because Hermione, however graciously, merely obeys her husband's command. Therefore these critics have generally tried to account for his sudden jealousy in one of two ways. Either they have explained it as manifesting a weakness inherent in Leontes' nature, a weakness which makes him respond to a most trifling cause for suspicion, or else they have simply called it an improbability and hence a flaw in the dramatic construction.
Each of these views has certain drawbacks which I should like to point out before citing what I consider to be a true interpretation. Harold C. Goddard, in *The Meaning of Shakespeare*, illustrates the view that Leontes' jealousy is an inherent characteristic; for he attributes it to "emotional instability." He believes that Leontes becomes instantaneously the victim of an insane jealousy for no other reason than the trifle that his friend from boyhood . . . agrees to stay at the solicitation of Leontes' wife. Within a matter of minutes, we might almost say of seconds, he is so beside himself that he is actually questioning the paternity of his own boy and his mind has become a chaos of incoherence and sensuality. Unmotivated, his reaction has been pronounced by critic after critic, and so it is, if by motive we mean a definite rational incitement to action. But there are irrational as well as rational incitements to action, and what we have here is a sudden inundation of the conscious by the unconscious, of which the agreement of Polixenes to prolong his visit is the occasion rather than the cause.

The psychology of the unconscious here seems to mitigate the moral indictment which early critics like Coleridge frequently level against Leontes. In comparing Othello with *The Winter's Tale*, Coleridge describes Othello as a noble person who is not easily jealous, whereas he describes Leontes as an ignoble person who suffers from such faults as "grossness of conception" and "selfish vindictiveness" and who is therefore easily given to jealousy. Lady Martin expresses the same view when she writes, "Shakespeare has therefore dealt with Leontes as a man in whom the passion of jealousy is inherent; and shows it breaking out suddenly with a force that is deaf to reason, and which stimulated by an imagination tainted to the core, finds evidences in actions the most innocent. How different is such a nature's from Othello's! . . ."

For Leontes to be considered naturally jealous, as these critics imagine, certain obstacles would appear insurmountable. Leontes has been married for several years before manifesting jealousy and he has been tolerating the company of Polixenes for nine months. Surely if he were naturally jealous he would have betrayed his weakness in some manner before. Yet the opening scene, the discussion between Archidamus and Camillo, is clearly designed to put the audience in the same frame of mind as the characters in the play, who are astonished when such a man as Leontes turned out to be jealous. Shakespeare treats Leontes sympathetically, as in the talk with Mamillius, and he treats him as a noble rather than as a base character. It is true that Leontes succumbs to jealousy without the assistance of an Iago or an Iachimo; but at the close of the play, having suffered a purgatory of grief, he appears worthy of the reconciliation with Hermione.

Thus the alternate view that Leontes' sudden jealousy is simply an improbability would seem preferable. Hudson expresses this view, saying, "In the delineation of Leontes there is an abruptness of change which strikes us, at first view, as not a little a-clash with nature; we cannot well see how one state of mind grows out of another; his jealousy shoots comet-like, as something unprovided for in the general ordering of his character." In his introduction to the *New Cambridge Shakespeare* edition Quiller-Couch further emphasizes the artistic ineptitude: "In *Pandosto* (we shall use Shakespeare's names) Leontes' jealousy is made slow and by increase plausible. Shakespeare weakens the plausibility of it as well by ennobling Hermione— after his way with good women— as by huddling up jealousy in its motion so densely that it merely strikes us as frantic and— which is worse in drama— a piece of impossible improbability. This has always and rightly offended the critics. . . ."

This interpretation is reasonable, at least, since it does not contradict the most obvious facts of Leontes' characterization; yet one would naturally wish to discredit it, since it is damaging to the artistry of the play. It may seem the better of the two customary views. But fortunately both of these views may be shown to be incorrect because they are both based on a mistaken assumption; on the assumption, namely, that Leontes' jealousy rises almost instantaneously. One critic, John Dover Wilson, has contradicted this assumption in a brief note to the *New Cambridge Shakespeare* edition:
The problem of this scene is to determine at what point Leontes first becomes jealous. My own belief is that the actor who plays him should display signs of jealousy from the very onset and make it clear, as he easily may, that the business of asking Polixenes to stay longer is merely the device of jealousy seeking proof.

It is my hope in the present article to support Wilson's belief with arguments that will convince the reader of its validity.

The other critics would have us believe that Leontes is not beset with jealousy when scene ii begins and that his passion must therefore rise in the brief period between line 1 and line 108 when he expresses his feelings in an aside. Moreover some critics shorten the period still further. According to Coleridge, for example, the words "At my request he would not" (line 87) reveal the commencement of Leontes' jealous fit. Coleridge believes that even in lines 43-45,

yet, good deed, Leontes,
I love thee not a jar o' th' clock behind
What lady she her lord,

Hermione sets Leontes' allegedly inherent jealousy "in nascent action." These lines, says Coleridge, should be accompanied, "as a good actress ought to represent it, by an expression and recoil of apprehension that she had gone too far." But only Wilson has forthrightly asserted that Leontes is already experiencing jealousy at the very beginning of the scene. Now in the source of The Winter's Tale, Greene's Pandosto, the jealousy of the king is quite plausible. For in the narrative form of the story it seems natural that over a period of time he should become increasingly suspicious while he observes his queen and the visiting king enjoying each other's company. Quiller-Couch, in the passage we have read, states that in the process of dramatizing it Shakespeare rendered the story improbable. Yet it is also possible to assume that at the beginning of scene ii the action of the play is identical with that of the novel. If we can impose the novel on the play—that is, if we can read the opening of the scene as if Leontes were already jealous—then we should be able to relieve our minds of the charge that the plot is at this point faulty.

As a matter of fact, a textual analysis of the scene will confirm such a reading. Let us assume that Leontes has watched with increasing anxiety the familiarity that has grown up between Hermione and Polixenes during the latter's long visit. Why then would Leontes wish to detain Polixenes? Probably not in order to exact revenge, because his suspicion has not yet developed into a conviction. It seems more plausible that like Othello he simply cannot bear to doubt and that he is intent on ascertaining the truth, which he could not easily if Polixenes were to depart. In view of this situation it would be natural if in his attempt to detain Polixenes with a show of courtesy, Leontes failed to communicate himself with appropriate warmth. And indeed, his words seem remarkably terse and laconic in relation to the situation as it seems on the surface. In their total effect they give more the impression of blunt refusal than of courteous persuasion. Having managed to say little himself, Leontes addresses these curt words to Hermione: "Tongue-tied our Queen? Speak you." She has noticed the inappropriateness of his speech which is apparent even in the printed text and which should be quite obvious in the stage delivery. Yet she does not suspect the anxiety which affects his speech any more than, up to this point, does the audience. Nor can she suspect how her success in persuading Polixenes will unsettle his mind; but that it immediately does produce such an effect is made clear by Leontes' pointed comment, "At my request he would not." If his mind were not already given to jealousy this swift reaction would be incredible. Therefore why should we not assume that he was already jealous? If we weigh the probabilities I think we ought to conclude that Shakespeare, although not overtly revealing his jealousy before the aside, has written this scene on the premise that Leontes is jealous at its very beginning and even for some time antecedent to it.
When Leontes expresses jealousy in his aside, he does not betray the astonishment of one who has just been surprised into a passion; but instead he speaks with a careful eye for detail as he observes the behavior of Hermione and Polixenes. He has taken the event which has just passed as evidence of guilt, and he has already turned his attention towards other evidence. In fact it is a measure of the advanced stage of his suspicion that he can think in such unemotional terms about what he sees. Instead of exclaiming, "What does this mean?" or "Can it be true?" he speaks only as if he were confirmed in his suspicion: "My heart dances, but not for joy, not joy."

After the aside, Leontes succeeds for a while in concealing his jealousy from the other characters as before; but the audience gets a better measure of his passion from the conversation with his boy, Mamillius. What distinguishes scene ii, as it progresses, from any of Leontes' previous experiences is that the seeming confirmation of his doubts rapidly unbalances his mind. Further indication that his suspicions are not entirely new comes when Leontes finally discloses his jealousy to Camillo. For then he implies that it is based not only upon Hermione's success in persuading Polixenes, but upon that in conjunction with many previous observations:

Is whispering nothing?
Is leaning cheek to cheek? Is meeting noses?
Kissing with inside lip? stopping the career
Of laughter with a sigh?—a note infallible
Of breaking honesty,—horsing foot on foot?
Skulking in coiners? -wishing clocks more swift?
Hours, minutes? noon, midnight? . . .

He is accustomed to observing such appearances. Insofar as they are real (we need not accuse Hermione of serious impropriety), they certainly have not all impressed his mind within the last few minutes or even hours. And still later in the scene, when Polixenes asks Camilio how Leontes came to be jealous, Camillo does not mention the incident which merely intensified the passion. He replies,

I know not; but I am sure 'tis safer to
Avoid what's grown than question how 'tis born.

Wilson's theory, which he set forth in 1931, has not gained the support or even the attention that it deserves and critics like M. R. Ridley, E. M. W. Tillyard, G. B. Harrison, and Hardin Craig have continued to discuss Leontes' characterization along the lines of earlier criticism. On the other hand, Mark Van Doren seems to follow Wilson in his discussion of the play, especially when he states that Leontes "opens his whole mind to us" in the aside. But if he accepts Wilson's interpretation he does not assert the fact, much less give reasons for doing so. Thomas Marc Parrott is one critic who has struck out on a fresh path:

It may repay us to follow the action of the play and to observe Shakespeare's use of the tragi-comic technique of surprise and spectacle. It opens gaily with the portrayal of the old friendship or the two kings and with Hermione's playful pressure on Polixenes to defer his departure, but the first surprise comes swiftly with the revelation of her husband's jealousy. No auditor, unless aware that Shakespeare was dramatizing Greene's novel, could have expected this. The sudden unmotivated passion of Leontes has often been denounced by critics, but Shakespeare had no desire to write Othello over again. The jealousy of Leontes, unlike that of the Moor, is causeless, self-centered, and recognized by all others in the action as morbid self-delusion.
Parrott differs from critics like Quiller-Couch because in comparing the play with its source he emphasizes the surprise element instead of the supposed improbability. However, he too regards Leontes' jealousy as a "sudden unmotivated passion."

S. L. Bethell, in his book *The Winter's Tale, A Study*, has noticed Wilson's theory and attempted to refute it. His argument appears in an appendix entitled "Leontes' jealousy and his 'secret vices,'" where he also attempts to refute Wilson's other theory that Leontes himself had sinned before the opening of the play. I will not enter into this second dispute except to say that I do not believe that Leontes had led a sinful life either. But surely these two ideas are not interdependent; for as I have already argued, Shakespeare treats Leontes as a worthy character and Leontes becomes jealous because of the morbid condition of mind in which his situation has placed him. Bethell's argument is principally based on Leontes' comment after Hermione and Polixenes go into the garden:

> I am angling now,
> Though you perceive me not how I give line.
> (180-181)

He believes that if Shakespeare gives this conventional indication of Leontes' state of mind here, it is improbable that he should have used the "relatively naturalistic technique" at the beginning of the scene. But if we accept Parrott's idea that Shakespeare used a surprise technique, this argument loses its force because the same surprise cannot happen twice. Moreover, the striking presentation of Leontes' jealousy is characteristic of Shakespeare's genius—his plays are remarkable for their dramatic openings—and by developing the contrast between the general opinion of Leontes' happiness and his true state of mind Shakespeare reiterates one of his favorite themes, that appearances are deceiving.

*The Winter's Tale* is complementary with Othello in that it takes jealousy as its premise and traces its consequences for a man who avoids death, whereas the earlier play traces the inception and growth of jealousy leading up to a tragic incident. In *The Winter's Tale* Shakespeare is thus satisfied only to hint at the question of "how 'tis born." After scrutinizing the text we can picture to ourselves how Leontes first became jealous. However, we should realize that Shakespeare omits this matter in order to turn our attention to the estrangement which inevitably follows; for *The Winter's Tale* is essentially a study of estrangement and reconciliation. If jealousy is the premise of this play it does not have to rise instantaneously. Yet if Shakespeare were to have described its development dramatically he would have had to introduce matter irrelevant to his theme—as Parrott says, he would have had to write Othello over again. And if he had immediately disclosed the secret of Leontes' jealousy to the audience he could hardly have begun the play in so surprising and effective a manner.


**Michael Taylor**

*In this essay, Taylor examines the character of Leontes as an "innocent" figure. Taylor demonstrates that the play's opening scenes, in their focus on childhood innocence, prepare the audience to view Leontes "as an innocent in the worse sense." That is, Leontes is shown to be a person who fails to look at the world objectively, but instead sees reflected in the world his own dark suspicions and paranoia. After tracing Leontes's "primal innocence" throughout the play, Taylor argues that by the play's end, this primal innocence is replaced by a new and more mature type of innocence, in which both intellect and passion, nature and art, are combined. In his reference at the end of the essay to William Blake's "spiritual vision," Taylor implies that this new type of innocence may be problematic and may be, in some ways, just as dark and troublesome as the primal innocence which hampers Leontes throughout much of the play.*
Dominated by Leontes' ravings, the first act of *The Winter's Tale* appears to be the fiery prelude to a tragedy of jealous passion, the flights of Camillo and Polixenes to Bohemia at the act's end an intimation of more dismal fates to come. Polixenes can see only too clearly the reasons why Leontes' wrath will be immoderate:

This jealousy
Is for a precious creature. As she's rare,
Must it be great; and as his person's mighty,
Must it be violent; and as he does conceive
He is dishonored by a man which ever
Professed to him, why, his revenges must
In that be made more bitter.


Polixenes' logically irresistible analysis of his predicament—as much a manifestation in linguistic terms of the engaged mind as Leontes' outbursts of the crazily disengaged—contains no hint that we have left behind the tragic world of King Lear in favor of one more romantically conceived. Polixenes' prediction carries an indisputable authority. Yet the play's true status as a tragicomedy is startlingly and ingenuously revealed in the first scene of the next act when, out of the blue, Antigonus makes a judgment of Leontes' behavior to end the scene on a very different note from the one sounded so funereally by Polixenes. After Leontes has made a furious exit, following fruitless attempts to raise up everyone else to his own frenzied state, Antigonus with remarkable sangfroid [composure] confides to us that they are all more likely to be raised up "To laughter, as I take it, / If the good truth were known" (II.i.198-99).

If when the good truth is known it will produce laughter, derisive and cleansing, what will in the meantime produce violent recrimination is a bad deception; the one, for example, by which Leontes deceives himself into thinking that his wife has slept with his closest friend, Polixenes. To Leontes, the bad deception is the bad truth. Time and again he insists petulantly on the accuracy of his knowledge, on its dismal validity. His interpretation of the ways of his world has all the innocence of the recent convert to a simplistic faith, as well as the hysterical insistence. Although Camillo "cannot name the disease" (I.ii.384) he can see what a tenacious hold it has on its victim and his understandable ignorance of the cause of Leontes' behavior has been echoed not quite so understandably by generations of critics despite the background that Shakespeare provides for it.

In the play's second scene, Hermione playfully interrogates Polixenes about the time he spent as a youth with Leontes; she is especially (and ominously) intrigued by accounts of "my lord's tricks" (I.ii.61). Equally playfully, Polixenes declares that what as boys they were "trained together" (I.ii.21) in was a golden naivete, a pastoral innocence, in which

We were as twinned lambs that did frisk i' the sun,
And bleat the one at th'other. What we changed
Was innocence for innocence; we knew not
The doctrine of ill-doing, nor dreamed
That any did.

(I.ii.67-71)

Although tupping old rams have replaced frisking lambs in the landscape of Leontes' mind, he still retains the innocent ignorance of which Polixenes speaks, as though his adult incoherences were a version of his youthful, equally uncommunicative, bleating. The Arcadia of Polixenes' nostalgia seems just as unreal: a benign landscape beyond responsibility, where time, like the waves of Florizel's sea, "moves still, still so" in a perpetual renewal of delight, where "there was no more behind, / But such a day tomorrow as to-day"
It does not seem unlikely that someone who experienced his childhood in such a state of joyful ignorance should, as an adult, misinterpret his wife's generous affection for an honored guest: to be obsessively and exclusively aware of the doctrine of ill-doing as an adult might very well entail as little knowledge of human nature as to be blissfully ignorant of such a doctrine as a child.

Although the conversation between Polixenes and Hermione never quite loses its veneer of courtly gallantry, it becomes more pointedly ominous. Pursuing his joke's conclusion, Polixenes fastens the blame for the loss of their boyhood innocence on the "temptations" of the women in their lives; and while Hermione takes his jesting in good part, she makes it clear that she understands his inference perfectly well: "Of this make no conclusion, lest you say / Your queen and I are devils" (I.ii.80-91). She prolongs their courtly encounter by offering Polixenes marriage's monogamous contract as a casuistic justification for his fallen condition:

Th'offences we have made you do we'll answer,
If you first sinned with us and that with us
You did continue fault and that you slipped not
With any but with us.
(I.ii.83-86)

It is at this significant moment that Leontes, who has been silent and presumably otherwise engaged for the previous fifty lines or so, intercedes, to complete Hermione's last line of verse with the impatient enquiry, "Is he won yet?"

His intervention at this point raises the question of how much, if anything, he has overheard of the tag end of his wife's remarks. There is no indication in the text; what Leontes says next need not involve a change of mood. Most actors seize the opportunity, however, for a highly charged rendering of such flat statements as "At my request he would not" (I.ii.87), and the play's New Cambridge and New Arden editors both suggest that Leontes overhears those last especially equivocal lines of Hermione, inevitably misinterpreting them. Even in the theater then (perhaps especially in the theater) Leontes' outbreak of jealousy a few lines later comes as no real surprise, though its intensity never fails to shock. And I agree with William Matchett when he argues that it would have come as no real surprise to us even had Shakespeare not allowed Leontes the circumstantial evidence of Hermione's ambiguities, or, for that matter, our brief glimpse into that backward of time where idyllic ignorance so childishly frisked. Hermione's visibly pregnant condition, the news that Polixenes has been in Sicilia for nine months, and our awareness of the narrative conventions governing such a triangle, would surely be adequate preparation. Everything else, including the premonitory punning that Matchett discerns . . . , thickens the texture of the experience for us, and intensifies its credibility. Polixenes' nostalgic desire "To be boy eternal" (I.ii.65) performs these functions by invoking a past that has as much premonitory significance as anything spoken about the present. As Lindenbaum notes, Polixenes childishly "yearns for an existence unaffected by time's movement and provides that definition of primal innocence which implies that sexual love could be no part of man's experience in his unfallen condition." . . .

Primally innocent Leontes still manages to be. Despite the obvious power that he now wields as a king, and despite the poetry of his lamentations, he often strikes us (and members of his court, too) as a small child in hysterical bouts of contumacy against parental authority: the eternal boy at his most spiteful and petulant. Little wonder that Paulina treats him as though he were a wayward son: in her scornful view he indulges "needless heavings" (II.iii.35), "Fancies too weak for boys, too green and idle / For girls of nine" (III.ii.179-80). As the first wave of inane suspicion sweeps over him, he follows Polixenes in a sentimental evocation of himself as a child, mirrored now before him in his son, Mamillius, whose innocent presence increases his peevishness at the same time that it reminds Leontes of his former innocent self:

Looking on the lines
Of my boy's face, methoughts I did recoil
Twenty-three years, and saw myself unbreeched,  
In my green velvet coat, my dagger muzzled  
Lest it should bite its master and so prove  
As ornaments oft do, too dangerous.  
(I.ii.153-58)

Such dangerous-sounding nostalgia—the phallic dagger, the winsome "green velvet coat"—is matched by the dangerous nonsense of his concurring with Polixenes that their sons cure in them thoughts that would make thick their blood. Nothing could be further from the truth. Rather, his behavior illustrates the wisdom of Bacon's maxim that "Children sweeten labours; but they make misfortunes more bitter." Mamillius' presence intensifies Leontes' thickening thoughts, reminding him not only of his innocent youth but of his years with Mamillius' mother that he had until so recently thought just as innocent.

All this harping on childish innocence in these opening scenes prepares us to see Leontes as an innocent in the worst sense, one who "does nothing / But what he did being childish (IV.iv.394-95), who looks at the world and sees reflected there his own hysterical forebodings. All he knows about human nature he expresses in a number of vulgar truisms based upon some kind of loose, undifferentiating overview that bundles everyone together. Until his change of heart in the middle of the play Leontes never ceases to startle us with the number and intensity of his assured judgments about Polixenes and Hermione in particular and human behavior in general. Unaware of his primal condition, he speaks as though he were the Delphic Oracle he later rejects. Encountering opposition, Leontes' rage knows no restraint: he speaks a language that no one understands, is "In rebellion with himself" (I.i.358), obeys a cogitation (to use his own pedantic term), infected as though he had drunk and seen the spider (II.i.45). Throughout his excesses, the pedantic language of cogitation mingles uneasily with expressions—often unconscious—of furtive or violent sexuality. Even before he expresses—or thinks that he has reason to express—his suspicions about his wife, he speaks in such a way as to alert us to the violence and corruption within him, as in this disturbing description of the ardor of his wooing:

"Why, that was when  
Three crabbed months had soured themselves to death  
Ere I could make thee open thy white hand  
And clap thyself my love.  
(I.ii.101-04)

Later, he lingers over his accounts of his wife's suspected sexual activities as though deriving some kind of perverse pleasure from them. "To your own bents dispose you" (I.ii.178) he says to Hermione and Polixenes, revealing his own unconscious bent to be cuckolded. In his conversation with Polixenes, Camillo perfectly catches his master's voyeuristic conviction of Hermione's guilt:

He thinks, nay, with all confidence he swears,  
As he had seen't or been an instrument  
To vice you to't, that you have touched his queen  
Forbiddenly.  
(I.ii.412-15)

On the evidence of his language alone, we might agree with C. T. Neely that Leontes' primal innocence "springs from a pre-rational, pre-linguistic state of consciousness characterized by its 'indeterminacy.'" She goes on to link its source in the inchoate with other stylistic aberrations, with the play's opening scene, for instance, where representative courtiers from Bohemia and Sicilia, Archidamus and Camillo, vie with each other in compliment, their ornate, petrified language recapturing the linguistic flavor of Elizabeth's stately court, "something of a world of romance in its own right: peaceful, golden, remote, impossible." ... In their expressions of complacent satisfaction over the past and future they seem spokesmen for an era of high,
confident civility where certainties abound. Persisting in hyperbolic self-deprecation, for example, Archidamus insists on the truth of his ultramodest disclaimers: "Verily I speak it in the freedom of my knowledge": (I.ii.11-12). His mannered prose, weighed down by a Latinate vocabulary, euphuistic antitheses and elaborate breakings off, suggests constriction rather than freedom, and the fact that what he is saying amounts to a polite lie (namely, that Bohemia will be less hospitable to the Sicilians than Sicilia to the Bohemians) runs counter to his claim that he speaks in knowledge's freedom as do later events to both their convictions in the irrevocability of their kings' friendship and in the golden promise of Mamillius.

The hint of innocent worldliness in Shakespeare's depiction of Thaisa in *Pericles*, however, blossoms in the first part of *The Winter's Tale* into a full-blown portrait of the mature virtuous woman. Unlike her husband, Hermione speaks a language everyone understands, and its directness and vivacity in the play's second scene are already a world removed from Archidamus' and Camillo's tortuous elegancies in the first. Guileless, exuberant, colloquial ("We'll thwack him hence with distaffs"), varied in tone and structure, studded with exclamations and questions, her language has all the innocent fervor of Marina's spiced with the wit of Beatrice's. With A. D. Nuttall, we realize that "her language is neither naïve nor faux-naïf but is rather the achieved innocence of a good woman in a fallen world." With increasing élan [ardor], Hermione shows how an achieved innocence can afford the freedom of sexual metaphor, as distinct from Leontes' sodden obsession with it. Unlike Polixenes, as Lindenbaum notices, "she is fully willing to accept the flesh and all that some might consider the gross part of man's nature." ... So too, if only by inference, is Mamillius. Although he may resemble his father in appearance, as one egg another, he does not do so in misapprehension. Leontes continues to deceive himself when he imagines that, twenty-three years before, he was just such another boy. In Mamillius' knowledgeable banter with Hermione's ladies-in-waiting, he discloses a sophisticated awareness of the doctrine of ill-doing, if only as a background for some tart observations on cosmetic lore. Mamillius' brief appearances qualify him as one of those child sophisticates, endearingly precocious, on whom Shakespeare occasionally bestows an innocent authority, and the line stretches back through Macduff's unnamed son to Moth in Love's Labor's Lost of whom Armado says (as might well be said of Mamillius): "A most acute juvenal; voluble and free of grace!" (III.i.59). The final word on Mamillius should be given to that inveterate speaker of them, Paulina, whose epitaph on him praises his spirituality; he had, she says, "Thoughts high for one so tender" (III.ii.194).

To have and to speak high thoughts, to speak in the freedom of knowledge, to speak as Marina speaks in the brothels of Mitylene or as Imogen in Cymbeline's corrupt court, reveals an understanding of the world's vexations far superior to Leontes' sensual pedantry. "How hast thou purchased this experience?" Armado asks Moth, who replies, "By my penny of observation" (*LLL*, III.i.23-24). For the truly innocent mind, a penny's worth of observation suffices to purchase the truth about Hermione and Polixenes. Everyone who speaks out attempts to persuade Leontes how counterfeit his empirical currency; but the sterner their disapproval, as we have seen, the more indefatigable his assurance. He knows what he knows indubitably: more, he knows it as a caballist of the philosophy which calls all in doubt, and what that philosophy eschews is an older form of knowing, intuitive, empathetic—in theological terms, theosophic, an angelic knowledge vastly superior to the empirical. It is to this superior way of knowing that Paulina vainly appeals when she shows Leontes the newly born Perdita:

> We do not know  
> How he may soften at the sight o' the child.  
> The silence often of pure innocence  
> Persuades when speaking fails.  
> (II.ii.39-42)

Paulina hopes that Perdita will smile extremity out of act like the baby daughters in *Pericles* and *The Tempest*. But unlike Pericles and Prospero, Leontes is beyond the liquid persuasions of pure innocence, as he vehemently demonstrates in his rejection of its speaking likeness in the great confrontation at the heart of the
play between him and that "gracious innocent soul, / More free than he is jealous" (II.iii.29-30), his wife.

Act III, Scene ii is a scene of high drama, magnificently crafted, moving from the measured, dignified cadences of Hermione's defense to a series of sudden reversals: the Oracle's declaration of Hermione's innocence; Leontes' blasphemous rejection of it; news of Mamillius' death; Leontes' abrupt penitential transformation; the collapse of Hermione. Throughout these fluctuations of fortune, Hermione never wavers in her adherence to plain statement, to "but what comes from myself" (III.ii.24), to her belief in the divinities who shape just ends. Leontes is deaf to all her appeals, however, insisting that Hermione knows more than her words reveal, that she has a guilty knowledge of the conspiracy against him hidden behind her protestations of bewilderment. Leontes' attempt to foist onto his wife the knowledge engendered by his own barren speculations incites Hermione's important disavowal:

You speak a language that I understand not,
My life stands in the level of your dreams,
Which I'll lay down.
(III.ii.79-81)

Dream and reality have shifted places radically: the reality of Hermione's innocence has become for Leontes the dream of her guilt. His reply "Your actions are my dreams" (II.ii.81) continues the equivocal juggling begun by Hermione in her ill-concealed threat to demolish her husband's dreams. But Leontes' language has always been highly susceptible to charged ambiguity: he seems unable to prevent his words—as unruly as the minds of some of his courtiers—from acts of semantic treachery, as though in spite of himself he cannot quite master the superior, intuitive knowledge (what Antigonus calls his "silent judgment" [II.i.171]) he has of Hermione's innocence, a knowledge that Hermione knows he has if only he could reach down into himself to find it (III.ii.31-34).

As part of the pattern of ironic reversals in this scene, however, Leontes fails to speak in the freedom of knowledge even when he collapses into the clearer knowledge predicted by Hermione (II.i.96-98) and induced by the news ("mortal to the queen" as Paulina grimly observes) of Mamillius' death. Despite the horror of these events, Leontes remains astonishingly, ingenuously optimistic. "Her heart is but o'charged" (III.ii.150) he says of Hermione, and in the speech which follows he lays out an itinerary of reconciliations for himself—he will approach Polixenes, "new woo" Hermione, recall Camillo—as though it were an easy matter to reorder his world along the old innocent fines. His dream of innocence is as naive as his dream of Hermione's guilt, especially when, in outlining his sentimental program, he fails to mention the death of Mamillius, the one disaster he cannot possibly do anything about however great his belief in his conciliatory powers. Leontes will only be able to speak in the freedom of knowledge when he knows the full extent of his guilt: a knowledge provided by the scene's final dismaying revelation when Paulina bursts in again with the news of Hermione's "death," providing at the same time a suitably hyperbolic expression of the anguish the guilty person must inevitably feel (III.ii.208-12).

The second half of the play proper begins sixteen years later after a couple of remarkable bridging scenes in which Antigonus loses his life to a bear, the crew of his ship drown, Perdita is found by the Bohemian shepherds (Act III, Scene iii), and Father Time asks us not to think it criminal that so many years should pass with such indecent speed (Act IV, Scene i). With Act IV, Scene ii Shakespeare refashions the play's opening with yet another conversation in which two men talk about the possibility of a visit to the native country of one of them, followed by their discussion of the admired prince of the country in which they presently reside. Tone and circumstances have changed radically, however. In Act IV, Scene ii, despite the passing of sixteen years, Camillo and Polixenes seem to be speaking still in the aftershock of the Sicilian experience: worried men intensely aware of the tricks in the world; Camillo anxious to revisit Sicilia before he dies; Polixenes convinced that it would be a death to lose him and curiously petulant in his attempts to persuade Camillo to change his mind: "Better not to have had thee than thus to want thee" (IV.i.12-13). The confident civilities
that prefaced the Sicilian half of the play have been replaced by nervous Bohemian ones; in journeying from Sicilia to Bohemia we appear to have left behind the old innocence for a troublesome new sophistication. And although the next scene introduces a new character, Autolycus, who does much to dispel the gloom induced by talk of separation, death, and wayward sons, he can hardly be described as a harbinger of the new innocence, despite A. D. Nuttall's enthusiastic partisanship. Indeed, Autolycus' ultimate fate reads like a parody of Leontes', when he is forced to accept the new inheritance of the meek, sue for their favor and promise to mend his way of life.

With the important exception of Florizel's encounter with Polixenes, the play's moments of highest drama are all variations on confrontations between desperate men and resolute women. In Sicilia, extremity fails to respond to the women's attempts at its assuagement, as Leontes continues blindly on his destructive course, deaf equally to Paulina's admonitions and to Hermione's eloquent integrity. Such confrontations inform the play's structure, inviting deepening responses as we shift from one tense version of the basic conflict to another. The pattern persists in the second half, though there is now no question as to the women's authority; they speak in an authoritative freedom of knowledge, "with words as medicinal as true" (II.iii.37). Beginning with Antigonus' vision of Hermione who tells him what to do, continuing in more muted form in the relationship between Perdita and Florizel in the fourth act and coming to a climax with Paulina as stage manager in the fifth, the Bohemian experience establishes the sovereignty of the new innocence as interpreted and made available by its confident hierophants, with the most challenging revelation left for the magic of Paulina as High Priestess in the play's final scene.

Antigonus' vision of Hermione marks a significant change from the intensely realized humanity of Hermione's and Paulina's roles in the first half of the play to something much closer to the oracular style of the last scene where the "grave and good Paulina" (V.iii.1) leads Leontes into an ecstatic re-experiencing of his original perturbation; the sight of Hermione now, as then, "piercing to my soul" (V.iii.34), an "affliction" that, in a familiar sensual transformation, "has a taste as sweet / As any cordial comfort" (V.iii.76-77). Paulina's management of the reawakening extracts every possible tension from it; until the moment when Hermione steps down from the pedestal— and that moment is agonizingly delayed— Leontes must suffer once again with an intensity he has not known for sixteen years. Apart from the obvious theatrical benefit from the way in which Paulina ekes out those moments when Hermione is in a limbo between art and nature, neither quite statue nor quite human being, there could not be a more vivid final manifestation of female power, nor a more conclusive piece of evidence for Paulina's role as "that audacious lady!" (II.iii.42), in Leontes' words, whose "boundless tongue" (II.iii.91) and enterprising imagination have marked her as "subversive woman, truth-teller and, finally, artist, whose truth challenges Leontes' masculine order."

Truth-teller, artist, subversive woman: descriptions which shed as much light on Hermione's playful responses to Polixenes and Leontes in the play's opening scenes as on Paulina's "red-looked anger" (II.ii.34) in the second act and her magisterial aplomb in the fifth. They shed light too on the presentation of Perdita, militantly innocent as she is, questioning not only the very propriety of her own love affair with Florizel, but also unpriggishly shunning Bohemian indecencies. The rhetorical question that the Clown asks about Mopsa and Dorcas could not be asked about Perdita: "Will they wear their plackets where they should bear their faces?" (IV.iv.239-40). And Perdita responds to Camillo's courtly praises of her in the same manner as she responded to Florizel's, with the same determination to cut excess down to size in a language as robust as Hermione's (IV.iv.110-12). At times, and under stress, the note she strikes trembles on the shrewish; her rebukes for Florizel beginning with "I told you what would come of this" (IV.iv.440) come to a shrill climax:

How often have I told you 'twould be thus?  
How often said my dignity would last  
But till 'twere known!  
(IV.iv.467-69)
At times like these her tongue seems as boundless as Paulina's, used to much the same effect, persisting almost as inexorably in the freedom of its knowledge, demonstrating as so often in this play that "A lady's 'verily' is / As potent as a lord's" (Lii.50-51)

Perdita's occasional moments of vulgar dogmatism are only a minor though not insignificant instance of Shakespeare's determination to humanize his tale of wonder; to combine a "mimetic fidelity to life as we know it" with a romantic design that enables The Winter's Tale to "transcend Perides and Cymbeline and take its place among the very greatest of Shakespeare's works." Perdita's innocence is very like her mother's, as Nuttall points out: "like Hermione's, unlike Autolycus [Perdita's], is an achieved innocence. It is the fruit of high intelligence and consideration, a flower rather than the root of her personality" (p. 47). An innocence achieved, in other words, in the face of the antimasque emphasis in Bohemia on dildos, fadings, plackets, and the like; one that further resembles Hermione's in its delight in "sinless sensuality," a munificence which, for S. L. Bethell, makes Perdita "more truly representative of the age of innocence than Milton's Eve."

Shakespeare's presentation of Perdita in these terms is clearly part of the play's larger design. M. M. Mahood's essay on The Winter's Tale in Shakespeare's Wordplay talks of the importance of "recreation as re-creation," of the engaging sensuality of life in Bohemia: "According to Blake's paradox, the return of the spiritual vision by which what now seemed finite and corrupt would appear infinite and holy was to be accomplished by 'an improvement of sensual enjoyment'; and such enjoyment is felt throughout the scenes in Bohemia." It is exquisitely felt through the "cleanly wantonness," in Herrick's phrase, of Perdita's innocent enjoyment of the senses, in which she seems "a compound of Flora, as Florizel has already named her, with an Aphrodite chastened by prayer and almsgiving." Although the reference to Proserpina's rape invests what follows with a certain fragility, Perdita's is nonetheless a sparkling sensuality, essentially innocent, "life-creating . . . the antidote to her father's barrenness." No more so than when, with an unabashed fervor, she redirects Florizel's morbid witticism back to the world of natural energy where the lovers truly belong:

No, like a bank for love to lie and play on.
Not like a corse; or if, not to be buried,
But quick and in mine arms.
(IV.iv.130-32)

For Geoffrey Hill, who makes an interesting contrast between Perdita's exuberance and Imogen's pudency in Cymbeline, "the tone of Perdita's 'But quick and in mine arms' seems the real heart of innocence." The Shepherd puts it somewhat less innocently, but still well within the spirit of Perdita's freedom of knowledge:

If young Doricles
Do light upon her, she will bring him that
Which he not dreams of.
(IV.iv.178-80)

What, undreamed of, she will bring Florizel is nothing to what she will bring Leontes in her role as one of "those wonder-working heroines of Shakespeare." On her, of course, depends the triumphant outcome; first she who was lost has to be found before "the gods / Will have fulfilled their secret purposes" (V.i.35-36), and a dream of innocence made reality. The play ends in a double, linked epiphany: Perdita's restoration to Leontes and through her the friendship renewed between Leontes and Polixenes constitutes the marvel of the last scene but one (Act V, Scene ii); and this minor miracle leads to the major one of Hermione's resurrection in the final scene, the connection further underscored by the manner of Paulina's final injunction, "Turn good lady; / Our Perdita is found" (V.iii.120-21). By the time we reach Act V, Scene ii, then, where the tale of Perdita's recognition is told in suspenseful relays of gentlemen from Leontes' court, the wisdom she manifests—fruit of her achieved innocence—takes on a sacramental character. She speaks now in an oracular freedom of knowledge. The "clerk-like experienced" Camillo—himself an exponent of sanctified knowledge,
from whom in happier times Leontes frequently "departed / Thy penitent reformed" (I.ii.237-38)— has already alerted, us to the impressive quality of Perdita's intellect:

I cannot say 'tis pity
She lacks instructions, for she seems a mistress
To most that teach.
(IV.iv.574-76)

In the opening scene of the final act, the Servant's praise of her moral authority, transcending the secularity of Camillo's and transforming the superstitiousness of Polixenes', enlarges, in startling fashion, her symbolic standing:

This is a creature,
Would she begin a sect, might quench the zeal
Of all professors else, make proselytes
Of who she but bid follow.
(V.i.106-09)

Yet despite its obvious importance, we do not actually witness her effect upon her father and his court (when she and they learn who she is), and we lose as a result a "sight which was to be seen, cannot be spoken of" (V.ii.41-42) according to the Third Gentleman (appropriately enough Paulina's Steward) who has himself seen it and speaks of it for our benefit at length and hyperbolically. As many critics have pointed out, from a theatrical point of view it would be too much of a "deal of wonder" (V.ii.23-24) for us to be present at all the highly emotional restorations of relationships. Shakespeare chooses instead to concentrate upon the most excitingly theatrical one, the spectacular restoration of Hermione to Leontes. Much of what is "spoken of" in prose in Act V, Scene ii, however, looks forward to the reverent proceedings in poetry in the next and final scene. In Act V, Scene ii all three Gentlemen are in a state of hyperbolic excitement: emotion already running high, "wonder" the word on their lips, "Nothing but bonfires" the order of the day. As the self-conscious narrator of such a deal of wonder, the Third Gentleman chooses to belittle the credibility of what he has seen in order to convince his hearers of its incredible truth: a technique the reverse of Autolycus' who might be made to react in some appropriate fashion on stage to remarks as provocative as the Second Gentleman's "Such a deal of wonder is broken out within this hour that ballad-makers cannot be able to express it" (V.ii.23-25) ("cannot be able" certainly distances the possibility). All that has been told disarmingly resembles "an old tale still" (V.ii.29). Both the First and Third Gentleman emphasize the difficulty of distinguishing joy from pain in the way in which the characters respond to the news of Perdita's true status, especially in the case of Leontes whose memory of what could have been subverts his happiness in what now is, "as if that joy were now become a loss" (V.ii.49). The excessive Third Gentleman outlaments them all: "I am sure my heart wept blood" (V.ii.85).

Old tales, then, but heartrending, transfiguring ones, powerful enough to fashion extremities of emotion in grotesque, rictal attitudes, like Paulina, who "had one eye declined for the loss of her husband, another elevated that the oracle was fulfilled" (V.ii.71-72); or like Leontes and Camillo, who "seemed almost, with staring on one another, to tear the cases of their eyes. There was speech in their dumbness, language in their very gesture. They looked as they had heard of a world ransomed, or one destroyed. A notable passion of wonder appeared in them" (V.ii.11-16). Living human beings silenced by the intensity of their emotions contrast with the situation in the next scene where an apparently stone statue becomes a living human being. The difference in immediacy and significance between the Gentleman's account of the one and our own experience in the theater of the other has its comic counterpart in the difference between the miraculousness of Hermione's and Perdita's story (old tale or not) and the parodic miraculousness of Autolycus' ballads whose effect on his listeners also turns them into stone: "No hearing, no feeling, but my sir's song, and admiring the nothing of it" (IV.iv.604-05). In both situations, the essential requirement is to "awake your faith" (V.iii.95); a
credulity that Autolycus never has any difficulty in awakening as he deals with people who wear their faith so innocently on their sleeves. Yet there is a connection between the power of his art and the power of Paulina’s ("for the stone is mine" [V.iii.58]) in the final scene, where, when Hermione steps down from her pedestal, as Rosalie Colie says, "the interchange of art with nature is affirmed, as art offers human nature a chance to civilize its brutalities."

A proper assessment of this last scene needs to consider it as the climatic one of a significant series in which, as Charles Frey puts it, "a single, still woman faces curious but uncomprehending onlookers." We should not be so transported by the powerful unexpectedness of Hermione’s revival to fail to see it as the product of interlaced concerns. The dramaturgy of this last scene looks back in particular to that of the scene where Paulina confronts Leontes with his innocent baby daughter (Act II, Scene iii); it is also closely linked to another encounter between a father and a daughter, the one between Perdita and Polixenes in Act IV, Scene iv. There Polixenes' schoolmasterly insistence on the natural rightness of the human drive to tamper with the products of nature in order to better them gives an authoritative voicing to the play’s optimistic view (and a profoundly realistic one when we consider those sixteen penitential years) that the sensitive intelligence will finally prevail. It is an art, he says, "Which does mend nature—change it rather—but / The art itself is nature" (IV.iv.96-97).

"The art itself is nature" would make an attractive and cogent epigram for the significance of this final scene; cogent as much in a literal application—the statue is not man-made, not a statue at all, but a real human being—as in metaphorical applications. Nature and art here interpenetrate in vitally civilized ways. So this last scene begins—and ends—with stately civilities between Paulina, as hostess, and Leontes, as guest and supplicant. Courtesy and ceremony prevail, worlds removed from the incivilities of the second act: the king has come now to the house of his subject and mentor as an honored guest, his visit "a surplus of grace" (V.iii.7) in Paulina’s view, a "trouble" for her in his. Their courteous self-deprecation reads like a far more subdued version—decorously more subdued—of the severities of courtliness displayed by Archidamus and Camillo at the beginning of The Winter's Tale. Reads like a true ceremony of innocence, now, in fact. The "silent judgment" about which Antigonus had spoken now operates in Leontes’ mind: it is he who now possesses the superior understanding that enables him to reject the pragmatic advice of his courriers for Paulina’s harder counsel. All along, of course, she has manipulated Leontes, first by inciting him to passion with the memory of his wife and son, deliberately recalled by her, and then by calming him into sobriety with talk of kingly responsibility and the like; now the incitement to passion prevails (although he must not yet touch the statue) as she encourages him to recall his queen’s "full eyes" (V.i.53), to think of how, had she lived, he might "Have taken treasure from her lips" (V.i.54), adding, like some cruel Enobarbus, "And left them / More rich for what they yielded" (V.i.54-55).

At the sight of the statue all this cleanly wantonness wells up once again; the "greediness of affection" (V.ii.97) that the Third Gentleman described in the previous scene is now given further fervent expression. Appropriately enough, Perdita attempts to make the first contact; Leontes is "transported" and speaks of his longing for Hermione in the vocabulary of Florizel:

No settled senses of the world can match  
The pleasure of that madness.  
(V.iii.72-73)

When, at last, Paulina calls on Hermione to descend from the pedestal the scene is sensuously described and acted:

Leontes. O, she's warm!  
If this be magic, let it be an art  
Lawful as eating.
Polixenes. She embraces him.

Camillo. She hangs about his neck.

(V.iii.109-12)

The strange phrase "lawful as eating" grasps something of the mysterious authority of the conjunction between art and nature that the play dramatizes: whatever the terminology, it is difficult to resist responding to the new sense of wholeness that this last scene offers, exemplified so vividly in the person of Leontes himself who has, in James Smith's words, "been moved down to the very centre; his whole being has been changed, so that the physical and the moral now move in harmony with him." The physical and the moral have joined together; eating is now sanctioned by law: art in the sense of the deft application of learned judgment— that gentle scion—combines with natural instinct—the wildest stock—to produce the new harmony or, in Paulina's more forceful term, the "exultation" (V.iii.131) that the play finally celebrates. Like Pericles, The Winter's Tale asserts its vision of the new innocence with the utmost confidence and certainty. By the end of the play, the primal innocence in which Leontes had originally wallowed has been replaced by its superior radical counterpart—Blake's spiritual vision has returned with all the force of its mature appropriation of intellect and libido—lamb and lion are one. After The Winter's Tale, especially in The Tempest the vision is Blakean in a much more troubled sense.


**Criticism: Hermione**

David M. Bergeron

[In this essay, Bergeron studies the way in which Hermione defends herself in the trial scene of Act III of The Winter's Tale. Bergeron argues Hermione's approach is logical and honest, and "full of controlled passion." In addition to comparing Hermione's rationality and self-control to Leontes's uncontrolled passionate outbursts, Bergeron maintains that Hermione's self representation in the trial scene reflects the overall strength of her character.]

When Leontes and the others gather in the final scene of The Winter's Tale before the statue of Hermione, Paulina instructs them:

```
It is requir'd
You do awake your faith. Then all stand still:
Or—those that think it is unlawful business
I am about, let them depart. (V.iii.94-97)
```

In a moment the music sounds and the statue moves. Puzzling, perhaps, is Paulina's word "unlawful". Robert Uphaus has argued that this word is appropriate because The Winter's Tale creates much "unlawful business;" it is "Shakespeare's most defiant romance." The play continually violates our expectations. The most explicit example of defiance comes in Hermione's trial in Act III, a scene that in many ways is the obverse [counterpart] of the play's final restoration scene. The actual trial in Act III counters the trial of faith in the last scene, each producing its own special sense of wonder and the unexpected. My focus will be on Hermione's defense of herself in the trial, demonstrating how her rational approach contrasts with Leontes' passion and showing how her defense strengthens the presentation of her character. In several ways the trial foreshadows the restoration.

Generally, critics writing on The Winter's Tale have not paid much detailed attention to Hermione's trial. In an essay that explores the role of women in the play Peter Erickson in fact finds that Hermione's appearance in
the trial confirms his view that she changes from a vibrant strength, seen early in the play, to weakness: ". . . she adopts a stance of patience and stoic passivity." I will argue quite the opposite: the trial scene exhibits great strength in Hermione's character while it may also demonstrate patience. I see no evidence that she adopts the stance that Erickson suggests. What is indeed remarkable about Hermione here is how within social and legal confines she brilliantly defends herself in the trial, thereby helping us understand the great reservoir of moral courage that she possesses.

The natural outgrowth of Leontes' jealousy has been to send Hermione to prison in Act II on the, as yet unproved, assumption that she is guilty. His accusations against her in II.i.81-95 are clear but mistaken; and his precarious position is evident in his assertion: "... if I mistake / In those foundations which I build upon, / The centre is not big enough to bear / A schoolboy's top" (II.i.100-3). The centre does not hold for Leontes; in part it does not hold because Leontes is himself the center, or so he thinks, building the foundations step by step on his jealousy. Fortunately for him and the state, a sufficient vestige of orderly procedure remains so that a formal trial of Hermione can be held. As Leontes says: "... as she hath / Been publicly accus'd, so shall she have / A just and open trial" (II.iii.202-4). Such is the primary business of the first part of Act III.

Shakespeare does not include many formal trials: the trial of Antonio in The Merchant of Venice, Katherine's in Henry VIII, and the one here in The Winter's Tale. Several other trials or legal proceedings are, of course, referred to but not given dramatic life. The semblance of a trial in Measure for Measure never acquires the formal characteristics of the ones above. Portia is the star in Antonio's trial as judge figure, not the defendant; throughout she truly has the upper hand. Katherine shares some similarities with Hermione, a point noted long ago by G. Wilson Knight in The Crown of Life. But her defense is primarily an attack on Wolsey, the formal charges against her never being articulated. Katherine has ostensible legal support from the learned reverend fathers. Hermione stands alone: defendant and sole legal counsel. As she notes, she has no other defense "But what comes from myself . . ." (III.ii.25). Solitary and vulnerable, she must make the best case for herself.

The orderly and formal structure of the trial belies the chaos, irrationality, and jealousy that bring it about, perhaps Shakespeare's way of indicating that Sicilian society may be capable of redemption. In other words, to have such a trial implies that justice may yet be possible— certainly it is preferable to letting Hermione rot in jail. The odds against justice being achieved in the trial obtain so long as Leontes is the potential judge. The legalistic structure also counterpoints the mystical, transcendental oracle of Apollo that will finally determine the outcome of the trial, supplanting Leontes' judgement.

The assumption on which Hermione proceeds differs radically from that of Leontes. She observes in an "if" statement that contrasts nicely with Leontes' earlier one:

... if powers divine  
Behold our human actions (as they do),  
I doubt not then but innocence shall make  
False accusation blush, and tyranny  
Tremble at patience.  
(III.ii.28-32)

For Hermione there is a center, and it holds. Shakespeare takes the seeds that he finds in Bellaria in Greene's Pandosto and gives them full development in Hermione. What I propose to examine in some detail is Hermione's legal defense: it is studied, calculated, logical, honest, and full of controlled passion. It is also at moments spontaneous as when she responds to Leontes' outbursts or questions; but basically, I think she has thought through the issues and has some kind of structure in mind for her argument. Her defense proceeds on the basis of the ancient modes of persuasion, enunciated by Aristotle: ethical, logical, and pathetic proofs (see Aristotle Rhetoric, Book I, chapter 2). She engages not so much the subtleties of law as she practices the art of persuasion.
Leontes opens the proceedings by at least giving lip-service to the pursuit of justice:

Let us be clear'd
Of being tyrannous, since we so openly
Proceed in justice, which shall have due course,
Even to the guilt or the purgation.

(III.ii.4-7)

He believes, of course, that he is right and will be vindicated by the trial. Leontes' word "purgation," though it means "acquittal," carries also the meaning of "catharsis"—what better description of what happens in the trial scene to both Hermione and Leontes? In one sense Leontes is also on trial even as he thinks Hermione is the only guilty party. As the prisoner Hermione is brought in, Leontes commands: "Read the indictment" (11). The Officer complies in what is, I believe, the only formal statement of charges in a trial in Shakespeare. The main burden of the indictment is thus:

Hermione, queen to the worthy Leontes, king of Sicilia, thou art here accused and arraigned
of high treason, in committing adultery with Polixenes, king of Bohemia, and conspiring with
Camillo to take away the life of our sovereign lord the king, the royal husband . . .

(12-17)

In addition, she has presumably assisted in the escape of Polixenes and Camillo. Adultery and conspiracy are the fundamental charges. In contrast, Katherine in Henry VIII is not accused of either of these crimes; indeed, her main "fault" is that she has not produced a male heir. Hermione's task is somehow to answer the indictment. She cannot counter with tangible proof, so she must try to move by persuasion. Her strength grows from the knowledge that she is innocent and that "powers divine" will exonerate her.

Hermione's first argument rests on establishing the "ethos" of the speaker, that is, her moral, credible, and upright nature (recall Brutus' speech given before Antony's in Julius Caesar). She knows that it is insufficient merely to assert "not guilty," "mine integrity, / Being counted falsehood . . ." (26-27). Instead, she appeals to the common perception of her good character "... my past life / Hath been as continent, as chaste, as true, / As I am now unhappy . . ." (33-35). One notes that she does not rely on the considerable testimony about her good character spoken by others earlier in the play, like Paulina and Camillo, but seeks to make the persuasive case herself. She argues by reciting simple facts: that she is "A fellow of the royal bed," "a great king's daughter," and "The mother to a hopeful prince" (38, 39, 40). She also owns "A moiety of the throne," which makes her a political partner with Leontes. The implication is clear: she is of such stature that she must be listened to. She has, however, been left "To prate and talk for life and honour . . ." (41). Illustrating Hermione's control in logically defending herself is the skill with which she grasps the words "life" and "honour" and develops them in additional comments. Thus she contrasts sharply with the frenzy and irrationality of Leontes. Her appeal to his "conscience" rests not on his good will but rather on his recollection of how she was in his merited grace before Polixenes came to Sicilia. If she should be "one jot" beyond being totally honorable, then "harden'd be the hearts / Of all that hear me, and my near'st of kin / Cry fie upon my grave!" (52-54). The note of finality that accompanies the statement suggests that Hermione has come to the end of this particular mode of arguing, as indeed she has.

Her case, however, does not rest on the ethos of her character alone, for she moves next to logical proof, that is, to answer explicitly the charges of the indictment. Point by point she responds to the formal accusation of adultery and conspiracy. About her relationship with Polixenes, Hermione responds:

... I do confess
I lov'd him as in honour he requir'd,
With such a kind of love as might become
A lady like me ...
(62-65)

With irony Hermione notes that her expression of love to Polixenes was none other than what Leontes had himself commanded: "'Which, not to have done, I think had been in me / Both disobedience and ingratitude / To you, and toward your friend . . .' (67-69), She signals her movement to the second point of the argument: "Now, for conspiracy . . ." (71); and she begins: "I know not how it [conspiracy] tastes, though it be dish'd / For me to try how" (72-73). All she knows is that "Camillo was an honest man" (74); but why he has left the court no one knows, not even the gods. Her methodical approach to the details of the indictment underscores her attempt at logical proof and indicates a mind that has spent its time in prison sorting out the issues and preparing her defense. As we sometimes comment that Leontes is his own Iago, perhaps we can suggest that Hermione is her own Portia.

When Hermione finishes her logical proof, Leontes counters with additional accusations, unmoved by what she has said, and ironically adds: "Your actions are my dreams. / You had a bastard by Polixenes, / And I but dream'd it!" (82-84). On this illusion, of course, rests all of Leontes' jealousy, the subsequent imprisonment of Hermione, and the trial. Leontes seems to sense the conclusion of the legal proceeding, for he renders judgement on Hermione: "... as / Thy brat hath been cast out, .../... so thou / Shalt feel our justice . . ." (86-87, 89-90). The justice he has in mind is, in his own words, "no less than death" (91). But Leontes is wrong, not reckoning on the strength of Hermione nor on her determination to follow through on her final mode of argumentation: pathetic persuasion.

She begins bluntly enough: "Sir, spare your threats" (91). No longer does she need to establish her good character (ethos) or to answer the precise accusations of the formal indictment (logic); the last movement of her defense is clearly an appeal to the emotions (pathos). Even so—and this is one of the striking and remarkable things about Hermione's defense—the pathetic proof also proceeds logically, step by step. Her first point consists of enumerating the three things ("comforts" she calls them) that she has lost: "The crown and comfort of my life" (94), namely Leontes' favor; the "first fruits of my body," that is, Mamillius, from whose presence she is barred "like one infectious" (97, 98); and the "third comfort," the baby who has been taken from her breast and "Hal'd out to murder . . ." (101). One notes the control of her rhetoric: the first "comfort" contrasts with the word "lost"; the "second joy" with "infectious"; and the "third comfort" with "murder". Joining this profound sense of loss is the recognition that she has herself been "proclaim'd a strumpet" (102) "on every post" and therefore denied her rights as a mother. She makes one final point in this part of the argument: she has been given inadequate time to recuperate from child-birth; instead, she has been rushed to the trial before she has "got strength of limit" (106).

Her peroration begins with her question: "Now my liege, / Tell me what blessings I have here alive / That I should fear to die?" (106-8). She no longer values her life—"I prize it not a straw" (110), but she does treasure her honor. Seemingly aware that she has pursued her several proofs, she warns Leontes that if she is condemned "Upon surmises, all proofs sleeping else / But what your jealousies awake, I tell you / 'Tis rigour and not law" (112-14). She knows that her defense is solid, and, of course, she knows that she is innocent. But the immediate warning grows from the full understanding of how the legal proceeding should function. Her condemnation would be "unlawful business," the ultimate expression of defiance. The irony works several ways: Hermione is herself quite defiant, but the trial is wrong; the trial has the semblance of pursuing justice, but it rests on fallacious notions of Leontes. The judgment that seems inevitable would in fact mock the cause of justice. She rests her case with an emotional appeal beyond the puny, mortal understanding of Leontes: "Apollo be my judge!" (115).

The trial verdict shifts from human judgment to divine intervention by the oracle of Apollo. Leontes has deluded himself in believing that he controls the trial; but, as he will soon learn to his peril, he is subject to higher law, the presiding spirit of Apollo in this play. Only the intransigence of Leontes fails to be moved by
Hermione's persuasive legal defense; the Lords cry out for the messengers of the oracle to be summoned to court, and so they are. Cleomenes and Dion appear and are compelled to "swear upon this sword of justice" (124) that they have indeed been at Delphos and bring with them "This seal'd up Oracle, by the hand deliver'd / Of great Apollo's priest . . ." (127-28). They are the medium; Apollo is the message. Divine witness now clinches the case for Hermione and renders judgment. The Officer of the court reveals the Oracle:

Hermione is chaste; Polixenes blameless; Camillo a true subject; Leontes a jealous tyrant; his innocent babe truly begotten; and the king shall live without an heir, if that which is lost be not found.
(132-35)

Several things interest us about the Delphic oracle. First, it is both retrospective and prophetic; that is, it looks to the past and offers judgment on the characters, it imposes a stasis on the present, and it sees into the future with its riddle-like comment about Leontes' heir. In that sense it rather resembles the play itself at this moment: one large part of the action is coming to an end (past) while another strand of plot is developing (future). Further, the oracle parallels in some respects the indictment read at the beginning of Hermione's trial even to the point of naming the characters—Hermione, Polixenes, Camillo—in the same order as they appear in the indictment. It obviously responds directly to the accusations made in that indictment, the basis of which has been Hermione's presumed guilt; but the message of the oracle is clear and simple: "Hermione is chaste."

With that all of Leontes' foundations of blame crumble. Though revealed by Apollo, the oracle sounds very much like the report of the jury at a trial's end; it systematically and concisely answers the charges made or implicit in Hermione's trial.

Little could Leontes know in Act II, scene i when he dispatched the messengers to Delphos that they would return with a judgment exonerating Hermione and condemning him, the logical conclusion of her trial.

Indeed, Leontes' reason for seeking word from Apollo is to satisfy others, as he says: "Though I am satisfied, and need no more / Than what I know, yet shall the Oracle / Give rest to th' minds of others . . ." (II.i.189-91). In Pandosto it is Bellaria who initiates the mission to Apollo, making the request on her knees before Pandosto. For Bellaria the Apollo appeal is one last effort to exonerate herself, but for Leontes it will merely confirm, so he thinks, what he already knows. The tone in Pandosto and in The Winter's Tale is strikingly different. Shakespeare has set the oracle matter in motion in order to bring the message in at the conclusion of Hermione's defense and not before. Leontes learns at the end of Act II that Cleomenes and Dion, the Delphic messengers, are back in the country (II.iii.192-96); but there is no necessary expectation that they will arrive and participate in the trial. Shakespeare delays their arrival so that it may coincide with the end of the trial; thus Apollo's message judges the trial itself as well as the character of the persons involved.

The "courtroom" response to the oracle's verdict reveals joy for some but continuing obstinace on the part of Leontes. At Leontes' order the Officer reads Apollo's verdict; but Leontes responds with an ambiguous question to the Officer: "Hast thou read truth?" (138). The Officer answers that he has read the document exactly "As it is here set down." But Leontes cries out: "There is no truth at all i' th' Oracle: / The sessions shall proceed: this is mere falsehood" (140-41). The reaction contrasts sharply with the comment of the Lords— "Now blessed be the great Apollo!" (136)— and with Hermione's simple but joyous "Praised!" (136). One might note in passing that this is Hermione's final word until her restoration in V.iii. Neither persuaded by Hermione's proofs nor moved by Apollo's oracle, Leontes lashes out in a desperate attempt to assert his will and control in the trial; he is now the defiant one. Obviously he has lost; and if he will not be sensitive to Hermione's defense nor to the will of the gods, then the dramatist offers one last convincing blow: the news that his son is dead. With lightning-fast conversion—resembling the speed with which Leontes initially expressed his jealousy—Leontes changes; "Apollo's angry, and the heavens themselves / Do strike at my injustice" (146-47).
Having lost in the trial and having lost his son and presumably Hermione as well, Leontes begins the painful process of finding himself, stripped of his pride and groundless jealousy. As Hermione's sins have been enumerated in the formal statement of the indictment, so Leontes' are rehearsed by Paulina at the end of the scene. (11. 175ff). She becomes his accuser and judge; thus, the trial continues, but of Leontes, not of Hermione. As Hermione has presumably died, Leontes withers into remorse, abetted by the knowledge of his guilt and the lashing tongue of Paulina. Defiance seems now to have had its day. Humbled and chastened, Leontes promises at the end of III.ii to visit the chapel where Mamillius and Hermione will lie, "and tears shed there / Shall be my recreation" (239-40). Time and again Leontes resembles figures from Greek tragedy— I think especially of Creon in Sophocles' Antigone whom the gods break across their superior power and will.

Antigone differs from Hermione, of course, because she knowingly and willfully breaks the law of Creon. But the defense of her action rests on the awareness that spiritual laws take precedence over man-made laws, and she buries her brother in accordance with the will of the gods. Hermione, too, is sensitive to those "powers divine" operating in her world; by such power she presents her impressive legal defense. She has for the moment seemingly won the battle but lost the war. The dramatist will, however, eventually show her triumphant in her restoration in the play's final scene.

Why the trial scene in The Winter's Tale? It establishes in compelling terms the strength of Hermione's character and by contrast the paltry insufficiency of Leontes'. It is the most extensive examination of Hermione in the play—nowhere else does she have such a scene. If what I have suggested is valid, namely that Hermione's legal defense is systematic and controlled, then we understand the rationality that dominates her character in contrast to Leontes'. Under the most extreme circumstances she thinks coolly, logically. Paradoxically, in Hermione's defiance is her rationality, and in her rationality is her defiance. Her control defies Leontes' passion; and by asserting herself in the trial, she strikes a blow for justice and logical proceeding. Leontes, on the other hand, defies the system of justice with his groundless accusations, and he defies the gods by insisting on his will— all prompted by passion, not logic. Leontes is left with unlawful business.

The trial scene is a concrete, explicit example of the several trials in the play as it is also the most developed. One thinks, for example, of the quasi-trial of Florizel by Polixenes in Act IV, scene iv, the sheep-shearing scene, where the father's judgment falls harshly on his insolent son. The confrontation between father and son begins with Polixenes' question: "Have you a father?" (IV.iv.393), to which an impertinent Florizel answers: "I have: but what of him?" Having tested his son, Polixenes, resembling the earlier irate Leontes, removes his disguise and renders a verdict of punishment: ". . . we'll bar thee from succession; / Not hold thee of our blood, no, not our kin . . ." (430-31). Somehow the play must also resolve the profound consequences of this "trial." On the metaphorical level we can see much of the play as the "trial" of Leontes. The legal form of the actual trial helps, I think, our perception of this metaphor.

The trial also assists the oracle's credibility by its coming as an explicit response to and judgment on the trial. Having witnessed the trial and heard Hermione's persuasive defense, we can readily see the necessity of the intervention of the gods in order to achieve justice. This intervention is not the spectacle of the vision of Diana in Pericles nor the magical descent of Jupiter in Cymbeline; rather it is a report from the god Apollo functioning like a jury— no less wondrous than the others but nicely tied to immediate human problems. The trial makes possible this orderly intervention of Apollo, and the oracle in turn ratifies the trial, confirming its procedure and rendering judgment. The trial needs Apollo, and the oracle needs the trial.

This legal proceeding also throws into high relief the social, political, legal, and emotional conflict between Leontes and Hermione. The orderly, objective form of the trial assists in the audience's judgment as well, underscoring our belief in Hermione and dismay at Leontes. What we are unprepared for is the consequence of the trial—Mamillius' actual and Hermione's apparent death. Defying or upsetting our expectations is at the heart of the dramatic strategy of III.iii in which Antigonus is destroyed and, of course, at the center of the
play's final scene. The defiant, "unlawful" nature of the trial foreshadows the restoration scene. The intervention of Apollo produces wonder akin to if different from the wonder evoked in the final scene.

Not only may the trial foreshadow the last scene, but the restoration also fulfills the trial. Paulina, the singing master of the souls of Leontes and Hermione, has imprisoned them both, separately of course: Hermione, hidden away somewhere for sixteen years, and Leontes, incarcerated in a process of penance and renewal and a vow not to remarry without Paulina's approval. In a sense Paulina has usurped the position of Apollo, her own brand of defiance. The trial has imposed a sentence on both Leontes and Hermione; this sentence is revoked, fulfilled, overcome, commuted, and transmuted in the play's final scene. The reunions of husband and wife and of mother and daughter supplant the deaths in the trial. Defiance is now more artistic than personal. The statue of Hermione defies the laws of nature by its art (Leontes is puzzled why the statue should have such wrinkles) even as its nature defies art. Submission and forgiveness characterize the tone and action of the scene, demonstrating again how this scene is the obverse of the trial.

The gods judge Leontes in that last scene, accept his penance, and restore Hermione to him. Hermione's gracious acceptance of Leontes ratifies the judgment of the scene: Leontes has been on trial and it is now ended. The earlier trial scene mocked justice; the last scene mocks with art. When Hermione begins to move, Leontes cries out: "If this be magic, let it be an art / Lawful as eating" (V.iii.110-11). The "unlawful business" of the trial and the "unlawful" nature of the restoration parallel and reflect on one another. In the trial scene and in the restoration— indeed throughout the play— we are forever meeting when we least expect "with things dying" and "with things new-born" (III.iii.112-13).


Criticism: Paulina

Joan Hartwig

[In the excerpt that follows, Hartwig examines the role of Paulina in the play. Hartwig argues that through the character of Paulina and her relationship to Leontes, the audience's perception of Leontes is favorably adjusted. Leontes's jealousy, Hartwig explains, is "completely self-inflicted," and it would be easy for the audience to immediately condemn him. However, Shakespeare places Paulina and Leontes in the stock character roles of "shrew" and "tyrant." Hartwig suggests that the comic nature of these roles, together with the sympathy created for Leontes by seeing him as the victim of Paulina-the-shrew, enable the audience to suspend its judgement of Leontes.]

In The Winter's Tale, Leontes, confronted with the breathing statue which is Hermione, pleads to keep this moment which is penultimate to actual discovery. Paulina, aware of the intensity with which Leontes has responded to the apparent statue of Hermione, offers to draw the curtain.

Paul. I'll draw the curtain:
My lord's almost so far transported that
He'll think anon it lives.
Leon. O sweet Paulina,
Make me to think so twenty years together!
No settled senses of the world can match
The pleasure of that madness. Let't alone.
(V.iii.68-73)
Joy occurs before the factual affirmation that the world of hope and dreams coincides with the world of real experience: it occurs when the character perceives, with all his logic and rationality suspended, a tragicomic vision in which the limits of human possibility have exploded—effects no longer depend upon human causes alone.

Before Leontes can enjoy "the pleasure of that madness" which the tragicomic recognition creates, however, he must undergo the painful process of emotional growth. Like Posthumus in Cymbeline, Leontes achieves an inner worthiness to match his outward show only after he has endured the most difficult of adversities. Both men believe themselves responsible for the deaths of their wives because of their uncontrolled jealousy. Painful though his acknowledgment of guilt is, each accepts the responsibility for his own action, and each attempts to requite his sin by enduring—keeping his spirit alert to its own pride and acting with generosity. Leontes' penance is sixteen years longer than Posthumus', but Leontes has the added reward of a daughter's forgiveness and immediate evidence that his renewed world will continue in harmony with the next generation. Another difference is that Leontes' jealousy is completely self-inflicted; he has no qualifier of his guilt as Posthumus has in Iachimo. By omitting an outside prompter to absorb censure, Shakespeare created a different dramatic problem: How can Leontes be protected from immediate condemnation by the audience?

One of the ways in which Shakespeare meets this problem is through the character of Paulina. She and Leontes characterize each other throughout the play. Paulina plays the shrew to Leontes' tyrant in the first half of the play; in the last half, she plays confessor to Leontes' humble penitent. There are other roles through which they engage each other's nature in defining actions, but these four are primary and they control the other subsidiary roles.

Paulina's assumption of the shrewish role begins with her first appearance, which follows Leontes' public accusation of Hermione as an adulteress. Paulina's first lines to the Gaoler, under whose surveillance Hermione is imprisoned, are courtly enough; but when the Gaoler refuses to admit her to Hermione, Paulina reveals the shortness of her patience and the power of her lashing tongue (II.ii.9-12). Paulina's descent from "gentle lady" to a tough-tongued woman who calls herself "gentle" is an appropriate change for the circumstances of Leontes' court, where gentle forms have been cast aside already as a meaningful measure of gentility: Hermione's charm and graceful actions as hostess to Polixenes have been seen by the king as deceitful displays of vulgarity and lust. Although Leontes' vision is distorted by his heated imagination, he remains the source for whatever values "form" may have in his kingdom. Paulina's biting question "Is 't lawful, pray you, / To see her women? any of them? Emilia?" begins with the recognition that law has become a slippery term, and, in its questioning descent from "women," to "any of them," to "Emilia," it reflects how much and how swiftly the "laws" of courtesy have vanished in Leontes' court. Paulina, therefore, immediately casts herself into the role of shrew, the "scolding tongue" of moral conscience in this case rather than of self-indulgent discontent. She clothes herself in the role, verbally, when Emilia informs her of the premature birth of Hermione's baby girl.

I dare be sworn:
These dangerous, unsafe lunes i' th' king, beshrew them!
He must be told on't, and he shall: the office
Becomes a woman best. I'll take 't upon me:
If I prove honey mouth'd, let my tongue blister,
And never to my red-look'd anger be
The trumpet any more.
(II.ii.29-35)

Paulina's conscious assumption of her role balances Leontes' awareness of his own role-playing in his semicomic, ominous announcement:
Go, play, boy, play; thy mother plays, and I
Play too; but so disgrac'd a part, whose issue
Will hiss me to my grave: contempt and clamour
Will be my knell. Go, play, boy, play. There have been,
(Or I am much deceiv'd) cuckolds ere now,
And many a man there is (even at this present,
Now, while I speak this) holds his wife by th' arm,
That little thinks she has been sluic'd in 's absence
And his pond fish'd by his next neighbour, by
Sir Smile, his neighbour: nay, there's comfort in't,
Whiles other men have gates, and those gates open'd,
As mine, against their will. Should all despair
That have revolted wives, the tenth of mankind
Would hang themselves.
(I.ii.187-200)

In both of these announcements of their roles, there is a comic element as well as a serious threat. Leontes’ speech follows the departure of Hermione and Polixenes and climaxes his growing sense of the reality of his presumed position as cuckold. At such a moment when he sees his suspicions harden into action—the touching of hands between Hermione and Polixenes—when his suspicions seem most credible, he speaks of reality as a staged world in which the actors are playing conscious roles. One psychological comfort he gains from such an effort is the sense that something larger than human choice controls each man’s ability to achieve his own identity. The staged play, playing parts, implies an external controller, and being a cuckold depends more on being cast to play the part than upon a deficiency in the individual’s will or personality. The responsibility of action and of consequences to action, therefore, Leontes relegates outside himself. Such distance provides the possibility of lessening actual pain because it removes the situation from the world of humanly controlled action and consequence and becomes an unavoidable set of circumstances. Thus, at the point where Leontes’ pain in recognizing what he considers to be reality becomes greater than he can bear, he shifts his vision of it to a stage artifice which protects him from the intensity of total involvement. He attempts to achieve for himself the same double sense of commitment to real experience and of safety from real threat which every theater audience knows. At the same moment that he achieves such distance for himself, he taunts the audience with the duplicity of its position.

There have been,
(Or I am much deceiv'd) cuckolds ere now,
And many a man there is (even at this present,
Now, while I speak this) holds his wife by th' arm,
That little thinks she has been sluic’d in ’s absence.
(I.ii.190-94)

Leontes moves from a character in the play, involved in the reality of his own situation; to a perspective like the audience’s, from which he surveys his role in the play; to a point beyond the audience, from which he can show them what they themselves are doing. These changes in points of view are immense, and the dramatic effects they produce are complex. As any man in the audience turns to look at the woman beside him, he realizes simultaneously that the situation is improbable but that it is altogether possible in human terms. In recognizing how possible Leontes’ position as cuckold is, the audience forgets for the moment that his position as cuckold is the result of his infected fancy. There is just enough truth in his generalization for the audience to see that underneath his variously harsh and tyrannical attitudes, there exists (at least at given moments) a cool and rational perception of everyday realities. The surprise of the switch to the audience’s personal knowledge of his situation causes laughter—the laughter of recognition that indeed this stage play is not so far-fetched as it might have seemed, or perhaps that life is not so far removed from art as it might seem.
And the laughter dispels some of the horror the audience must feel at the extremities of Leontes' assumptions and the cruelties of his actions. When he says "there's comfort in't" to know that other men have experienced what he sees his own situation to be, we agree. Human frailty and the sense of humor which alone seems capable of assimilating the results of human frailty are things we know about and respect. Leontes' speech thus wins by its comic recognitions what it loses by its harsh, potentially tragic threats: the audience's sympathy. Emotional response is thereby held in a contradictory balance which forces a suspension of judgment despite Leontes' condemnable actions.

Like Leontes', Paulina's announcement of her role as shrew has comic effects as well as serious implications. "When she swears to use her trumpet-tongue to tell Leontes of the danger of his delusions, she implies that she is at home in such a role: If I speak sweetly, she says, then let my tongue fail to serve me "any more." The announcement of role-playing has its heroic as well as its comic heritage, but Paulina's dependence on her tongue to control situations insists on the audience's recognition of her as a shrew figure. In assuring Emilia that she will do her utmost to bring about a successful outcome of her interview with Leontes, she says:

Tell her, Emilia,
I'll use that tongue I have.
(II.ii.51-52)

In her interview with Leontes (II.iii), Paulina is continually characterized by his comments as a shrew, and the comic effects of this scene rely on the oldest formulas of farce. While Paulina berates him, Leontes narrows her characterization by pointing up the comic role she is enacting. The scene of the scolding shrew berating (unjustly in the formula) a poor, exhausted man is so stock that the alteration of values in this scene cannot altogether alter the evocation of sympathy for Leontes. Paulina, in defense of Hermione's goodness and the child's innocence, speaks on the side of moral right and justice, while Leontes, defending his investment in the delusion he has constructed as reality, insists on moral wrong and injustice. Yet the roles which they play as stock characters—the shrew and her weary victim-modify the force of the moral values they are enacting.

Leontes greets Paulina's entrance with both immediate anger and ironic patience:

How!
Away with that audacious lady! Antigonus,
I charg'd thee that she should not come about me.
I knew she would.
(II.iii.41-44)

This formulaic response to a stock situation creates an amusing and ironic distance between Leontes and the trial he is undergoing. The scene begins by establishing itself as a comic routine and it continues to follow the pattern. Antigonus protests that he tried to stop her with threats of Leontes' displeasure and his own, but obviously with no effect. Leontes' sarcastic response insures Paulina's shrewish characterization: "What! canst not rule her?" In her response, she agrees to the role: "... in this— . . . trust it, / He shall not rule me" (47, 49-50). Throughout the scene Leontes counters Paulina's accusations with accusations about her role as shrew, each time increasing the farcical effect and displacing his formulaically sympathetic position in the comic routine.

Thou dotard! thou art woman-tir'd, unroosted
By thy dame Partlet here.
(II.iii.74-75)

He dreads his wife.
(79)
A callat
Of boundless tongue, who late hath beat her husband,
And now baits me!
(90-92)

A gross hag!
And, lozel, thou art worthy to be hang'd,
That wilt not stay her tongue.
(107-109)

Leontes' chief means of projecting Paulina's image is, of course, through reference to her husband, Antigonus. Leontes works upon Antigonus' sense of pride and manly dignity in order to force him to banish Paulina, but Antigonus reacts with equanimity. He answers the accusation that he cannot stay his wife's tongue with a comic appeal to the universality of his situation.

Hang all the husbands
That cannot do that feat, you'll leave yourself
Hardly one subject.
(II.iii.109-11)

Antigonus' joke echoes Leontes' earlier remark that a tenth of mankind might hang themselves for cuckolds (I.ii.200), and it has the same effect of comic displacement in a tragically threatening situation.

The stock situation diametrically opposes the narrative situation, and the complexity of emotional responses produced by the opposition is significant in several ways. It is necessary to achieve some sympathy for Leontes in order to prepare him a place in the comic resolution of the play; his guilty action must be capable of redemption. He is a self-crossed figure and the soliloquy which precedes Paulina's entrance reveals him pathetically caught in the consequences of his own erroneous action. His torment, although it causes him to contemplate the further horror of murdering Hermione to ease his pain, does for a brief moment evoke pity. Paulina's entrance at such a moment, when Leontes is most distracted by news of his son's illness and by paranoiac thoughts of having become a joke to Camillo and Polixenes, increases the possibility of compassion for Leontes. Verbal flagellation at such a time could hardly be accepted by anyone. Yet the comic distance achieved through establishing the characters in their stock positions— Paulina as a shrew, Antigonus as her hen-pecked and ineffectual husband, and Leontes as the long-suffering victim of her tongue—works both to remove Paulina from a wholly commendable position and also to dispel the pathos of Leontes' grappling with his sorrow.

Without the qualification of the stock characterization, the audience would naturally respond favorably toward the moral justice of Paulina's position and it would as unreservedly admire her honesty and psychological insights into Leontes' self-delusions. Consistently, the audience would readily condemn Leontes for his jealousy and violence toward the gentle Hermione. Yet Shakespeare has offset these natural propensities by his use of stock comic characterization. The conflict between moral evaluation and emotional sympathy requires a hesitation of commitment on the part of the audience, and the conflict delays judgment until the revelation of Apollo's oracle, which is the climax of emotional tension in the first part of the play.

After the revelation of Apollo's oracle and Hermione's apparent death, Leontes' reliance upon Paulina is in one sense a replacement or compensation for the loyalty he had owed Hermione and which he had held from her. Immediately after the announcement of Mamillius' death, Hermione faints, and Paulina collects the overcharged and scattered emotional atmosphere into a single awesome focus:
This news is mortal to the queen: look down
And see what death is doing.
(III.ii.148-49)

Her directive becomes the "still center" of the scene and, in a larger view, of the entire action of the play. The final resurrection of Hermione depends upon the conviction that Paulina's interpretation of Hermione's swoon carries. Leontes tries to modify the fatality of Paulina's reading—"Her heart is but o'ercharged: she will recover"—but Paulina's calm and direct evaluation cannot be so easily resisted. In her two powerful lines, Paulina has changed her position from subject of Leontes to ruler. But even as she moves into her new role in relationship to Leontes, her harshness absorbs the censurable effects of his guilty action. While she is gone to attend Hermione, Leontes admits his sin and begins to plan how he will amend it (155-56). Paulina rushes back and for twenty-five lines torments him with tongue-lashing accusations, delaying the revelation that the queen is dead. Then she invites Leontes to "despair" rather than to repent and repair his soul, and Leontes brokenly submits to the justness of even this.

Go on, go on:
Thou canst not speak too much; I have deserv'd
All tongues to talk their bitt'rest.
(III.ii.214-16)

In submitting to the shrew, Leontes makes partial amends for his previous tyranny. Paulina's fury does not abate easily, however, and she extends her verbal punishment of Leontes beyond humane limits (218-32). Her intense and bitter accusations produce another important effect aside from absorbing part of the hostility that Leontes' actions have generated: they convince the audience that Hermione is, in fact, dead.

The scene ends with Leontes asking Paulina to lead him to his sorrows. When the play's action again returns to Sicilia (V.i), it is immediately evident that Leontes has allowed Paulina emotional dictatorship over him; and that for sixteen years she has been his priestess and confessor. Cleomenes attempts to soothe Leontes' guilt and sorrow, but Paulina still needles him to confess his sin.

Cleo. Sir, you have done enough, and have perform'd
A saint-like sorrow: . . .
Do as the heavens have done, forget your evil;
With them, forgive yourself
Leon. Whilst I remember
Her, and her virtues, I cannot forget
My blemishes in them. . . ,
Paul. True, too true, my lord:
If, one by one, you wedded all the world,
Or from the all that are took something good,
To make a perfect woman, she you kill'd
Would be unparallel'd.
Leon. I think so. Kill'd!
She I kill'd! I did so: but thou strik'est me
Sorely, to say I did: it is as bitter
Upon thy tongue as in my thought. Now, good now,
Say so but seldom.
Cleo. Not at all, good lady:
You might have spoken a thousand things that would
Have done the time more benefit and grac'd
Your kindness better.
Despite the essential change in their relationship, Paulina still enjoys the power of her shrewish tongue. The concern is now whether Leontes should marry again. Most of his subjects want an heir and would encourage his remarriage, but Paulina exacts Leontes' promise "Never to marry, but by my free leave. . . . Unless another / As like Hermione as is her picture, / Affront his eye" (V.i.70, 73-75). When Cleomenes tries to stop her bargaining with the king, she says, true to the prolixity of her stock characterization,

I have done.
Yet, if my lord will many,— if you will, sir,
No remedy but you will,— give me the office
To choose you a queen: she shall not be so young
As was your former, but she shall be such
As, walk'd your first queen's ghost, it should take joy
To see her in your arms.
(V.i.75-80)

She has forced Leontes to allow her yet another role with which to rule him— now she is his procuress. When Perdita and Florizel petition Leontes to be their advocate before Polixenes, and Leontes seems to admire Perdita's beauty a little too much, Paulina quickly reminds him of their contract.

Sir, my liege,
Your eye hath too much youth in 't; not a month
'Fore your queen died, she was more worth such gazes
Than what you look on now.
(V.i.223-26)

Leontes assures her that he was thinking of Hermione in admiring Perdita, but at this point only the audience knows how justified he is to do so.

The comic pattern of Paulina's and Leontes' relationship continues into the final scene, where the living Hermione is revealed. Paulina forces Leontes into an intensely emotional state of anticipation and then threatens to draw the curtain upon the statue. Through her threats to close off the revelation, however, she builds the kind of imaginative excitement that the tragicomic recognition requires. By threats of frustration, she dispels rational skepticism that would "hoot" at the revelation of the living Hermione "like an old tale." She achieves, with the confident skill of a good stage director, or a good playwright, the fusion of illusion and reality into joyful truth.

The discovery of that joyful truth is so exhilarating that no one worries about the trickery involved in creating it. The experience of wonder justifies the artifices used to make that experience possible. The "voice of moral justice" has deceived not only Leontes, but the audience as well. We experience, as he does, "the pleasure of that madness" which "no settled senses of the world can match." And the experience is so delightful that we can forgive a little skillful trickery along the way. If, upon leaving the theater, we are at ease to ponder the significance of that trickery, we confront once again that profound dislocation of fixed perceptions which Shakespeare's tragicomedy produces. There are more realities than meet the eye in these final plays. Or, to put it more precisely, the eye is trained to look through the artifice into a world of wonder.

All possible reservations are displaced before the reunion of Leontes and Hermione so that the pure wonder of their joy may be experienced without reservation. It is in this way that the scene of the gentlemen's report of the kings' meeting functions. Each gentleman has caught only a part of the meeting, and each gives a stylistically distinct narration: the First and Second Gentlemen relate with as little embellishment as possible
the wonder of each event they saw, and the Third Gentleman elaborates, with grand hyperboles, the rest of the action (V.ii.9-91). The tripartite narrative recalls the part-song of Autolycus, Mopsa, and Dorcas (IV.iv.298-307), and the Second Gentleman, Rogero, emphasizes that the ballad-makers could not express the wonder of the moment, a point underlined by Autolycus' silent presence throughout this scene. The gentlemen's narrative provides an artificial modulation between the pastoral world, where ballads celebrate an event, and the actualized dream of the tragicomic world, where wonder is enacted onstage. The narrative marks out a step in the transition from an art form which farcically abstracts events from life (Autolycus' ballads, IV.iv.270-82) to the statue scene, which infuses art into life. Autolycus even admits that the wonder of events surpasses his abilities to sell their credibility (V.ii.121-23). The skepticism expressed in this narrative scene exorcises the doubt the audience is likely to feel when the ultimate miracle of Hermione's resurrection is staged. Yet, the comic gentlemen accept the miracles they have seen and their eagerness to witness more miracles readies the audience's sense of wonder. After the gentlemen leave to augment the rejoicing at Paulina's chapel, Autolycus' admission that he could not have made credible Perdita's revelation is another preparation for the immense wonders of the final scene. Autolycus, the confidence man, has been subdued by a greater power than his own for creating "amazement." With this change of a vocal, energetic rogue to a docile and taciturn inferior of the Clown, the play's most skeptical voice is hushed in expectation of miracle.

When Paulina draws the curtain on the statue of Hermione, she notes the decorousness of the change. Whereas the three gentlemen babbled their tale of wonder, the royal party watches the consummate revelation in silence.

But here it is: prepare
To see the life as lively mock'd as ever
Still sleep mock'd death: behold, and say 'tis well.

[Paulina draws a curtain, and discovers Hermione standing like a statue]
I like your silence, it the more shows off
Your wonder: but yet speak; first you, my liege.
Comes it not something near?

(V.iii.18-23)

Leontes, when pressed to speak, is admiring, but a human touch qualifies his awe: "But yet, Paulina, / Hermione was not so much wrinkled, nothing / So aged as this seems." He looks upon the statue as an objet d'art and evaluates it as a thing. The audience, however, is a step ahead of Leontes: the possibility that the statue might actually be Hermione has been suggested in the Third Gentleman's report (V.ii.93-107). The anachronism of the work's having been "perfected" by a Renaissance artist, Julio Romano, is a signal for the audience to be alert for the revelation, and the Second Gentleman's comments about Paulina's activities in connection with the statue reinforce the clue: "she hath privately twice or thrice a day, ever since the death of Hermione, visited that removed house." Calling attention to the artifice is by this point in the play a familiar sign that appearance and reality may be due for some dislocations. When the curtains reveal Hermione "standing like a statue" we experience the overwhelming surprise of having our still undefined expectations fulfilled. From this point, each perception of Leontes draws him nearer to the recognition that we have already experienced, and the slight distance we gain on his perception allows us the opportunity to evaluate our response by his. In other words, we are caught in that magically double position of being involved in the action and removed from it simultaneously.

The intense beauty of the gradual resurrection of Hermione as she breathes, moves, and finally speaks is heightened by Leontes' intense joy at his growing understanding that the world of settled senses is not the final control of life's events. But the intensity of extreme joy is met with the comic inclusion of Paulina into the play's plane of action. Throughout the play, she has known and controlled the central miracle that informs
the entire action. As the stage director, she has remained outside the emotional renewal of the others, carefully controlling the art of the revelation. Now that her task is successfully completed, she offers to leave the joyful party to their hard-won exultation.

Paul. Go together,
You precious winners all; your exultation
Partake to every one. I, an old turtle,
Will wing me to some wither'd bough, and there
My mate (that's never to be found again)
Lament, till I am lost.
Leon. O, peace, Paulina!
Thou shouldest a husband take by my consent,
As I by thine a wife: this is a match
And made between 's by vows. Thou hast found mine;
But how, is to be question'd; for I saw her,
As I thought, dead; and have in vain said many
A prayer upon her grave. I'll not seek far—
For him, I partly know his mind—to find thee
An honourable husband. Come, Camillo,
And take her by the hand; whose worth and honesty
Is richly noted; and here justified
By us, a pair of kings. Let's from this place.
(V.iii.130-46)

The final note of reconciliation is appropriately the resumption of Leontes' control over his most unruly subject, Paulina. She procured a wife for him and Leontes procures a husband for her—to replace the one he had sent to his death. Camillo's acquiescence may be as much of a surprise to him as to Paulina, despite Leontes' remark "I partly know his mind." But since Antigonus had earlier been a surrogate victim for Camillo, absorbing the blame and the duty that Leontes would have cast upon Camillo, it is now the best of all comic conclusions to allow Camillo the opportunity to replace Antigonus. Paulina's tongue has a new victim and Leontes is free at last.

This comic reiteration of the stock relationship between Paulina and Leontes gives a sense of symmetrical completion which the play does not, in fact, supply. The audience does not know any more than Leontes about Hermione's sixteen-year disappearance; but we cannot follow when he says,

Good Paulina,
Lead us from hence, where we may leisurely
Each one demand, and answer to his part
Perform'd in this wide gap of time, since first
We were dissever'd: hastily lead away.
(V.iii.151-55)

The omission of an explanation increases our sense of wonder. Logic is frustrated, and, in order to affirm our joyful response to the experience of the play, we are forced to suspend our rational demands for an explanation of cause and effect. Consider, in contrast, the earlier handling of a similar problem in Much Ado About Nothing. Hero is slandered, and the Friar suggests that she pretend to be dead (IV.i.212-45). Like Hermione, Hero returns to life, unexpectedly for Claudio, who believed her dead. But the wonder of Hero's return is reserved for the characters of the play, since the audience is well aware of the logic behind the subterfuge when the Friar plans it. In other words, the earlier play takes great care to explain the practical cause of what would otherwise seem to be miraculous effects, but The Winter's Tale does not. Practical
explanations are available for its miraculous events, but the dramatic wonder of these events is exploited for the audience to the point that causality no longer seems relevant. *The Winter's Tale* is the only one of Shakespeare's tragicomedies that withholds from the audience the key to the marvelous resolution of the play. This concealment intensifies our immediate experience of dislocation, and it encourages us to alter our perspective in a significant way. We realize, along with the play's characters, that man's actions do not produce irrevocable effects. The play makes it very clear that a benevolent power has designed and is controlling events to surpass even the hopes and dreams that the man of "settled senses" occasionally entertains. The tragicomic perspective that Shakespeare creates in *The Winter's Tale* forces us to suspend rational judgment so that for a special moment we may glimpse the wonder in the world of human action.


Myles Hurd

[In this essay, Hurd assesses Paulina's pivotal role in *The Winter's Tale*. In participating in the play's action and commenting on major events, Paulina helps to shape the audience's response to other characters and to important scenes in the play, Hurd argues. Hurd observes Paulina's association with the stock comic character of the shrew, but maintains that Paulina nevertheless remains a credible character.]

Although an abundance of scholarly commentary on *The Winter's Tale* focuses on characterization, the significance of Shakespeare's inclusion of Paulina in the drama has elicited surprisingly little critical response. Her role, however, is crucially important. Her powerful speeches and prominence on stage remind us that she actually "carries a great deal of the action of the play on her shoulders and directs its course." A participant in the action as well as a shrewd commentator on major events in the plot, she helps control our responses to other characters and key scenes. In this respect, she functions theatrically as an internal stage director, whose presence sets up scenes of dramatic intensity. Moreover, in this play, which emphasizes the "divisions created in love and friendship by the passage of time and by the action of 'blood,' and the healing of these divisions through penitence and renewed personal devotion," Paulina, the "voice of moral justice," stands out as an admirable agent of reconciliations. Because Shakespeare offers us through her characterization an important perspective through which we gain major insights into the play, one profitable way of teaching first-year college students to appreciate his craftsmanship is by pointing out the centrality of her role. At the conclusion of their study of *The Winter's Tale* these students should recognize that Shakespeare uses Paulina to his full advantage in terms of stagecraft without sacrificing any of her credibility as a character. In addition, they should see that Paulina is the character who, even more than the oracle, makes things work in this play.

Paulina makes her initial appearance in Act II, Scene ii. In this scene she visits the jail where Leontes, the king, has banished Hermione, his wife. Paulina speaks with one of the ladies-in-waiting after the Jailer denies her permission to talk with the Queen. The Jailer's acknowledgement that he knows Paulina to be a "worthy lady / And one whom I much honor" (II.ii,5-6) [*The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1974)] is noteworthy because it establishes a bond of trust between her and the reader. The Jailer's recognition of her worthiness encourages us to accept her statements as truthful judgements on others. She becomes our "inside man" in the drama, a *raisonneur* whose opinions we learn to hold highly. Yet, in this scene what she says is just as important as what others say about her. In telling Emilia that she plans to assume the role of Hermione's "advocate to th' loud'st" (II.ii.38), Paulina senses the dangerous repercussions of Leontes' extreme jealousy; she vows to wield her tongue as a powerful instrument to make him aware of his unsupportable assertions:

I dare be sworn.  
These dangerous, unsafe lunes i' th' King, beshrew them!  
He must be told on't, and he shall; the office  
Becomes a woman best. Ill take't upon me.
If I prove honey-mouthed, let my tongue blister,
And never to my red-looked anger be
The trumpet any more.
(II.ii.28-34)

Even though the Lord, Camillo, and Antigonus had attempted unsuccessfully to deter Leontes from his dangerous course of action in Act I, we feel that Paulina's efforts will be triumphant, especially if she does in fact "use that tongue [she has]" (II.ii.51). That she is a skilled disputant is knowledge we learn from the last few lines in the scene, in which she convinces the Jailer that no harm will come to him if he releases Hermione's newborn daughter to her charge. She makes us eager to gauge the effectiveness of a woman's tactics to restore order in a chaotic man's world of power and authority.

Students should note that in this brief scene Paulina's speeches set up an obligatory confrontation with Leontes. Because he has declared the baby the illegitimate child of Polixenes, we are also eager to see what his reaction will be when he examines his daughter for the first time, and we want to find out what punishment he will inflict on Paulina for her good-natured meddlesomeness.

When Paulina finally does confront Leontes in Act II, Scene iii, she does so after breaking past the Lord and Antigonus in a spirit of militant defiance. Significantly, she tells the Servant that she offers "words as medicinal as true" (II.iii.36) to cure Leontes of his insomnia and to rid him of his jealousy. Because the imagery of disease predominates throughout the first act, her statement of her mission in terms of curative powers both highlights the extremity of Leontes' condition and signals to us that she, more than any other character, is capable of making him see the error of his ways. Leontes' first lines upon seeing her in court indicate that he has already prepared himself for the inevitability of their meeting:

Away with that audacious lady! Antigonus,
I charged thee that she should not come about me;
I knew she would.
(II.iii.41-43)

In his "I knew she would" we detect an unexpected tone of ironic impatience rather than regal outrage. The subsequent remarks he addresses to Antigonus—questions concerning the secondary character's ability to bridle his wife—also make us aware of the lightened tone. Here Paulina becomes a vehicle of comic displacement to buffer a serious and potentially violent situation. This displacement is necessary to shield Leontes from unpardonable condemnation. Shakespeare must have realized at this stage of composing the play that unless he could mitigate his audience's dislike for the king, Leontes' emergence as a changed figure at the conclusion of the work would impress us as being unearned. The playwright's problem lay in finding a way to control our responses to the jealous king.

Through his presentation of Paulina as a benevolently officious tongue-wagging wife, Shakespeare discovered an effective way of softening our reaction to Leontes. Paulina and Leontes approximate the roles of stock characters in a familiar setting—that of the henpecked husband who must endure his wife's seemingly endless beratings. The scene works because Shakespeare has invested virtue in a virago [shrew]. When Paulina fires off charges at the king to remind him of the damage he does in falsely accusing Hermione of infidelity, he answers not to her but to Antigonus, whom he accuses of being a weak man unable to take the head of his own household. Paulina sets her tongue loose to castigate Leontes for being an unwise, fault-finding husband; Leontes reacts by castigating Antigonus for not silencing a shrewish wife. We enjoy the scene because we "see" her standing in the middle of a stage and wielding power over the circle of men around her. We are confident that Paulina will outwit Leontes in their verbal battle.
In addition, two things about the exchanges catch our attention: (1) the way in which Shakespeare holds a delicate balance in maintaining a serio-comical tone through his presentation of Paulina as a childish speaker of truths; and (2) the way in which she clearly dominates the scene to the extent that all of the other characters play to her strong lead. The following dialogue illustrates both of these points:

*Leontes:* A callat of boundless tongue, who late hath beat her husband, 
And now baits me! This brat is none of mine; 
It is the issue of Polixenes. 
Hence with it, and together with the dam, 
Commit them to the fire. 
*Paulina:* It is yours: 
And might we lay th' old proverb to your charge, 
So like you, 'tis the worse. Behold, my lords, 
Although the print be little, the whole matter 
And copy of the father eye, nose, lip, 
The trick of's frown, his forehead, nay, the valley, 
The pretty dimples of his chin and cheek; his smiles; 
The very mold and frame of hand, nail, finger. 
And thou, good goddess Nature, which hast made it 
So like to him that got it, if thou hast 
The ordering of the mind too, 'mongst all colors 
No yellow in't, lest she suspect, as he does 
Her children not her husband's. 
*Leontes:* A gross hag! 
And lozel, thou art worthy to be hanged, 
That wilt not stay her tongue. 
*Andgmus:* Hang all the husbands 
That cannot do that feat, you'll leave yourself 
Hardly one subject. 
(II.iii.89-109)

Paulina's shrewdness in identifying points of similarity between Hermione's baby and Leontes is a disarming tactic that exposes him to the ridiculousness of his jealousy and causes him to remember that at two earlier points in the drama (I.ii.22 and I.ii.208-09) he takes comfort in acknowledging Mamillius as his look-alike child. Paulina assuredly "beats" and "baits" Leontes in the above passage by out-reasoning him while taking advantage of her license as a bold, honest woman to upbraid a bristling, foolish man. Not lost in the comedy of the situation, however, is the impact of her speech. After she leaves the court, Leontes decides to abandon the child rather than have it killed; he yields to Antigonus' intercession on the child's behalf and informs us that Paulina has pleaded with her husband to spare the infant's life.

Throughout this scene students should have no trouble identifying Paulina with a familiar character type in fiction—the good-natured servant who oversteps her authority to restore order in her employer's household. Students should also be aware that in this scene Shakespeare reverses the master/servant (king/subject) relationship so that Paulina "masters" her king by dictating to him an appropriate mode of behavior to adopt. The important point is that whether she plays the role of a shrew to Leontes' role as a tyrant, or an outspoken servant opposite his role of a corrected master, she remains a completely credible character.

At the beginning of Act III, Scene i, Shakespeare temporarily silences Paulina during Hermione's trial. Along with us she hears a formal accusation against the Queen, listens to Hermione's defense, and welcomes the oracle's confirmations of Hermione's innocence, the child's parentage, Camillo's loyalty, and Polixenes' blamelessness. After she watches the calamitous chain of events that follow Leontes' rejection of the oracle,
she lists all the crimes that have grown out of his jealousy before she falsely reports Hermione's death. The speech itself is filled with intensity because Paulina deliberately delays the report of this catastrophe. Moreover, the speech hints to us that throughout the remainder of the drama, Shakespeare will assign her the role of reminding Leontes of his sins until he becomes truly penitent. After he admits in this scene that he is to blame for his own remorse, she mentions the deaths of Hermione and Mamillius only seconds after promising him that she would not again burden him with painful memories. Moreover, she extracts from him a promise to visit daily the chapel where his wife and son are to be entombed.

Because Shakespeare depicts Paulina as the most truthful character thus far in the play, we have no reason to doubt her when she gives an untruthful report of Hermione's death. In this scene she tells a noble lie, and her action and motives are similar to those of the good Friar in Much Ado About Nothing. At this point in the play, students who are giving *The Winter's Tale* a close reading should detect from the final exchanges between Paulina and Leontes that Shakespeare is preparing us to accept her later role as a confessor for a changed, repentant king.

Although Paulina does not appear in Act IV, she is, nevertheless, linked to Perdita, whose life she had been responsible for saving. In addition, Shakespeare associates Paulina thematically with the well-known argument between Perdita and Polixenes over the extent to which man should collaborate art with nature. In the final scene of the play Paulina, in one sense, answers this question by having nature emerge out of art in her chapel.

In Act V, Scene i, Paulina appears as a moral historian who, after a gap of sixteen years, still tests Leontes on the sincerity of his repentance. Until Florizel and Perdita appear in the court, she clearly dominates the scene. Over the objections of Dion and Cleomenes she makes Leontes promise that he will not remarry—and this despite his kingdom's anxiety for him to beget an heir. Her justifications for exacting the promise come in a speech that reveals her special interpretation of the oracular decree:

```
There is none worthy,
Respecting her that's gone; besides, the gods
Will have fulfilled their secret purposes;
For has not the divine Apollo said—
Is't not the tenor of his oracle-
That King Leontes shall not have an heir
Till his lost child be found? Which that it shall,
Is all as monstrous to our human reason
As my Antigonus to break his grave,
And come again to me; who, on my life,
Did perish with the infant.
(V.i. 34-44)
```

Her reference to the abandoned baby prepares us for the return of Perdita to Leontes. After concluding the play we recall the speech and note that it actually points out Paulina's unwillingness to give up all hope that the baby has survived. For Paulina, the oracular decree coincides with her own deepest desires.

Hope becomes truth for Paulina in Act V, Scene ii, the scene that reconciles Leontes to his long-lost daughter. Her steward reports to us that she embraces Perdita when the young girl's identity is confirmed. We assess her concern for Hermione's child as a significant virtue when we acknowledge that her being told of the circumstances surrounding Antigonus' death could easily have canceled her happiness. The steward's recollection that Paulina had "one eye declined for the loss of her husband, another elevated that the oracle was fulfilled" (V.ii.79-81) shows us that she has the capacity for reconciling joy and sorrow in her own life—just as Shakespeare reconciles seemingly discordant elements in this tragicomedy.
The final scene reveals Paulina as an agent of reconciliation in other important ways. To dismiss her cleverness in bringing the statue of Hermione to life as a cheap theatrical trick on Shakespeare's part is to miss the significance of not only the scene itself but the play as a whole. She brings nature out of art in having the statue of Hermione move and creates life out of death in reviving a wife, believed dead, and returning her to a joyful husband. Paulina's union with Camillo at the conclusion of the play pairs two benevolent middle-aged characters who, with the passage of time, have witnessed summers of joy and winters of discontent in the lives of others. The announcement of forth-coming weddings in her chapel, a place earlier in the play associated with death, alerts us to prospects for new cycles of birth and regeneration. Her centrality in this scene in The Winter's Tale, a play about the richness and variety of human life experiences, will cause most students to agree that she is the most admirable character in this, one of Shakespeare's most beautiful plays.

For those impercipient students who either fail to recognize its merits or find fault with its theatricality, Shakespeare provides Paulina with lines to inspire appreciation:

> It is required
> You do awake your faith.
> (V.iii.94-95)

Once that faith is awakened, students should note that despite the presence of supernatural elements in this drama, it is Paulina who works the real magic, and she does so on a recognizable human level. Healing time does in fact triumph in this play— but not without the help of Paulina.


**Ganymedes and Kings: Staging Male Homosexual Desire in The Winter's Tale**

Nora Johnson, *Swarthmore College*

When historians discuss the relation between homosexual practice and homosexual identity in England before the eighteenth century, they often note that male same-sex behaviors coincided with neither a set of psychosocial characteristics nor a clear sexual preference. Alan Bray, for instance, describes satirical portrayals of the courtier who engaged in sodomy, arguing that these portrayals were striking from a twentieth-century perspective because of their failure to represent a specifically homosexual identity: "on this point [the satirists] are remarkably consistent: the sodomite is a young man-about-town, with his mistress on one arm and his 'catamite' on the other." Following, as he says, "broadly" in the traditions of Mary McIntosh, Jeffrey Weeks, and Michael Foucault, Bray argues that representations of sodomy before the late-seventeenth century reveal the historical contingency of the modern homosexual. He cites Donne's first *Satire*, for example, which accuses one man-about-town of enjoying the "nakedness and bareness" of a "plump muddy whore or prostitute boy," and he notes that Johnson's Sir Voluptuous Beast makes his wife listen to tales about his sexual exploits, recounting to her "the motions of each petticoat / And how his Ganymede moved and how his goat."

The evidence that Bray culls from sources other than satire is equally telling and equally resistant to identifying an exclusively homosexual "type." He describes the reputation of Sir Anthony Ashley, one of James I's courtiers known for his love of boys, who was also known to be a married man and the father of a
daughter. He similarly reports Lucy Hutchinson's description of court life under James:

The face of the Court was much changed in the change of the king, for King Charles was temperate, chaste, and serious; so that the fools and bawds, mimics and catamites of the former court grew out of fashion and the nobility and courtiers, who did not quite abandon their debaucheries, yet so reverenced the king as to retire into corners to practice them. What emerges from Bray's study is more than simply the absence of what twentieth-century historians would call "homosexuality." These accounts suggest that homosexual practice was part of an aristocratic sexual esthetic, a "fashion," in which the courtier sampled at will from an array of erotic practices, none of which could impose itself upon him as a rigid identity. Even Ashley's apparent preference for boys seems to have been compatible with his role as a husband and father. To reiterate the point that has become associated especially with the work of Foucault, sodomy in early modern England is an act, not an identity.

Certainly homosexual desire as imagined by James himself seems to have involved no sense of sexual nature. On the contrary, his letters to his favorite George Villiers enact almost an escape from identity, a sense that one of the pleasures of illicit sexuality was its license to undo the categories of self-definition. James addresses one such letter to "My only sweet and dear child," for instance, and he prays

That we may make at this Christmas a new marriage ever to be kept hereafter; for, God so love me, as I desire only to live in this world for your sake, and that I had rather live banished in any part of the earth with you than live a sorrowful widow's life without you. And so god bless you, my sweet child and wife, and grant that ye may ever be a comfort to your dear dad and husband.

James thinks of this relationship as if it were a marriage in which both partners are wives at the same time that James is father and husband and Villiers is child and wife. Far from being identified by his desire for another man, James imagines homoeroticism as an undoing of identity itself. In fact, James's words to Villiers resonate strongly with Bray's contention, developed further by Jonathan Goldberg, that sodomy in this period belongs not so much to a system of sexual taxonomy as to a system of unintelligibility, a social order in which sexual contact between men signifies only when it can be associated with chaos, anarchy, heresy, or sorcery. In this reading, the scandal James risks is not a revelation of personal identity so much as an unleashing of ideological forces that could threaten to undo his own kingship.

Neither James nor the early modern courtier who employs a ganymede, then, is a homosexual in any modern sense of the word. But what are we to assume about the ganymede or catamite himself? The terms in which we are accustomed to explaining the invention of sexual identity—the molly house subcultures in Bray's account, the discursive subject in Foucault's analysis—are inadequate to explain the status of the passive "boy" whose presence guarantees homoerotic content in the accounts of debauchery mentioned above. The ganymede is emphatically not the homosexual subject Foucault teaches us to associate with modernity; among other disqualifying factors, his participation in the homoerotic is taken to be a function of his youth, rather than some expression of essence or nature. In some accounts the ganymede himself desires a woman, while an adult male desires him. But the early modern representations I will examine below suggest that the ganymede's role as an object of homosexual desire extends beyond mere passivity in important ways, that he is imagined as intrinsically fit to be such an object, even, at times, in spite of his own professed desires. Moreover, although we know little or nothing about the relation between actual boys and literary representations of ganymedes, the employment of boys as erotic objects in early modern theater makes the ganymede an integral part of a theater company's reputation. In this light, the eroticized boy is more than a literary strategy for representing aristocratic sexual license. Because The Winter's Tale is centrally concerned, in my reading, with legitimating theatrical practice, its meditations on boyhood similarly become more than nostalgia for the lost past of the two kings whose relationship dominates the play. Representing boyhood
becomes instead a way of negotiating the homoerotic, both for Leontes and Polixenes and for the institution of theater itself. In both cases, the reputation for sodomy means more than "acts."

I will argue, then, that even in the absence of a totalizing rhetoric of homosexual identity, the ganymede's participation in the homoerotic identifies him powerfully, so much so that his presence onstage works to stigmatize the theatrical profession. Such an argument is offered not to counter the notion that homosexuality is a historically contingent construct; especially as formulated by Foucault, that insight has powerfully altered perceptions both of sexuality and of early modern Europe. Instead, I want to add this study to the growing body of work that moves beyond the potential reductiveness of a Foucaultian paradigm. We can surely emphasize the radical newness of homosexuality "as we know it" without ignoring the multiple and complex ways that sodomy could interact with notions of self before the modern era. As Gregory Bredbeck argues,

if [essentialist critics begin] with the assumption that we can trace an atemporal conception of homosexuality throughout history, the other alternative has been to say that because we cannot trace this particular concept through history, nothing can be traced. In each instance "the homosexual" is essentialized as the absolute standard of adjudication. "It" is what we must find if we are to find anything at all.

This essay explores what might be traced, and examines the interactions between theatrical self-consciousness and illicit desire in *The Winter's Tale*.

**Ganymedes and Kings: Staging Male Homosexual Desire in *The Winter's Tale*: II**

Ganymedes were, of course, not the only group of individuals to be categorized by their participation in sexual acts. On the contrary, the typecasting of women is a familiar part of the early modern sexual terrain, and one that Foucault more or less ignores. One of the factors that makes women such fascinating additions to the sexual taxonomy of this period, though, and that makes them important for a discussion of ganymedes is their paradoxical relation to sexual subjectivity. Women could be characterized absolutely by their sexual acts, without really being imagined to possess agency, or even desire.

Early modern women were sometimes represented as a kind of sexual fixed point in an otherwise chaotic staging of eroticized identities. When Ben Johnson wants to portray debauchery at its worst, for instance, he has his master cozenor Volpone engage in an elaborate fantasy of sexual license. "Inviting" the chaste and married Celia to be his mistress, Volpone promises her participation in an extended erotic stage play:

```
my dwarfe shall dance,
My eunuch sing, my foole make vp the antique.
Whil'st, we, in changed shapes, act *Ovid's* tales,
Thou, like *Evropa* now, and I like *love*,
Then I like *Mars*, and thou like *Erycine*.
```

```
Then will I have thee in more moderne formes,
```

```
And I will meet thee, in as many shapes:
```

It is a mark of Celia's perfect adherence to the role of the virtuous woman that she refuses to participate in Volpone's theatrical production, that she maintains her personal integrity by declining to play the adulterous role that both her husband and her would-be lover have scripted for her. In spite of the bewildering transformations of the men around her (her husband reverses in minutes his initial decision to lock his wife up in a chastity belt, deciding instead to prostitute her in hopes of winning Volpone's money; Volpone himself leaps up from his pretended deathbed to inform her that he had appeared just the day before as a mountebank at her window), Celia remains constant to her own and her husband's honor. In fact, her character requires no development beyond the demonstration that she will never swerve from the course of chastity.

To repeat a point made often by feminist critics, a reputation for participating in or resisting participation in a particular sexual act had the power to characterize a woman absolutely—onstage, at least—in the English Renaissance. For all that Jonson apparently delights in the possibilities of the ever-changing theatrical self, made manifest in the play's nearly endless recourse to disguise and deception, Volpone also exploits the notion of a woman's constancy, the possibility that a woman's sexual fidelity and, by extension, her infidelity, could stand for everything about her. Such a notion is possible, of course, only when women are considered as objects of greater or lesser use to the system of family and marriage, only in an essentially male erotic economy. To the Volpone who stages a theater of erotic pleasure, Celia matters because she either will or will not take up the adulterous part assigned her. Moreover, the conjunction of theatricality and sexuality in an endless exchange of erotic roles, so highly prized by Volpone, depends implicitly upon Celia's unwillingness to play those roles. Her absolute stillness and chastity make her appealing as a sexual object, after all, at the same time that her resistance to Volpone's role-playing provides him with a kind of foil for his sexual improvisations. The erotic fluidity of the self that characterizes Volpone's fantasy includes the deployment of a fixed sexual self, a feminine locus to which sexuality can attach as an identity, rather than a masculine escape from identity through sexual play. Celia inhabits this identity not so much because of her own desires as because of her perfect adherence to the desire of her husband.

I mention Celia here because I want to make the case that the ganymede, the effeminate boy who was stereotypically the object of male homosexual desire in early modern England, was similarly imagined to be defined by his sexual availability to mature men and similarly deployed as a locus of sexuality's power to stigmatize or characterize. When the dangerously powerful male favorite Gaveston plans to entertain his king in Marlowe's Edward II, for instance, he gives elaborate stage directions:

Sometime a lovely boy in Dian's shape,
With hair that gilds the water as it glides,
Crownets of pearl about his naked arms,
And in his sportful hands an olive-tree,
To hide those parts which men delight to see,
Shall bathe him in a spring.

As many critics have noted, this passage is (erotic in part because of the fantasy that the lovely boy is "in Dian's shape," that he impersonates a goddess. Oddly, though, Gaveston expresses the fantasy that a boy wearing only bracelets and an olive branch could convincingly represent Diana. The erotic opportunity offered the viewer here is not in fact the deliberate impersonation of a goddess. The boy impersonates nothing. He simply has, always, "naturally," the body of a Dian; he entertains merely by displaying himself at opportune moments. In order, in other words, to do justice both to the passage's obvious homoerotic content and to its claims to represent a tale out of Ovid, an audience would have to imagine the boy's profound physical androgyny, a kind of ocular proof of his femininity that goes beyond the use of long gowns and
chopines to emphasize the ambiguous "parts men love to see." This lovely boy is almost impossibly effeminate. In Gaveston's staging of erotic transformations, the boy's part is to register an ineluctable physical androgyny; what was free erotic play for James and Villiers becomes ontology for the lovely boy, his physical nature. The celebration of an eroticized fluidity of self relies implicitly upon the fixity of the boy as an androgynous erotic object, giving him a sexuality that has little or no relation to any desires he might be imagined to express. His body is, thus, paradoxically both fluid and fixed: fluid in its failure to adhere to any one gender and fixed in its permanent ambiguity.

Even when theatrical staging and physicality are not at issue, literary representations of the beloved boy tend to emphasize the inevitability of the boy's sexual objectification, the sense that this particular boy is made for this particular kind of love. When Richard Barnfield writes his *Affectionate Shepheard*, he imagines a ganymede whose appearance "intangled" the speaker Daphnis's will: "Cursing the Time, the Place, the sense, the sin; / I came, I saw, I viewed, I slipped in."¹² Even though Ganimede is in love with Queen Gwendolen and unlikely to respond to Daphnis's advances, Ganimede is imagined to be the cause of the older man's desires by virtue of his physical beauty. As the poem's second stanza indicates by its syntax, Ganimede's physical attributes insert themselves into the middle of Daphnis's (admittedly peremptory) self-examination, where they intrude upon the speaker's power to resist him:

> If it be sinne to loue a sweet-fac'd Boy,  
> (Whose amber locks trust vp in golden tramels  
> Dangle adowne his louely cheekes with ioy,  
> When pearle and flowers his faire haire enamels)  
> If it be sinne to loue a louely Lad;  
> Oh then sinne I, for whom my soule is sad.

Instead of penetrating the boy, this sentence structure suggests, Daphnis is physically penetrated by Ganimede's beauty. Into the middle of his mediation on sin is inserted a picture of Ganimede's amber locks and lovely cheeks. Daphnis's expressions move well beyond a statement of personal preference, here. Instead of noting simply that Ganimede's beauty pleases him, Daphnis implies that Ganimede's beauty acts upon him, virtually against the speaker's will. Even when the boy himself is imagined to love a woman, he is figured as the locus of homosexual desire; Ganimede's physical appeal is as absolute as the androgyny of Gaveston's boy. In each case, the speaker projects desire onto the body of the ganymede figure, making the boy a physical embodiment of homoeroticism.¹³

What the example of the ganymede suggests is that our current understanding of sodomy as lacking the power to inscribe early modern subjects is only a partial understanding. Representations of the subject who does the desiring, figured here as the courtly sodomite, do in fact imply that sodomy is merely one in a range of sexual behaviors with no particular signifying force. If we shift our focus to the object of desire, however, it becomes clear that the signifying force of sexuality has simply been deflected away from the sodomite. It registers instead in the body of the ganymede, the partner who, like a woman in a heterosexual coupling, might be said to lack power. The sodomite has the ability to change shapes at will; the ganymede, like the woman, is shaped by the sodomite's gaze into a static embodiment of that fluid will.

It is this imagined physical inevitability of the ganymede's participation in homosexual attraction that makes him, I think, an important figure in discussions of the relation between theatrical practice and homosexual identity. To the extent that "real-life" catamites were employed as boy actors, these boys would bring with them a reputation for sodomy that included a larger cultural willingness to attribute homosexual desire to them as physical types.¹⁴ Thus the theater itself, as an institution, negotiates a complicated set of attitudes about desire and the fixity of identity. Obviously theatrical performance gave great pleasure to the majority of Londoners in the period, and certain players became well known and much admired.¹⁵ At the same time, players as a class remained heavily stigmatized. Rather like the courtly sodomite, players were imagined to
shift identities at will and to partake of illicit sexuality. On the other hand, resembling the literary figure of the ganymede more than the aristocratic man-about-town, they were not well shielded from the social consequences of their erotic performances. In documents I will explore below, the Renaissance version of a long antitheatrical tradition identified players as immoral and dangerous, not least because of their willingness to engage in sexualized display in general and to employ cross-dressed boys in particular. Further complicating the player's status in this period, city officials struggled to minimize or abolish professional playing in London for reasons both economic and moral, while the court officially acted as patrons of the theater companies, even asserting that it was necessary to maintain professional players in town so that Elizabeth could be properly entertained when she so desired. As a result, players might be particularly familiar with the discrepancies between aristocrats and citizens. Playing companies entertained most of London's population, but their official legitimacy came from their ability to entertain the court, while a less exalted group of officials stigmatized playing for their own complex reasons.

As an economic enterprise, then, the stage can be thought of as trafficking in sexual identity, negotiating a form of exchange between its wealthy patrons—the courtiers (and sovereign) whose sexual behaviors pointed toward no particular sexual identification—and the boys apparently desired by those courtiers, whose sexual and economic employment inscribed homosexual desire upon them. If free erotic play is the prerogative of the aristocratic sodomite, it is the actor's profession and an important source of his reputation. Like the ganymede, the player's body is given a kind of heaviness that balances the weightless erotic play of the courtly sodomite.


I am drawn to this depiction of theater—as place in which sexual determinism negotiates with courtly erotic play—in part because it accords with my sense of late-Shakespearean romance. The romances seem to me preoccupied with two of the more prominent features of antitheatrical discourse: the suggestion that stage practice is inherently associated with illicit sexuality and the suggestion that play acting is an assault upon the stability of the individual self. Using the example of The Winter's Tale, I want to argue that the romances locate theatrical practice in close relation to illicit desire, acknowledging sodomy as a characteristic mode of being for the players and playwrights implicated in theatrical practice, incorporating both the erotic play of selfhood that typifies James's letters and the sense of sexual identity that characterizes the ganymede. While the ganymede and the courtier are not the only figures one can imagine participating in sodomy in the period—much of Bray's work, for instance, documents the prevalence of homosexual behaviors in households and villages, noting that there, as at court, the perpetrator of sodomy was in no way identified as "homosexual"—the ganymede and courtier represent two poles of sodomy's power to characterize. These two poles, moreover, figure prominently in the erotic imagination of The Winter's Tale, which juxtaposes questions of sexual stigma with questions of theatrical practice. What The Winter's Tale comes to associate with theater, finally, is not only the erotic indeterminancy that Valerie Traub has identified, but also a dependance upon the notion of sexual fixity, a deployment of the ganymede as a figure for sodomy's power to characterize participants in theatrical practice. Furthermore, I will argue, the play uses these very stigmatized features of theatrical practice to legitimate playing. As a kind of defense of the institution, The Winter's Tale reinscribes theater as a force both sexual and moral.

The theater was, after all, the source of seemingly endless sexual allegations in early modern England. Anthony Munday notes the power of playgoing to corrupt women:

Some citizens wives, upon whom the Lord for ensample to others hath laide his hands, have even on their death beds with tears confessed, that they have received at those spectacles such filthie infections as have turned their minds from chast cogitations, and made them of honest women light huswives.
Jonson himself, in *Poetaster,* has his stage version of the historical Ovid assume an automatic connection between playing and sodomy: "What? shall I have my son a stager now? an engle for players?" In "A Common Player" J. Cocke claims that an actor "If hee marries, hee mistakes the Woman for the Boy in Woman's attire, by not respecting a difference in the mischiefe." Phillip Stubbes complains that after a stage play "every mate sorts to his mate, every one brings another homeward of their way verye friendly, and in their secret conclaves (covertly) they play the Sodomits, or worse." Cocke also notes that these sexually undiscriminating actors participate in an unacceptably protean selfhood because of the many roles they play and the costumes they wear: "Take him at the best, he is but a shifting companion; for he lives effectually by putting on, and putting off. . . . His own [profession] . . . is compounded of all Natures, all humours, all professions" (257). The net effect of this sexual and ontological impurity is for Thomas White a scandal of self-loss: "Wherefore if thou be a father, thou losest thy child: if thou be a maister, thou losest thy servaunt; and thou be what thou canst be, thou losest thy selfe that haustest those scholes of vice, dennes of theeves, and Theaters of all lewdness." The chaotic play of identity and desire that the aristocratic sodomite is imagined to enjoy freely becomes in these descriptions a sinister aspect of theatrical practice, a cause for the player's notoriety.

Moreover, as the title of one of these antitheatrical tracts, *A Very Fruitful Exposition of The Commandements,* suggests, those who protested theater's alleged sexual excess tended to position themselves on the side of fertility and nature, condemning plays for their failure to bear moral fruit. John Northbrooke refers to plays as "unfruitfull and barren trees [that] shall be cut down" (75), while the author of the *Refutation of the Apology for Actors* refers to plays as "fruitless," and Henry Crosse says of the attraction to earthly pleasures that it "yeeld[s] no fruite at all." Standing in opposition to the reaping of both orthodox spiritual profits and all-important economic profits, theater, with its alleged enticements to nonprocreative sexuality, seemed to fly in the face of God's great commandment to be fruitful and multiply. Ultimately, as *The Winter's Tale* figures and refigures theatrical practice, it will reappropriate this notion of fertility and claim it for the stage.

I begin my discussion of *The Winter's Tale,* however, by asking why the play's many descriptions of boyhood sound so like these early modern descriptions of theatrical practice. Like theater, it seems, boyhood is figured as a realm of sexual and ontological instability, as Leontes makes clear in a paranoid aside to Mamillius: "Go, play, boy, play: thy mother plays, and I / Play too; but so disgrac'd a part, whose issue / Will hiss me to my grave." Child's play, sexual play, theatrical play—boyhood, illicit sexuality, theatrical stigma—are what come to mind when Leontes looks at his son. Childhood has become one reservoir for the scandal of the undifferentiated theatrical self. In a later passage, in fact, Polixenes describes youth in terms that again bring theater to mind. Leontes asks him, "Are you so fond of your young prince, as we / Do seem to be of ours?" and Polixenes describes his own son:

Now my sworn friend, and then mine enemy;  
My parasite, my soldier, statesman, all.  
He makes a July's day short as December;  
And with his varying childness cures in me  
Thoughts that would thick my blood.

(1.2.167-71)

To be free to cast off one's identity and assume another as boyhood does here is a pleasure—and a threat—associated with theatrical practice. As the ganymede does for the sodomite, the child does for the institution of the theater in these passages. Talking about boys becomes an implicit way of talking about men.

Leontes also associated boyhood with an ambiguity of gender that is again a familiar component of attacks upon the theater:
Looking on the lines
Of my boy's face, methoughts I did recoil
Twenty-three years, and saw myself unbreech'd,
In my green velvet coat; my dagger muzzl'd
Lest it should bite its master, and so prove,
As ornaments oft do, too dangerous.

(1.2.153-58)

To be "unbreech'd" is to be dressed in gender-neutral clothing; for a boy this implies a less than absolute separation from the female gender. Mamillius (or, really, Leontes' fantasy of his own past, occasioned by Mamillius) wears his dagger muzzled, as if to indicate that he has not reached phallic manhood. There is, furthermore, the implication that Mamillius's relative ambiguity of gender is imperiled by mature masculinity. Rather than imagine the harm that an unsheathed dagger might do to others, Leontes focuses upon the danger to the dagger's wearer. Sexual maturity, according to Leontes' fantasy, must mean an end to a fluidity of gender that has much in common with the fluidity of the theatrical self. At the heart of the play's anxious reminiscences about boyhood, then, is a larger cultural uneasiness about the theater.

At the same time, however, Polixenes sanitizes boyhood, idealizing the instability of self that characterizes both boyhood and the stage:

_Herrn._ Was not my lord
The verier wag o' th' two?
_Pol._ We were as twinn'd lambs that did frisk i' th' sun,
And bleat the one at th' other: what we chang'd
Was innocence for innocence: we knew not
The doctrine of ill-doing, nor dream'd
That any did. Had we pursu'd that life,
And our weak spirits ne'er been higher rear'd
With stronger blood, we should have answer'd heaven
Boldly "not guilty," the imposition clear'd
Hereditary ours.
_Herrn._ By this we gather
You have tripp'd since.
_Pol_ O my most sacred lady,
Temptations have since then been born to's: for
In those unfledg'd days was my wife a girl;
Your precious self had then not cross'd the eyes
Of my young play-fellow.

(1.2.65-80)

The absence of the individual self in this passage, the impossibility of distinguishing Leontes from Polixenes, has, ironically, become a sign of Edenic purity, a pastoral opposite to the ungodly crisis of self-definition provoked for tract writers by the scandal of theatrical role playing. Polixenes has also managed in this passage to refigure fertility, the marital sexuality that culminates in Hermione's pregnancy, as the interruption of that Eden. In much the same way that Polixenes makes the stigma of theatrical practice into an Eden, _The Winter's Tale_ works to make that stigma into a more fertile pastoral, a realm that welcomes and ultimately makes use of heterosexual fertility as a way of legitimating the scandalous stage. In its reflection upon the relationships between theatrical practice and illicit desire, moreover, the play negotiates a position for the theater that incorporates elements both of courtly erotic play and of the erotic fixity of the ganymede.
Polixenes' articulation of an all-male pastoral, and its interruption by Hermione, effects a double movement away from the realm of scandalous theatrical sexuality. First, the idealization of boyhood moves toward erasing any trace of the relation between youth and the stigmatized elements of theater embodied in the boy actor, a relation hinted at several times in the passages I have cited. Second, Polixenes posits Hermione's arrival as an absolute end to his union with Leontes, and as Camillo implies in the play's opening scene, that union is bound up both with theater and with homosexual desire. Camillo tells the courtier Archidamus:

Sicilia cannot show himself over-kind to Bohemia. They were trained together in their childhoods, and there rooted betwixt them then such an affection which cannot choose but branch now. Since their more mature dignities and royal necessities made separation of their society, their encounters, though not personal, have been royally attourneyed with interchange of gifts, letters, loving embassies, that they have seemed to be together, though absent; shook hands, as over a vast; and embraced, as it were, from the ends of opposed winds. The heavens continue their loves! (1.1.21-32)

According to the logic of Camillo's narration, Leontes and Polixenes want to be together but must be separated. As Leontes and Polixenes abandon physical immediacy for "mature dignity," they begin to employ others as go-betweens, as expressions of their relationship. What is at stake here is the public representation of relationship between men, an interchange of loving embassies and letters that will ultimately come to seem at least partially defensive, an assurance that the contact between Leontes and Polixenes is "not personal."

Furthermore, their very identity as mature men, as kings, demands that they be kept apart. The literal import of these lines is that Leontes and Polixenes want to touch, but the lines also reveal that these men owe their mature dignities to the fact that they cannot embrace. As they move apart they grow in stature, so that by the end of this speech they seem larger than life, reaching out across a vast, from the opposite ends of the earth. The extent to which these men avoid touching one another, finally, is the extent to which they tower over other men. Their affection for one another, associated with boyhood, stands in opposition to their kingly stature. If boys could embody the homoerotic in the cultural imagination of early modern England, and if in doing so they allowed adult men to avoid the possible consequences of homosexual desire, that potential of boyhood, as Camillo's speech asserts, comes down to a more personal level; however wistfully, he narrates the all important distance here between men and sexualized, undifferentiated youth. It was a sign of the sodomite's power that he could play with desire and identity and not get caught, but players, outside the circle of privilege that supported courtly indiscretions, are much more likely to require a justification for their participation in sexual play. The Winter's Tale, concerned as it is with legitimating theatrical practice, voices at least initially an anxious desire to separate mature men from the scandal of the playing boy.

Camillo has implied that go-betweens and a narrative of maturation are the tools through which Leontes and Polixenes will be distanced from the sexual and ontological threats of boyhood. Important as boys are in this staging of kings, however, it is Hermione who symbolically continues their loves. If Hermione comes between Leontes and Polixenes, then she is also the most obvious of their intermediaries, the chief actor in the theater of their relationship. In act 1 Leontes calls her in to speak for him when he wants Polixenes to extend his visit ("Tongue-tied our queen? speak you" 1.2.27), an act she performs, to her peril, all too enthusiastically. As she fulfills this function, Polixenes begins to cast her in the part I have described above: "O my most sacred lady, / Temptations have . . . been born to's." Part sacred and part temptation, Hermione is placed by both men in the position of go-between, and imagined by both of them to be sexually compromised. Leontes and Polixenes collaborate in the staging of Hermione as a necessary expression of their relationship, as a means of imagining that their "affections" have been replaced by "mature dignities." At the same time, their shared willingness to imagine her sexual impurity hints at the instability of their erotic compromise with what the play at this point posits as maturity, as a kingly distance from the desire they associate with boyhood. For all the play's work to distance the king from the ganymede, it ultimately recuperates both figures, both in its representation of these men and in its exploration of theatrical practice.
Of course Hermione is not impure, in spite of Polixenes' fantasy that she has corrupted the men's youth and Leontes' mad conviction that she poisons their friendship in the present moment. Such an admission, moreover, creeps into the very language that Leontes uses to imagine her as an adulteress:

Affection! thy intention stabs the centre:
Thou dost make possible things not so held,
Communicat'st with dreams;—how can this be?—
With what's unreal thou coactive art,
And fellow'st nothing: then 'tis very credent
Thou may'st co-join with something; and thou dost,
(And that beyond commission) and I find it,
(And that to the infection of my brains
And hard'ning of my brows).

(1.2.138-46)

The speech is echoed at the moment Leontes sentences his wife, meant as a statement of confidence in his own suspicions, but expressed as a tacit admission that he has projected his own desires onto her: "Your actions are my dreams." Leontes' own mind is engaging in the actions he attributes to Hermione. Affection—perhaps Leontes' own emotions and imaginings—"stabs the centre." For all the obscurity of the image, its sexual referent is clear, and the rest of the language used to describe Leontes' mental processes furthers the sexual implications. Moreover, Leontes' own thinking in this passage is fellowing, cojoining, coactive, both promiscuous and fertile, culminating in a kind of mental pregnancy, a swelling of horns upon Leontes' brow that parallels the swelling of Hermione's womb. Not only does his deranged creativity imply an admission that there is no reason to condemn his wife; it suggests further a strategy that the play as a whole takes up: the recuperation of sexual scandal as a fertile power. Leontes' individual use of Hermione as an expression of his imaginings is accompanied, ultimately, by the play's use of her as an expression and even a celebration of the imaginative power of a sexually stigmatized male theatrical community.


The early scenes of The Winter's Tale enforce an anxious distinction between boys and men, letting boys stand in for the scandal of theatrical practice. Included in that effort is an attempt to use Hermione as a sign both of the distance between Leontes and Polixenes and of the loves they bear one another.* The shared fantasy that she is impure suggests that the easy version of that story is inadequate, that desire and the implicit destabilization of identity cannot be dismissed or idealized as the province of boys. In addition, the language Leontes uses to describe that fantasy—as a promiscuous and fertile mental cojoining—resonates profoundly with what I believe to be a central part of the play's legitimation of theatrical playing.

Leontes' equation of his wife's fertility with his own mental processes—and his clear preference for the product of his own mind—recalls Plato's grounding of poetry in what Renaissance moralists would have regarded as a scandalous erotic context. In the Symposium, Socrates speaks of a lesson he has learned from the wise Diotima:

Men whose bodies only are creative, betake themselves to women and beget children. . . . But creative souls—for there are men who are more creative in their souls than in their bodies—conceive that which is proper for the soul to conceive or retain. . . . And he who in youth has the seed of [virtue and wisdom] implanted in him and is himself inspired, when he comes to maturity desires to beget and generate. . . . and when he finds a fair and noble and
well-nurtured soul, and there is union of the two in one person, he gladly embraces him, and to such an one he is full of fair speech about virtue and the nature and pursuits of a good man . . . and at the touch and presence of the beautiful he brings forth the beautiful which he conceived long before . . . and in company they tend that which he brings forth, and they are bound together by a far nearer tie and have a closer friendship than those who beget mortal children, for the children who are their common offspring are fairer and more immortal. Who when he thinks of Homer and Hesiod and other great poets, would not rather have their children than any ordinary human ones?32

These sentiments are, according to Diotima, among the lesser teachings of love, and although Socrates emphasizes that the love of one beautiful man should lead to an appreciation of the beautiful in general, many early modern readers identified the Symposium with homosexuality.33

The Symposium represents one way of legitimating the literary productions of an implicitly homosexual male culture, and it bears more than a passing resemblance to Polixenes' idealized male pastoral and Leontes' tormented and fertile imagination. Although the play will move to punish Leontes for his fantasy, and will reconfigure his attachment to Polixenes by way of the heterosexual marriage of their children, I emphasize Plato's idealization of a male homosexual poetics because a similar ideal is active throughout The Winter's Tale. The play works with considerable arder to establish a convincing affiliation between the playwright's craft and "great creating nature," and while that affiliation can function as a heterosexual imperative—Hermione's pregnancy and the family bonds that guarantee an heir to the throne can be seen as the ultimate sources of truth, the play's ultimate wisdom—the affiliation between poetry and pregnancy can also serve as a platonic boast about the superiority of male poetic production. Indeed, The Winter's Tale and The Symposium employ women and fertility in ways that are, initially at least, remarkably similar. In "Why Is Diotima a Woman?" David Halperin analyzes Plato's adoption of Diotima as the mouthpiece for his erotic teachings, including, I would add, his eroticization of poetic production.34 Referring to Diotima as "a version of pastoral," Halperin notes that her presence in The Symposium allows Plato simultaneously to "invest Diotima with an erotic and prophetic authority" and to evacuate that feminine authority, to use Diotima as a figure for "The male imaginary, the specular poetics of male identity and self-definition" (145). I will return to Halperin's reading of The Symposium in the final section of this essay, but I want first to trace the ways in which The Winter's Tale's pastoral celebration and recuperation of Hermione lend themselves, like Diotima, to the preoccupations of an eroticized male poetic community. If the play's first half registers an anxious awareness of contemporary antitheatrical tracts and their complaints about the fruitlessness of the literary, its second half incorporates women and nature into a declaration of the procreative power of sexually stigmatized male theatrical production. In fact, the play goes to great lengths to emphasize the independence of women as part of a strategy, I will argue, that, like Plato's, will ultimately serve to highlight the powers and desires of men. Especially through the figures of Camillo and Hermione, The Winter's Tale legitimates its own erotic practice while simultaneously obeying the injunction to be fruitful and multiply.

In many ways, the sheep-shearing feast in act 4 is a clear vote for the kinds of fertility that are associated with spring and pregnancy and agriculture rather than with men and poetry. As in the Shepherd's reminiscences about his "old wife" and as in Perdita's preference for the flowers that nature makes, Perdita's frankly sexual remarks to Florizel indicate that this is a new pastoral to which women and heterosexual desire are most emphatically invited.35

Per. O, these [flowers] I lack
To make you garlands of; and my sweet friend,
To strew him o'er and o'er!
Flo. What, like a corpse?
Per. No, like a bank, for love to lie and play on:
Not like a corpse; or if—not to be buried,
But quick, and in mine arms.

(4.4.127-32)

Perdita's next remarks indicate as well that there is a new theater in action here, charming even in its mild sexual scandal:

Per. Methinks I play as I have seen them do
In Whitsun pastorals: sure this robe of mine
Does change my disposition.
Flo. What you do,
Still betters what is done.

(4.4.133-36)

That Camillo and Polixenes should intrude upon this heterosexual pastoral suggests that this "natural" sheep-shearing feast is in some way anathema to the earlier male Eden in which twinned lambs never had to face the shearer. Their intrusion says, I think, a great deal about the uses of nature in a sexually stigmatized artistic endeavor.

Camillo is established early on as an accessory to the erotic bond between Leontes and Polixenes; he is the narrator of the opening scene's story of the two kings' affections, and he keeps Leontes from harming Polixenes. In addition, Leontes' exchange with him in act 1 casts Camillo in a role that strongly recalls a well-known icon of Renaissance homosexuality:

.. . ay, and thou
[Polixenes'] cupbearer,—whom I from meaner form
Have bench'd and rear'd to worship, who may'st see
Plainly as heaven sees earth and earth sees heaven,
How I am gall'd,—might'st bespice a cup,
To give mine enemy a lasting wink;
Which draught to me were cordial.

(1.2.312-18)

In his address to Camillo, Leontes reenacts the story of Jove's Ganymede, the cup bearer to the god who raised him from earth to heaven and who kept him as his lover. The language of raising up an inferior, combined with the sense that Camillo's vision now spans the gap between heaven and earth, recalls both the erotic myth and its allegorical implications for the merging of the divine with the physical. 36

Moreover, Leontes' chain of allusions implies that Camillo is, as Hermione has been imagined, somehow the favorite of both kings. Camillo is cup bearer to Polixenes, but his draught would nourish Leontes; he has been raised up by Leontes, but he attends Polixenes during his stay in Sicilia. The implied eroticism of Camillo's position is shared between the two kings, and the implication is that Camillo in some sense shares Hermione's role as erotic go-between and as actor in the theater of their affections. One of Leontes' most vivid declarations of certainty about Hermione's infidelity, after all, implies a symmetry between that infidelity and Camillo's promised poisoning of Bohemia: "I have drunk, and seen the spider" (2.1.45). As Leontes sees it, both Hermione and Camillo are objects of exchange between himself and Polixenes, and Camillo's associations with Ganymede make him a secondary player in the staging of the erotic bond between the two kings.
Camillo and Polixenes make their entrance in the play's second half negotiating once again the conflict between a man's duty to his homeland and his affection for another man. Although Polixenes stresses that he needs Camillo present for business reasons, his request that Camillo not leave is strongly reminiscent of the earlier exchange between Leontes and Polixenes: "I pray thee, good Camillo, be no more importunate: 'tis a sickness denying thee anything; a death to grant this" (4.2.1-3). That the business at hand should be Polixenes' interruption of a heterosexual pastoral (and that Florizel should apparently have no mother on hand, even in Bohemia), suggests that the concerns that shaped the earlier Edenic realm of twinned lambs have resurfaced in the relation between Camillo and Polixenes.

As mentioned above, Florizel claims that he is "heir" to his own "affections" as he makes plans to elope with Perdita. Camillo, however, who is more profoundly committed to the affections of his two masters, effects a reworking of Florizel's and Perdita's scheme for his own purposes:

\[
\text{Now were I happy, if} \\
\text{His going I could frame to serve my turn,} \\
\text{Save him from danger, do him love and honour,} \\
\text{Purchase the sight again of dear Sicilia} \\
\text{And that unhappy king, my master, whom} \\
\text{I so much thirst to see.}
\]

(4.4.509-14)

As Camillo puts it, he has "a woman's longing" to see his home and his king, and his employment here as an assistant to the young couple is a means toward the end of uniting himself and Polixenes with the object of their affections. The implication is that Camillo's participation in the staging of male affection stands in an opportunistic relation to the spectacle of heterosexual affection and to the natural pastoral upon which it intrudes. Perdita's comment upon her own participation in the elopement ("I see the play so lies / That I must bear a part," 4.4.655-66) is more apt than she realizes; she is being made to play act not only her own marriage, but also the reunion of the men whose desires are a powerful shaping force in the play.\(^{37}\)

If the play legitimates its own theatrical practice in part by staging a celebration of the "natural"—only to refigure that pastoral as implicitly in the service of the homoerotic—it moves similarly toward legitimation in the staging of Hermione's return. \textit{The Winter's Tale} takes great pains to establish this source of moral veracity as having come from outside the realm of male control and male fantasy. Paulina has disciplined Leontes thoroughly, calling his imaginings "Fancies too weak for boys, too green and idle / For girls of nine," and speaking out of turn repeatedly to remind him of his former tyrannies (3.2.181-82). Paulina speaks in direct opposition to male authority, and her disclaimers as she reveals the statue to be alive, protecting her from the possibility that she might be "assisted / by wicked powers" or that her "unlawful business" might be "hooted at / Like an old tale," actually serve to emphasize the power of her artistic deception, the fact that it transcends the laws that govern acceptable stagecraft.

We learn too that backstage, as it were, during the sheep-shearing celebration, Hermione and Paulina have quietly been staging their own spectacle. While Paulina has engineered Leontes' sixteen years of mourning, Hermione has "preserved / [Herself] to see the issue," with "issue" here meaning both the daughter she has lost and the outcome of a play—in this case, a play partly of her making. Given that Hermione began \textit{The Winter's Tale} with the burden of representing Leontes' esteem for Polixenes, as a player in the theater of male affection, it is remarkable that in the second half of the play she and Paulina have taken control of the plot, have planned their own theatrical strategy. Even though the ultimate result of this female theater is to reward Leontes for his conversion and to prove Hermione's fidelity to her husband and his lineage, the play's ending looks like it is authorized by women, largely because of the way that Paulina stages her power over Leontes and her power over the "statue" of Hermione.\(^{38}\) Like Diotima—in fact, much more emphatically than
Diotima—Paulina speaks in a voice that insists upon its own difference, its distance from the erotic preoccupations of men.

The return of Hermione, then, looks like a kind of triumph for the feminine, an artistic coup that, like the sheep-shearing feast, seems to proclaim its independence from the all-male community that produces sexually stigmatized theatrical spectacles. As metatheater, this apparent female power could be thought to represent a final distancing from the stigmatized theatricality that marked the play's opening scenes. Hermione's coming to life as a statue seems, moreover, to be a final elision of the spectacle of the boy actor, the figure who, more than any other, represents the sexual dangers of the theater; the emphasis in the play's last scene is upon the reality of Hermione's womanhood, after all, and not upon the androgyny of the boy who represents her. Hermione appears to step forward from out of the staged representation of "woman" and to assert her living reality, a reality made more convincing by her status throughout the play as the embodiment of truth. In this sense she continues the motion begun by Polixenes in the "twinn'd lamb" pastoral, the motion to erase the figure of the boy actor.

Furthermore, Paulina makes a brief remark that raises the question of lesbian desire, apparently marking an absolute distinction between the erotic possibilities of her own stagecraft and that of the two kings. In act 5, when Florizel and the unrecognized Perdita arrive in Sicilia, a servant describes Perdita to Leontes and Paulina with a sense of wonder:

This is a creature,
Would she begin a sect, might quench the zeal
Of all professors else; make proselytes
Of who she but bid follow

(5.1.106-9)

Paulina responds with mock horror, "How! not women?" (5.1.109). By underlining for us the sexual potential of this description of Perdita, Paulina takes us into new erotic territory. She implies at least an awareness of a desire that is outside male control, either for the purposes of progeny or poetry. In fact, her joke seems to emphasize the hiddenness and unrepresentability of lesbian desire, and by extension its distance from traditional models of the literary.

However, this heightened sense of the reality of the female at the end of The Winter's Tale also works paradoxically as a boast about the fecundity of the male community that produced the play. Like the gestures made in act 4 toward a heterosexual pastoral, the efforts that act 5 has made toward establishing the independence of women are simultaneously available as part of a male homosexual stagecraft. Paulina's passing joke about lesbian desire, for instance, is answered in a manner that suggests that the scandalous boy actor has not been as thoroughly removed from the play's erotic economy as my earlier argument implied: "Women will love her, that she is a woman / More worth than any man; men, that she is / The rarest of all women" (5.1.110-12). The servant's response highlights a different erotic possibility than Paulina's joke, emphasizing not the lesbian but the bisexual possibilities of Perdita's attractiveness. His rather elaborate explanation for her ubiquitous appeal sounds a bit like Sonnet 20 ("A man in hue all hues in his controlling, / Which steals men's eyes and women's souls amazeth," 7-8), or like the kinds of erotic play that characterize Twelfth Night; the play's response to the possibility of an independent lesbian desire is to return to the terrain of the boy actor, to reassert the fundamental androgyny of a Perdita who is played by a boy in women's clothes, and thus to remind its audience of the ganymede's participation in the broader range of theatrical eroticsisms. Rather than figuring the ganymede as a sign of stigmatized sexual identity from which mature and powerful men can distance themselves, The Winter's Tale implicates the ganymede, finally, in every aspect of the stage's erotic practice. We are prepared by the play's boasts about the power and appeal of the ganymede to regard Hermione's return not so much as the elision of the boy actor but as his triumph. The boy who
 impersonates the "real" Hermione, along with the theatrical company that engineers his impersonation, asserts power so absolute that it dares to stage its own exclusion.

That exclusion goes beyond boasting that a boy can convincingly play a mature woman with miraculous powers, however. On a deeper level, the play uses this final moment to register in silent eloquence the cost of the effort to distance boys from men. Mamillius, identified repeatedly in the play's first half with his father's past, has died at the end of act 2 and is thus hauntingly absent in this scene of miraculous reunion. Leontes' family has in a sense acquired a son through Perdita's marriage to Florizel, but the effort to substitute Polixenes' son for Leontes' through the institution of marriage is, in light of the initial failure of Leontes' and Hermione's union to erase the past, a particularly hollow theatrical convenience. Paulina herself critiques it just before the newly wedded couple arrives in Sicilia:

Had our prince,
(Jewel of children) seen this hour, he had pair'd
Well with this lord; there was not full a month
Between their births.

(5.1.115-18)

In her wonderful sadistic way, Paulina emphasizes the fatality of Leontes' former paranoia, keeping alive the memory of the past if not in this case the actual victim of it. In addition, she speaks uncharacteristically here for the union of men, subtly replacing the image of Perdita's marriage to Florizel with a different masculine pairing. Even the most independent voice of female power in this play speaks up to long for the past of the twinned lambs.

The play's final scene of miraculous heterosexual restoration, then, is claimed by the power of the sexually stigmatized boy in at least two ways. On the one hand, the very reality of the statue's femaleness is a boast about theater, about the power of a cross-dressed boy to fool an audience, even an onstage audience. On the other hand, the legitimate claim of Mamillius to be present at this family reunion ensures that the marriage of Florizel and Perdita and the miraculous rebirth of Hermione will on some level acquire their poignancy because they are compensation for another loss, for the jewel of children who cannot be replaced by stagings of even the most forgiving and fertile heterosexual embrace.

**Ganymedes and Kings: Staging Male Homosexual Desire in The Winter's Tale: V**

I return, finally, to Halperin's discussion of *The Symposium* in order to clarify the relation between *The Winter's Tale's* assumption of female procreativity and the problem with which I began this essay: the difference in signifying power between the participation of boys and the participation of men in homosexual and homoerotic acts. Halperin argues that Diotima functions as a mimetic device through which Plato appropriates a putatively "feminine" erotics as the cornerstone of his own teachings, his own articulation of what *The Symposium* calls "right pederasty." Concerned as she is with the erotics of pedagogy, Diotima aligns herself, in Halperin's account, with the symbolic appropriations of female procreativity that typify male rites of passage in ancient and modern patriarchal cultures. Like the couvade, like ritual scarrings that symbolize menstruation in men, like pederastic rites that initiate boys into manhood and employ procreative imagery, Diotima gives witness to "the determination of men to acquire the powers they ascribe (whether correctly or incorrectly) to women," which Halperin calls "a remarkably persistent and widespread feature of male culture."40
Importantly, according to Halperin, these appropriations of female procreativity inevitably depend upon the failure of men to represent women:

Even in the midst of mimicking menstruation, pregnancy, giving birth, and breastfeeding, the male actors must share with their audience the understanding that their procreative performances are symbolic, not real—that nose-bleeding is not menstruating, that oral insemination is not breastfeeding. The point of all those rites, after all, is to turn boys into men, not into women: for the cultural construction of masculinity to succeed it is necessary that the process intended to turn boys into men be genuinely efficacious, no less "generative" than female procreativity itself, but it is also necessary that the men who do the initiating retain their identity as men—something they can only do if their assumption of "feminine" capacities and powers is understood to be an impersonation, a cultural fiction, or (at the very least) a mere analogy. (146)

Thus Halperin accounts for The Symposium's relative lack of concern for Diotima's authenticity, its willingness to let readers suspect that Socrates merely uses her as a voice through which to speak his own erotic doctrines.

The Symposium, then, lets the mask of female impersonation slip for the purposes of bolstering the power of men and bolstering the power of "masculine" and "feminine" as categories of definition. Its efforts to do so are, as Halperin points out, fully appropriate to a treatise on the pederastic initiation of Greek boys. The Winter's Tale, on the other hand, while similarly preoccupied with the transition from boyhood to "more mature dignities"—and with the erotic significance of that transition—performs its version of what Halperin calls "mimetic transvestism" to what is ultimately a much more unsettling effect. Leontes and Polixenes portray themselves, and others portray them, as having outgrown their childish proximity to one another and to the implicit homoeroticism of boyhood. Because the ganymede repeatedly intrudes, however, upon the terrain of heterosexual reconciliation and procreation, the play finally dramatizes the difficulty of distancing men from boys, of marking any absolute passage through time from one erotic mode to another. As I have argued in the early portions of this essay, the implied narrative of masculine development that relegates something like homosexual identity to boyhood (while allotting to mature men a literally insignificant or uninscriptive range of sexual choices) is finally unsustainable in the erotic context of English Renaissance theater. Because all players could share in the sexual stigma of the ganymede, because everyone on the Shakespearean stage was implicated in the boy actor's sexual display, no real rite of passage is finally possible. When The Winter's Tale allows the ganymede to peek out from behind its display of natural and female fecundity, it reveals, finally, not the supreme confidence of Platonic distinctions between male and female, but instead a peculiarly theatrical breakdown of the distinctions between ganymede and king. In so doing, it claims for the theater not only the free play of sexual desire, but also the power of that desire to adhere to subjects.

Notes

1 Alan Bray, Homosexuality in Renaissance England (London: Gay Men's Press, 1982), 34.


6 See for example Bredbeck's introduction, to Sodomy and Interpretation: Marlowe to Milton (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), quoted in text. Goldberg argues that "the invocation of historical difference . . . cannot be used as a way of cordoning off the past from the present" (Sodometries, 6). Louise O. Fradenburg and Carla Freccero present a series of articles that complicate the "acts vs. identities" debate, including their own introduction, which asks whether "alterism functions within current historicist practice precisely to stabilize the identity of 'the modern'" ("Premodern Sexualities in Europe," Gay and Lesbian Quarterly 1 [1995]:378). See also Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park, who challenge "the conventional binary periodization of sexuality into 'modern' and 'pre-modern'" ("The Hermaphrodite and the Orders of Nature: Sexual Ambiguity in Early Modern France" Gay and Lesbian Quarterly 1 [1995]:419). Alan Sinfield's speculations are particularly helpful in their readjustment of the notion of historical difference:

I have a suspicion that the quest for the moment at which the modern homosexual subject is constituted is misguided. I suspect that what we call gay identity has, for a long time, been always in the process of getting constituted—as the middle classes have been always rising, or, more pertinently, as the modern bourgeois subject has for a long time been in the process of getting constituted. Theorists of post-structuralism . . . sometimes write as if they were showing that Shakespeare and his contemporaries did not envisage full or even coherent subjectivities in anything like the modern way. But actually these scholars tend to discover ambivalent or partial signs of subjectivity; they catch not the absence of the modern subject, but its emergence. . . . Of course, the human subject is never full, and hence may, at any moment, appear unformed. And so with gay subjectivity, which because of its precarious social position is anyway more fragile and inconstant: it is on-going, we are still discovering it" (Cultural Politics—Queer Reading [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994] 14).

7 Bredbeck, Sodomy and Interpretation, xi.


9 This observation is too widespread to be cataloged, but the following examples are instructive. Madelon (Sprengnether) Gohlke notes that "Once Othello is convinced of Desdemona's infidelity . . . he regards her not as a woman who has committed a single transgression but as a whore, one whose entire behavior may be explained in terms of lust" ("I Wooed Thee with My Sword': Shakespeare's Tragic Paradigms," in Representing Shakespeare: New Psychoanalytic Essays, ed. Murray M. Schwartz and Coppella Kahn, 174 [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980]). Similarly, Coppella Kahn points out that "the cuckold may take revenge against either his wife or her lover, or against both. According to the double standard, however, she has become a whore, irrevocably degraded by even one sexual transgression" (Man's Estate: Masculine Identity in Shakespeare [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981], 121). Janet Adelman's reading of, for instance, Hamlet, speaks powerfully of the importance of sexuality in the characterization of a Gertrude or an Ophelia, and the play becomes for her a paradigm for the anxieties about women's sexuality that resonate throughout the Shakespearean canon: "as they enter into sexuality, the virgins—Cressida,
Desdemona, Imogen—will be transformed into whores, their whoredom acted out in the imaginations of their nearest and dearest; and the primary antidote to their power will be the excision of their sexual bodies, the terrible revirginations that Othello performs on Desdemona, and Shakespeare on Cordelia" (Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays, "Hamlet" to "The Tempest" [New York: Routledge, 1992], 36). Speaking not so much of adultery but simply of marriage, Carol Thomas Neely argues that the loss of virginity signals for Shakespeare's heroines the loss of "their position as idealized beloveds" (Broken Nuptials in Shakespeare's Plays [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985], 63). Critics who focus more primarily upon the inscription of women's bodies also locate sexuality—perhaps necessarily—at the center of the idea of woman. Susan J. Wiseman, writing about 'Tis Pity She's a Whore, notes that "it is . . . Anabella's body rather than Giovanni's which comes to bear the meaning" of the incest they commit together ("'Tis Pity She's a Whore: Representing the Incestuous Body," in Renaissance Bodies: The Human Figure in English Culture, c. 1540-1660, ed. Lucy Grant and Nigel Llewellyn [London: Reaktion Books, 1990] 188).

Peter Stallybrass analyzes contradictory cultural assumptions about women's sexuality that are expressed as actual features of women's bodies, be they figured as "grotesque" or "classical" ("Patriarchal Territories: The Body Enclosed," in Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe, ed. Margaret W. Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy J. Vickers [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986]).


13 There is the further suggestion that Ganimeede is physically inscribed even by heterosexual desire when Daphnis describes him as a beloved "Vpon whose forehead you may plainely reade / Loues Pleasure, grau'd in yuorie Tables bright" (15.4). Again, it is not the desire of the boy himself that is at stake here, so much as his susceptibility to being inscribed by pleasure.

14 Among the many critics who discuss the erotic significance of the boy actor see especially Laura Levine, Men in Women's Clothing: Anti-Theatricality and Effeminization, 1579-1642 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); and Stephen Orgel, Impersonations: The Performance of Gender in Shakespeare's England (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). See also Valerie Traub's challenge to the notion that pederasty and effeminacy were primary modes of male homosexual expression in this period (Desire and Anxiety: Circulations of Sexuality in Shakespearean Drama [New York: Routledge, 1992], 94). My own intention is not to conflate pederasty with sodomy, so much as to explore the signifying power of this one form of sodomitical desire. There is, of course, merit to Stephen Orgel's claim that early modern England evinced no "morbid fear of homoeroticism as such" (36). While recognizing the culture's investment in homoerotic patronage and friendship, and in transvestite theater, I want nevertheless to give antisodomitical discourse its due. As Louis Montrose has recently argued, to accept antitheatricalism as an authentic cultural expression rather than a negligible pathology is "to respect the intelligence and sincerity of contemporary
opponents, and also to appreciate that the Elizabethan theater may have exercised a considerable but unauthorized and therefore deeply suspect affective power upon those Elizabethan subjects who experienced it" (The Purpose of Playing: Shakespeare and the Cultural Politics of the Elizabethan Theatre [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996], 45). It seems unlikely to me, given the importance of Puritan belief in this period, that the pleasure of theater was unaccompanied by a genuine awareness of its controversial sexuality.

15 The two books that most powerfully influence my understanding of theater as an institution in this period are Andrew Gurr, Playgoing in Shakespeare's London (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); and Leeds Barroll, Politics, Plague, and Shakespeare's Theater (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991). Both stress the dangers of overstating the connections between the theaters and the aristocracy, Gurr by critiquing the notion that it was predominantly the wealthy and powerful who frequented the theaters, and Barroll by arguing persuasively that James I did not in fact regard the stage as an extension of his own monarchy, as some new historicists have implied. Nevertheless, their own works imply a complex interaction between patronage and regulation of the theaters, not because the court understood the greatness of art and the city officials were moralistic puritans, but because both governing bodies knew the stage could be defended or attacked for strategic reasons. See Montrose, Purpose of Playing, chapter 5, for a careful study of the relation between court patronage and city regulation in Elizabeth's reign. I am also grateful to A. R. Braunmuller and the members of his Folger Institute seminar, 1996, for many rich discussions of the position of the stage in early modern England, and to Susan Zimmerman's colloquium at the Folger, 1996-97, for very helpful feedback on this essay. This work and the larger project from which it was taken would have been impossible, moreover, without the help of Janet Adelman and Joel Altman.

16 Traub, Desire and Anxiety, 16.

17 A second and third blast of retrait from plaies and Theaters (London, 1580) 3-4.


19 "But so long as he lives unmarried, hee mistakes the Boy, or a Whore for the Woman; by courting the first on the stage, or visiting the second at her devotions" (E. K. Chambers, The Elizabethan Stage [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923], 257). A Common Player is attributed to Cocke by Chambers, who reproduces the text from two variant editions included among the essays of John Stephens (255).

20 The Anatomie of Abuses: contayning a Discoverie, or briefe Summarie, of such Notable Vices and Imperfections, as now raigne in many Christian Countreyes of the Worlde, but (especiallie) in a verie famous Llande called Ailgna, 1583. Ed. F. J. Furnivall (London: New Shakespeare Society, 1877-79) 144-45.

21 White argues that "the cause of plagues is sinne . . . and the cause of sinne are playes: therefore the cause of plagues are playes." For White, the devastation caused by the plague joins with the moral destructiveness of theater, making tangible the self-loss associated with theatrical practice (A Sermon preached at Pavles Crosse on Sunday the thirde of November 1577 in the time of the Plague, [London, 1578], 48).

22 Noted in Russell Fraser, The War against Poetry (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 26. Fraser outlines early modern objections to the poetic, noting that the attribution of sterility to poetry was related to a growing capitalist emphasis upon productivity. See especially 4-6.

23 John Northbrooke, A Treatise Wherein Dicing, Dauncing, Vaine playes, or Enterluds . . . are Reproofed, London, 1577-75; Henry Crosse, Vertues Commonwealth: Or the Highway to Honour (London, 1603), V4. In Refutation, I.G. charges that "men have deuised many unlawful artificiall Pleasures, whereby they might passe away (as their name Pastimes signifie) the most precious time of their life . . . idiele and fruitlesse, without
any profit to the Church, or Common-wealth wherein they lieu, or to their owne soules . . . choking up the
good Seed of the Word, which should dwell plentifully in their heartes, and in sted thereof, sowing the Tares
reaped from ungodly and obscaene Stageplayes" (1615, introduction and bibliographical notes by Richard H.

24A Winter's Tale, ed. J. H. P. Pafford (London: Methuen, 1963) 1.2.187-89. All further references are to this
dition.

25 Like the catamite who seems intrinsically homoerotic, boys seem here by their nature to be theatrical
beings. Their "varying childness" makes them paradoxically static, full-time occupants of a state of
undifferentiatedness that others visit only in memories of childhood, or onstage. The pleasure of changing
identities was also associated with homosexual practice in early modern England. Discussing romance in
chapter 4 and satire in chapter 5 of Homosexual Desire, Bruce Smith argues persuasively that homosexual
behavior in this period, along with its literary representation, could include extensive play with gender
identity. See also Smith's discussion of "boy" as a term that inscribes "a distinction in power vis-à-vis a social
or moral superior" (195).

26 For a discussion of breeching, see Adelman, Suffocating Mothers, 7. Adelman discusses breeching in
relation to the maternal in The Winter's Tale on 228.

27 Although Virgil's eclogues are the Renaissance's source for pastoral convention, early modern writers also
knew a version of pastoral that downplayed the political import of Virgil's poetry in favor of a more
sentimentalized nostalgia for the rustic life, figured as an Eden or a Golden Age. To the extent that Polixenes'
description of childhood can be compared with the pastoral at all (admittedly, among more important
differences, most pastoral poetry was not written from the perspective of the sheep), it must be as an echo of
this latter nostalgic pastoral rather than as a Virgilian treatment of social problems. The play's later
sheep-shearing scenes, however, are much more strongly Virgilian in their use of pastoral landscape and song
to discuss what are clearly not Utopian concerns. For extended treatments of both Polixenes' nostalgia and the
sheep-shearing scene, see Peter Lindenbaum, Changing Landscapes: Anti-Pastoral Sentiment in the English

28 Bruce Smith discusses Polixenes' version of the pastoral in the context of the all-male educational
institutions in which Elizabethan men spent their childhood and adolescence, noting the likelihood that these
institutions fostered homosexual behavior (Homosexual Desire, 98-99).

29 Jonathan Dollimore explores the contradictions of the "natural" in relation to the perverse, meaning by
perverse a category of oppositions to the dominant order (disguising itself as natural) that come increasingly
to be identified with sexual difference. I see some such relation working itself out in The Winter's Tale, with
Puritan assumptions about the natural order of heterosexual fertility and economic productivity standing in
opposition to the imagined unnatural behaviors of theatrical practicers and patrons. Like Dollimore's work,
The Winter's Tale explores the contradictions inherent in the category of the natural, and it further embarks
upon a reappropriation of nature as a function of a homoeroticized artistic endeavor (Sexual Dissidence:
Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991)).

30 Stanley Cavell writes compellingly of the necessity for Polixenes to leave Sicilia (Disowning Knowledge in
with a particular poignancy Hermione's success at bridging the gap over which the two kings shake hands,
noting that just after Leontes has described his initial sexual conquest of her as a sour and crabbed opening of
her white hand, Hermione turns and offers that hand to Polixenes: "Why lo you now; I have spoke to th'
purpose twice: / The one, for ever earn'd a royal husband; / Th'other, for some while a friend [Giving her hand


33 Sidney, for instance, remarks that philosophers "do authorize abominable filthiness" more than poets do, and he offers the Phaedrus and Symposium as evidence (The Defense of Poesie, (1583), in Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden, ed. Allan H. Gilbert, 406-61 [Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1940]). See also Gilbert 444 n. 94, which cites Scaliger's condemnation of the Symposium "and other monsters." I am indebted to Heather Weidemann for her suggestion that the Symposium was central to my reading of The Winter's Tale. I am not, however, suggesting that the Symposium is a source for the play or that Shakespeare knew it. The parallels between these two texts seem to me attributable to the persistence of certain strategies for legitimating male writing.

34 David Halperin, "Why Is Diotima a Woman," in One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love (New York: Routledge, 1990). I am grateful to Gregory Bredbeck for suggesting the parallels between Halperin's reading of Plato and my own work with this play, and for additional suggestions beyond the scope of individual citation.

35 A long line of critics associate the play's pastoral with the female; see especially Adelman's discussion: "Through its association with the female and its structural position in the play—outside Leontes's control, outside his knowledge—the pastoral can figure this [maternal] body, the unknown place outside the self where good things come from" (Suffocating Mothers, 231). Peter Erickson agrees that The Winter's Tale associates this pastoral with women, while he emphasizes the extent to which such a female power serves patriarchy (Patriarchal Structures in Shakespeare's Drama [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985] 158-62).


37 Frey argues that one of the great purposes of The Winter's Tale's second half is to recuperate the notion of "play" that Leontes' jealousy had made suspect in the play's first half. He sees Perdita's and Florizel's use of costumes as an important motion toward the restoration of faith in drama (Shakespeare's Vast Romance, 143-47). I would argue, however, that an early modern audience's faith in drama would require awakening for cultural reasons that go beyond Leontes' personal expressions of mistrust, including the complex of sexual allegations made about theatrical practice in the period.

38 Many critics have noted that the play's resolution depends upon Leontes' ability to rely upon female powers. See, for example, Kahn, Man's Estate, 216-19, and Marianne L. Novy, Love's Argument: Gender Relations in Shakespeare (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 176-77. Neely argues that the romances make possible an intertwining of "sexual/marital anxieties" with "political conflicts," in part because the frightening power of female sexuality has been displaced onto the father-daughter bond as a result of the mother's real or imagined death. She finds in The Winter's Tale the most powerful transformation of incestuous desire into an acceptance of heterosexual fertility, a transformation brought about through the
agency of Hermione, Paulina, and Perdita (chap. 5). Although Adelman claims that the-romances aim collectively to restore "the ideal parental couple lost at the beginning of *Hamlet*" (*Suffocating Mothers*, 193), in her reading paternal authority is the play's ultimate concern, and she would agree that paternal authority manages at best a momentary compromise with the sexual mother in *The Winter's Tale* (220-38). In Erickson's reading, Paulina is "less of an exception to the general rule of female obedience than she appears to be" (*Patriarchal Structures*, 162), since, like the play's other women, she exerts her efforts on behalf, ultimately, of male power (148-70).

39 In characterizing lesbian desire as an unrepresentable realm potentially outside of male control, I am building on the sense of its remoteness articulated in Donne's "Sapho to Philaenis":

> Men leave behinde them that which their sin showes
> And are as theves trac'd, which rob when it snows.
> But of our dallyance no more signes there are,
> Then fishes leave in streames, or Birds in aire.
> And betweene us all sweetnesse may be had;
> All, all that Nature yields, or Art can adde.

(39-44)

The poem itself belies the separateness of lesbian sex—which after all serves Donne's purposes, not Sappho's—but nevertheless invests in a fantasy of its Utopian isolation. I am of course using the term "lesbian" here and throughout with a consciousness of its historical anachronism. See Valerie Traub, "The (In)Significance of 'Lesbian' Desire in Early Modern England," in Goldberg, *Queering the Renaissance*.

40 Halperin, "Why Is Diotima a Woman?" 143.


**Critical Essays: Jacobean Muscovites: Winter, Tyranny, and Knowledge in *The Winter's Tale***

Daryl W. Palmer

Muscovy matters to the English imagination in ways that have scarcely been remarked. To some observers in Jacobean England, mention of the place would have conjured up stories of wintry exploration and icy imperialism, beginning, no doubt, with the image of Sir Hugh Willoughby, frozen along with his company in a Lapland river. Sailing north for Cathay in 1553, Willoughby gave new meaning to the telling of tales in winter. The note detailing his final ice-bound days in the month of September, discovered in one of his two ships, inscribes the event: "Thus remaining in this haven the space of a weeke, seeing the yeare farre spent, & also very evill wether, as frost, snow, and haile, as though it had beene the deepe of winter, we thought best to winter there."¹ Here is a story of winter coming before winter, of winter as fate and alien world, a narrative that breaks off because no one survives to finish it. The cold destruction of this winter's tale meshes in fascinating ways with the narrative of Richard Chancellor, who, having become separated from Willoughby in a tempest, voyaged on to make contact with Ivan the Terrible, emperor of Russia and the embodiment of rough, cold extremes. Chancellor, it was said, had discovered Russia.² A flourishing trade developed alongside fragile diplomatic ties. Russian ambassadors visited London in 1557, 1569, 1582, and 1600. A little group of Muscovite students came in 1602 to study at Winchester, Eton, Cambridge, and Oxford.³ And tales proliferated, so that the mere mention of Muscovites would have brought to mind a picture of this terrible Ivan
IV, the burly ruler who proposed marriage to one of Elizabeth's ladies and subsequently chastised the queen for allowing men to rule in her place, for ruling "in your maydenlie estate like a maide." Muscovy would have suggested the famously unhappy Boris Godunov. It would have triggered images of the wintry port of Archangel, a stormy place of tentlike encampments and of reindeer pulling sleds. Above all, it would have suggested the many narratives of Muscovy Company agents, rehearsed in the pages of Hakluyt and Purchas: stories of the emperor, his customs, jealousies, and violent deeds; accounts of Russian households and ceremonies; chorographies of Russian landscapes; and so on into a wintry prose that stands, I think, as prologue to Shakespeare's Winter's Tale.

The play encourages such associations even when it seems focused thematically and geographically elsewhere. When the king of Sicilia accuses his queen "of high treason, in committing adultery with Polixenes, king of Bohemia' (3.2.14-15), Hermione's defense, remarkable both for its pertinence and eloquence, nonetheless exceeds the local terms of Leontes's Sicilia and King James's London. As the court waits breathlessly for the oracle's word, Hermione adds,

The Emperor of Russia was my father:
O that he were alive, and here beholding
His daughter's trial! that he did but see
The flatness of my misery, yet with eyes
Of pity, not revenge!

(11. 119-23)

In the note to line 119 of his Arden edition of the play, J.H.P. Pafford echoes H. B. Charlton, who believes that the Muscovite reference lends "a sense of majesty and pathos" to Hermione's plight. Peter Erickson has proposed that "this recourse to the benign father provides a microcosm of the play's resolution." But in its particularity the passage surely demands more aggressive questioning, especially since we know that Shakespeare went out of his way to alter his source so that it was Hermione who would have a Russian father. In Greene's Pandosto, the main character contemplates the obstacles to his revenge: "yet he saw that Egistus was not only of great puissance and prowess to withstand him, but had also many kings of his alliance to aid him, if need should serve, for he married to the Emperor's daughter of Russia." In Greene's story, that is, the Russian connection is to the Polixenes character and matters incidentally, but Shakespeare keys Hermione's public display of innocence and outrage to the invocation of Russia.

What difference do trace elements of faraway cultures, their climates and their rulers, make to a grand and complex romance meant for the stage? Topicality, intertextuality, and influence are but a few of the terms scholars have traditionally employed in answering this kind of question; and the choice of rubric indicates a corresponding emphasis on culture, textuality, and the author, respectively. Regardless of the emphasis, the scholar's work depends on a process of identification whereby equivalent patterns are uncovered. For Glynne Wickham and David M. Bergeron the investigation of a topical Winter's Tale leads them, despite differing theoretical orientations, to identifications of the play's characters with the Stuart royal family. Similarly, when Leah Marcus reads Measure for Measure, she pursues an identification of Vienna with London. Louise Schleiner, following Julia Kristeva's subtle formulation of intertextuality, sees an identification between Greek versions of the Oresteia and Hamlet. In The Winter's Tale "Autolycus may incarnate the unemployed vagrant" of the period's pamphlet literature for Barbara Mowat. For Howard Felperin the old codes of the morality play and the early revenge play influence vestigially key scenes in Hamlet. In each case the process of identification seems to authorize the scholar's retelling of the Shakespeare story. In each case the question is not whether identifications can be avoided but whether the scholar's descriptions of these identifications can admit obvious gaps and contradictions and still have value as interpretive enterprises. Marcus offers on this score, noting "meanings generated by a given text may well be multiple or self-canceling, or both. Instead of striving for a single holistic interpretation of a text, we may find ourselves marking out a range of possibilities or identifying nexuses of contradiction."

In light of these precedents, taking up Hermione's reference to the emperor of Russia becomes a precarious business for several reasons, the most important being that, unlike Schleiner or Felperin, I have no one or two rich texts to hold up against Shakespeare's play. Instead, my proposed mode of attenuated reading actually leads to a scattering of identifications between and among dozens of jostling texts born of decades of English contact with Russia. Such reading ensures that I will not be able to tell Shakespeare's tale anew and whole. This apparent diffuseness will prove unsettling to some, reassuring to others. But ultimately the issue has less to do with my ability to account for Shakespeare's play than with my responsibility to that play's dialogue with its culture of origin. If the play dangles identifications of Jacobean Muscovites in front of me, then I want to be able to describe what made those identifications provocative. When, for instance, Shakespeare invokes a Russian ruler, he encourages his audience to undertake a fleeting albeit bracing "passage from one sign system to another," from English questions about kingship to Russian queries on the same theme. Marking these passages, I can give shape to my reading by respecting fields of cultural doubt, regions of common anxiety, what Marcus calls "nex-uses of contradiction." In the pages that follow, I attend to three such fields—winter, tyranny, and knowledge. At the end of the essay, neither the play nor these fields will be reduced to neat individual tales; instead I shall have mapped a series of entertaining and half-fulfilled identifications that played out with urgency for a Jacobean audience.

The fact that any careful observer could have noticed certain resemblances between the apparently disparate worlds of England and Muscovy seems to have encouraged certain habits of analysis in the pages of Hakluyt and Purchas. To be sure, voyaging led English writers into a host of alien worlds where they developed and refined rhetorical strategies for constructing—even consuming—otherness. Nevertheless, Muscovy posed a special challenge because the region always appeared uncomfortably similar to England; indeed, from their first contact in 1553, English merchants and diplomats asked their readers to understand Muscovy as an imperfect analogue to England. This analogical thinking underlies both the composition and the reception of Shakespeare's romance. Richard Chancellor inaugurates the convention: "Mosco it selfe is great: I take the whole towne to bee greater then London with the suburbs: but it is very rude, and standeth without all order." Following the same rhetorical plan, he begs his reader to see the emperor of Russia in terms of the English monarch: "then I was sent for againe unto another palace which is called the golden palace, but I saw no cause why it should be so called; for I have seene many fayrer then it in all poynts: and so I came into the hall, which was small and not great as is the Kings Majesties of England." Invoking a favorite notion of the age, we might say that Russia existed as a kind of looking-glass for England and its ruler. The land and its people seemed to encourage projection. So when John Merrick, chief agent for the Muscovy Company, returned to England in the autumn of 1612, he asked James I to envision Russia as his own. Less than a year earlier Shakespeare had toyed with such identifications in The Winter's Tale. Now Merrick was proposing that the king make Russia a protectorate, and James fancied the notion. "A King," James asserted, "is trewly Parens patriae, the politique father of his people." Perhaps, with his noble prince Henry taken ill, James found comfort in imagining his fatherly duties elsewhere: he would be imposing parental order on the orphaned country. James was still contemplating the project when The Winter's Tale was performed at court on the occasion of Princess Elizabeth's wedding in February 1613. For a brief moment it seemed that the English monarch might actually take the place of the emperor of Russia, that the world of fractured courts might merge with the world of happy plays: but the election of Michael Romanov later that same year put an end to this fantasy of Jacobean Muscovites. James never saw his daughter again and hardly spoke to his wife. Any careful observer could have pointed out that none of these reflections had ever been stable.

What unsettled these reflections more than anything else was the famed Russian temperament, made available (as such notions often are) through an atmospheric discourse of season and place. Shakespeare could hardly have avoided the influence of this seductive matter. When Clement Adams set down Chancellor's account, he tried to capture the environment in a paradoxical scene of wonder:

The north parts of the Countrey are reported to be so cold, that the very ice or water which distilleteh out of the moist wood which they lay upon the fire is presently congealed and
frozen: the diversitie growing suddenly to be so great, that in one and the selfe firebrand, a man shall see both fire and ice.26

The idea of winter in Russia gave Englishmen a profoundly concrete way of writing about the yoking of elemental opposites. Accounts published in the decades preceding composition of *The Winter's Tale* nurtured the extraordinary vernacular of ice and fire. Giles Fletcher put the evolving aesthetic succinctly: "The whole countrie differeth very much from it selfe, by reason of the yeare; so that a man would mervaile to see the great alteration and difference betwixte the winter and the sommer in Russia."27 Here was a Russian world whose climate modeled the unstable psychologies of its inhabitants and also of the characters of English romance, who very often differ from themselves.

Then, in the 1590s, the Dutch explorer William Barents undertook three voyages to a string of islands off the northern coast of Russia, a region known as Nova Zemlya. On the third voyage, in 1596, the expedition found itself trapped in the thickening ice. Against incredible odds, the party survived the winter there. In 1598 Gerrit De Veer published his account of Barents's voyage in Dutch; Latin, French, and German editions of De Veer soon circulated throughout Europe. An English translation, by William Phillip, appeared in 1609. In a 1942 article Sarah M. Nutt recounts this publishing history and describes the resemblances between Claudio's "Thrilling region of thick-ribbed ice" in *Measure for Measure* and De Veer's narrative. Nutt characterizes the narrative as possessing that quality of interest and enthusiasm which might have served as a model for Claudio's delighted spirit. At times his descriptions of nature become intensely poetic. He often speaks of the terrific movements of the pack-ice and the strength of tremendous polar bears as "admirable."28

In the same essay Nutt catalogs the variety of icy allusions in seven other plays by Shakespeare, pointing out that

the year 1609 saw a revival of interest in the search for a northeast passage. The Dutch East India Company had persuaded Henry Hudson to leave the employ of the Muscovy Company to make a new trial for them and a rival group of Dutch merchants immediately sent out another expedition. The open-polar-sea theory gained new adherents. Thomas Pavier finally printed Phillip's translation of De Veer's narrative; it was dedicated to the governor of the Muscovy Company.29

As Shakespeare composed his romance for staging in 1611, *winter* and *Muscovy* were in fashion. Moreover, Nutt correctly suggests that this language of alien winter could function quite effectively for a playwright interested in the extremes of romance characters.

A decades-old dialogue between poetry and commerce affirmed that great profits were to be made by moving between England and Russia as long as Englishmen were prepared for the attendant risks—both physical and political. In fact, the published communications between England and Muscovy suggested an evolving language of suspicion, secrecy, and spying. On the one hand was the court of Ivan IV, where the ruler so distrusted his subjects that he wrote to Elizabeth in 1565 of "the perverse and evill dealinge of our subjects, who mourmour and repine at us; forgettinge loyall obedience they practice againste our person."30 This distrust gradually extended to the English queen herself. By 1568 the emperor had become so frustrated with Elizabeth's inattention to his overtures for greater princely intimacy that Thomas Randolph, the queen's ambassador, met with royal suspicion on his arrival in Moscow. He complained of being "straightlie kepte prisoner with suche uncourtoyse usage of the sergeaunt that kepte them, as worse coulde not have byn shewed to an enemy."31 On the other hand was Richard Eden, who described the English "discovery" of Muscovy "by the direction and information of the sayde master Sebastian who longe before had this secrete
in his minde." During the 1550s and 1560s this single English secret grew into a distinctive mode of 
operation for Cabot's company. As part of their instructions to the purser and other servants of the third 
voyage to Muscovy in 1556, the Company commanded the men to "spie and search as secretly as you may,"
probing for abuses by Englishmen and Muscovites alike. These merchants were asked to have "Argos eyes" 
and to "keepe a note thereof in your booke secretly to your selfe." Refining these aims in a letter to their 
agents in Russia in 1557, officials of the Muscovy Company noted the emperor's mistrust of the ambassador 
and reminded the agents to write in "cyphers." Such examples, drawn from the actions of Muscovites and 
Englishmen alike, could be multiplied many times over. Taken together, they amount to a veritable code of 
diplomatic interaction between two kingdoms whose rulers never forgot to address each other as "sister" and 
"brother," where travelers could never be certain of the line between "prisoner" and "guest."

From within a context of suspicion and spying, contemporary observers began to compare the two realms in 
order to articulate a virulent notion of tyranny. Writing of his journey to Muscovy in 1557, Anthony 
Jenkinson explains that "This Emperor is of great power: for he hath conquered much, as well of the 
Lieflanders, Poles, Lettoes, and Swethens. … He keepeth his people in great subjection: all matters passe his 
judgement, be they never so small. The law is sharpe for all offenders." George Turberville ville devotes one 
of his verse letters to a description of Russia as the

... savage soyle,  
where lawes doe beare no sway  
But all is at the King his wil,  
to save or els to slay.  
And that saunce cause God wot,  
if so his minde be such  
But what meane I with kings to deale  
we ought no Saints to touch.  
Conceave the rest your selfe,  
and deeme what lives they leade:  
Where lust is law, and subjectes live  
continually in dread.

The poet's couplets suggest that "the emperor of Russia" was synonymous with arbitrary and extreme 
vioence. To the English mind the emperor of Russia meant torture. Purchas relates how Ivan's own brother 
was "put to exquisite tortures first, and after to death; his wife stripped and set naked to the eyes of all, and 
then by one on horse-backe drawne with a rope in to the River and drowned." Purchas also tells how Ivan's 
"Chancellor Dubrowsti sitting at table with his two Sonnes, were also upon accusation without answere cut in 
pieces, and the third sonne quartered alive with foure wheeles, each drawne a divers way by fifteene men." 
Purchas describes Ivan's dissatisfaction with his supreme notary, whose "wife was taken from him, and after 
some weeks detayning was with her hand-maid hanged over her husbands doore, and so continued a fortnight, 
he being driven to goe in and out by her all that time." Writing directly to Elizabeth, Giles Fletcher explains 
that "In their [the Russians'] maner of government, your Highnesse may see both a true and strange face of a 
tyrannical state (most unlike to your own), without true knowledge of God, without written lawe, without 
common justice." In his "Maxims of State," Sir Walter Ralegh emphasizes the need for "proportion" in the 
government of a nation, a balance of power, "so that a monarch be not too monarchical, strict, or absolute, as 
the Russe kings." At the end of James's reign, Purchas concludes: "We Englishmen under the government of 
his Majestie, have enjoyed such a Sunshine of peace, that our Summers day to many hath beene tedious,"
while the Russian emperors have engendered a "Hellmouth centre, there pitching the Tents of Destruction, 
there erecting the Thrones of Desolation." In the manifold elaboration of these comparisons, the writers have 
begun to use the idea of the emperor of Russia and his propensity for violence in their measurements of early 
modern England. We can certainly imagine, I think, a mature Shakespeare musing over Turberville's couplets 
and their sense that "lust is law." In crafting the unstable blank verse of Leontes, the playwright simply
extends a poetic assay that was decades in the making.

At this juncture it ought to be apparent that Hermione's invocation of a Russian father resonates with far more specificity than the play's critics have previously noted. In her awful moment of persecution, Hermione appeals to a land famous for subjection. In their imaginations the English audience might remember Ivan IV for many things, certainly for revenge; but pity would not be the obvious choice. So the daughter of the Russian emperor turns out to be what we would call an "expert witness." She testifies:

if I shall be condemn'd
Upon surmises, all proofs sleeping else
But what your jealousies awake, I tell you
'Tis rigour and not law.

(3.2.111-14)

Hermione can grasp the difference between rigor and law in such clear monosyllabic terms—"I tell you"—because her own father epitomizes its abuse. I suggest that her search for pity from the Russian emperor marks the extremity of Leontes's tyranny; or else, perhaps even at the same time, it marks her great capacity for hope. The queen knows the emperor of Russia and still imagines a sympathetic gaze.

What I want to emphasize here is the extraordinary way that identifications multiply in light of Hermione's paternal invocation. For instance, Bergeron has shown in convincing detail how this mimetic relationship translates in The Winter's Tale into an emphasis on fathers and royal succession, re-presenting the ongoing conflict between James and his son Henry, suggesting to a courtly audience in 1613 "Henry's death painfully fresh in their minds." In Shakespeare's play, of course, Leontes exceeds Jacobean fury by angling for the destruction of his own newborn child: "Go, take it to the fire" (2.3.140). Having lost both his wife and son, Leontes listens to the oracle define the crisis: the king of Sicilia "shall live without an heir, if that which is lost be not found" (3.2.135-36). So the Sicilian problem is a Jacobean concern is a Russian fate, because, as Turberville puts it, "best estates" have "none assurance good / Of lands, of lives nor nothing falles / unto the next of blood." As in Shakespeare's play, the emperor of Russia also had to endure the effects of his own tyranny. On 9 November 1581 Ivan entered his daughter-in-law's chamber and began to rebuke her for her attire. When his son, Ivan, answered his wife's cries, the father and son fought and the son was killed. Jerome Horsey relates the course of events, how Ivan strake him in his furie a box on the ear; whoe toke it so tenderly, fell into a burninge feavour, and died within three daies after. Wherat the Emperor tore his hear and byrd like a madd man, lamentinge and morninge for the loss of his sonn. But the kingdom had the greatest loss, the hope of their comfortt, a wise, mild and most woorthy prince, of heroicall condicion. 

When Ivan died in 1584, disputed successions rocked his empire. The "Thrones of Desolation" described by Purchas were, in part, attributable to the emperor's violence against his own offspring. Of equal importance for our understanding of the Russian emperor's relation to Shakespeare's play is the way that, over time, the historical specificity of Ivan's familial violence collapsed into a simple notation of psychological extremes. By 1674 a historian writing about Muscovy could conclude that Ivan killed his son "upon no other provocation than that of his violent Temper." Hermione's "father" had already become an archetype.

Finally, if we are to understand something of English theatrical pleasure and its relation to Ivan's cruel ways, then we must confront the bear's part in Shakespeare's romance. Many critics have noted, as Nutt does, that "there was really no necessity for this scene; Antigonus could just as easily have been taken out of the action by the shipwreck." So why the bear? In part, as Sir Walter Raleigh pointed out at the beginning of this century, the creature functions as a bridge, leading the audience toward the spring world of comedy. And, in part, Shakespeare surely understood that the bear carries symbolic and cultural associations: ideas of winter

123
and tyranny mingled with his audience's taste for bearbaitings. 49

I want to suggest that the bear alludes here (as it always did in sixteenth-century Moscow) to Ivan and the play's investment in notions of kingship. By 1603 this connection could be dealt with in shorthand by Purchas: "Cutting out tongues, cutting off hands and feet of his complaing Subjects, and other diversifi ed tortures I omit; as also the guarding his father in lawes doores with Beares tyed there." Ivan, he explains, liked "recreating himselfe with letting Beares loose in throngs of people." 50 As it did for the common audience in early modern London, the bear embodied for Muscovites Ivan's particular tastes in sport. Nowhere is this ursine association more telling than in Fletcher's narrative about Ivan's "private behavior":

One other speciall recreation is the fight with wilde beares, which are caught in pittes or nets, and are kepte in barred cages for that purpose, against the emperour be disposed to see the pastime. The fight with the beare is on this sort. The man is turned into a circle walled round about, where he is to quite himselfe so well as he can, for there is no way to flie out. When the beare is turned loose, he commeth upon him with open mouth. … But many times these hunters come short, and are either slaine, or miserably torne with the teeth and talents of the fierce beast. If the party quite himselfe well in this fight with the beare, he is carried to drinke at the emperour's seller door, where he drinketh himselfe drunke for the honor of Hospodare. And this is his reward for adventuring his life for the emperours pleasure. To maintaine this pastime the emperor hath certein huntsmen that are appointed for that purpose to take the wild beare. This is his recreation commonly on the holy daies. 51

Fletcher's formula is seductive: know the tyrant through his "recreation" and the origins of his "pleasure." I would, in turn, apply this formula to Shakespeare's theater and suggest that we understand the romance of tyranny as a psychological triumph in which the audience learns how to take pleasure from cruel re-creation. 52

Traces of violence from alien cultures contribute to this end because they can be mingled with native tastes while retaining an aura of alterity, of "not"

Shakespeare manages this negotiation with dexterity. Near the end of the play, Autolycus has the Clown by his ears, regaling him with Polixenes's planned barbarities against the Shepherd's son. "who shall be flayed alive, then 'nointed over with honey, set on the head of a wasps' nest, then stand till he be three quarters and a dram dead …" (4.4.785-88). But most fascinating, the narration of tyranny (Paulina's old task) has been taken over by the fooling thief and ballad-hawker. At this distance, near the play's end, a tyrant's atrocities become the stuff of "merrie tragedie," leading the frightened Clown to seek out Autolycus's help and to spell out a marketable version of kingship: "and though authority be a stubborn bear, yet he is oft led by the nose with gold" (11. 803-4). The Clown's proverbial wisdom sharpens the significance of the Russian emperor in Shakespeare's vision of royal romance. The existence of Ivan and Muscovy allowed English writers to imagine authority as a wild, raging bear, a creature of spectacle that entertained both kings and commoners alike. The trope of Ivan as beast fable enabled the English audience to become fanciful when thinking about political exigencies, to imagine that courtly capacities for envy and cruelty belonged to old tales from faraway lands of winter. So the detail that startles and makes us question its necessity actually leads toward a more thoughtful consideration of the royal households on which succession depends.

Both the historian Felicity Heal and I have argued that the idea of hospitality exists as a profound nexus for English Renaissance thought. 54 In one prose tract after another, writers shaped evolving humanist ideals in terms of household structure and management. But the impulse to define the household that inspired Tasso flowed through Muscovy as well. In Shakespeare's day the grand Muscovite text on the subject was the Domostróy, compiled during Ivan's reign. In a distinctly Muscovite fashion, the Domostróy codifies household discipline and punishment. It advises: "Punish your son in his youth, and he will give you a quiet old age" and "If you love your son, punish him frequently." 55 Expanding the uses of familial rigor, the book codifies hospitable conventions in an explanation of the wife's discipline. We find an uncanny prologue to the
matter of *The Winter's Tale*: "Let her be sure that her husband wants her to keep company with the guests she invites, or the people she calls upon." In this context the household text enjoins, "A woman ought to talk with her lady-friends of handwork and housekeeping."56 The husband's control of the woman's company and talk are absolutely crucial to the life of the household. In his account Jenkinson confirms this fact: "The women be there very obedient to their husbands, & are kept straightly from going abroad, but at some seasons."57 To these bits of cultural proscription, I would append a scene of Muscovite hospitality.

In his account of Chancellor's arrival in Muscovy, the schoolmaster Adams pays special attention to the Russian emperor's hospitality, his royal "Cupboorde," "the vessels, and goblets" of gold. Adams notes how "the ghests were all apparelld with linnen without, and with rich skinnes within, and so did notably set out this royall feast."58 Adams notices many things, but Ivan's handling of the bread fascinates him most:

… and before the comming in of the meate, the Emperour himselfe, according to an ancient custome of the kings of Muscovy, doth first bestow a piece of bread upon every one of his ghests, with a loud pronunciation of his title, and honour. … Whereupon al the ghests rise up, and by & by sit downe againe.59

Adams goes on with his narration, but this ceremony so catches his imagination that he returns to it once more: "The Russes tolde our men, that the reason thereof, as also of the bestowing of bread in that maner, was to the ende that the Emperour might keepe the knowledge of his owne houshold: and withal, that such as are under his displeasure, might by this meanes be known."60 I find in this account the kind of cultural motive that ties the many foregoing scenes of Muscovite life together. The emperor's practice and his ordinance come together as a special version of Renaissance government. Whereas the traditional ideal of "the Renaissance" is absolutely defined by the humanist impulse to recover, translate, and share knowledge, Muscovy in the same age is positively defined by the keeping of knowledge. Royal displeasure is taken for granted. Talk and company must be controlled and limited. The ruler must be able to name and summon servants at will. Men keep knowledge, while women simply take their disciplined place under male confinement.

With its strange cartographic accretions and what Stephen Orgel has dubbed its incomprehensibility, "61*The winter's Tale* makes sense in terms of this makes sense in terms of this alien model. Since Chancellor's first voyage to the frozen land of Ivan IV, English writers had probed this kind of linkage. I suggest, then, that we might place—if not understand—Leontes's jealousy. The king inhabits a world of secrecy, suspicion, and sying that has no proper name until the playwright asks his audience to think on the emperor of Russia. When Leontes confronts Camillo, he complains of his servant's powers of observation: "not noted, is't, / But of the finer natures?" (1.2.225). The Sicilian king is trapped in a Muscovite bind, struggling to control wife's talk in (what seems to him) a precarious court while attempting to be hospitable. He tells her to speak, so Hermione pleads with Polixenes: "How say you? / My prisoner? or my guest?" (11. 54-55). As in Muscovy, the difference between prisoner and guest is dangerously ambiguous. The ruler's mounting jealousy over her winning conversation comes in an aside: "O, that is entertainment / My bosom likes not, nor my brows" (11. 118-19). Leontes struggles to put into public speech what the factors of the Muscovy Company committed to "cyphers": the need to discipline talk and negotiate suspicion. This leads the king aggressively toward his son and heir and on toward a nearly incomprehensible rage. In lines that recall Fletcher's poetical account of fire and ice in the Russian winter, Camillo describes Leontes as "one / Who, in rebellion with himself, will have / All that are his, so too" (11. 354-56). Seen from a Muscovite perspective, the Sicilian predicament is clear: they can fathom neither the ways nor the consequences of keeping knowledge. Shakespeare's romance is, among many other things, a grand interrogation of competing versions of how human beings ought to treat knowledge.62

The playwright has Polixenes announce the theme in straightforward terms when he presses Camillo: "If you know aught which does behove my knowledge / Thereof to be inform'd, imprison't not / In ignorant concealment" (11. 395-97). "Ignorant concealment" stands as a wonderfully crabbed epither for what the rest
of the play is about. By the end of The Winter's Tale, all of the major characters have engaged in a version of this practice. Polixenes, Camillo, Florizel, Perdita, Autolycus, Paulina, and Hermione—all conceal knowledge in order, for better and for worse, to breed ignorance in their relations with others. Along the way, each character attempts to assert a distinctive mastery over the others, that special prerogative that Ivan so violently protected. In this spirit Leontes complains, "Alack, for lesser knowledge!" (2.1.38). The king then returns to the language of hospitality to explain his sense of betrayal, invoking the fanciful notion of the cup poisoned by the spider which cannot kill if the spider is unseen because the drinker's "knowledge / Is not infected" (11. 41-42). Properly kept knowledge, we may presume, would make the keeper inviolable, but Leontes confesses with fury: "I have drunk, and seen the spider" (1. 45). Weakened by infected knowledge, the king is vulnerable to the challenges of the women. When Leontes accuses Hermione of being a "bed-swerver" and cohort in the escape of Polixenes and Camillo, the queen chides, "No, by my life, / Privy to none of this. How will this grieve you, / When you shall come to clearer knowledge …" (11. 93 and 96-97). Hermione's innocence is founded on honest ignorance, and her retort has authority because she discriminates between kinds of knowledge. From the same solid ground, Paulina challenges the king's anger, obtaining the baby daughter by command: "The keeper of the prison, call to him; / Let him have knowledge who I am" (2.2.1-2). Informed of the woman's arrival, Leontes's bitter, perhaps comic conclusion sums up his tangled position of knowing and commanding: "I charg'd thee that she should not come about me. / I knew she would" (2.3.43-44).

Lest we miss the ubiquity of the problem Shakespeare is dramatizing and casually attribute the whole question to the failings of the Sicilian king, we need to look ahead into the springtime world of Bohemia, where Florizel is contemplating marriage to Perdita. When the disguised Polixenes questions Florizel about the absence of the father, the son replies: "for some other reasons, my grave sir, / Which 'tis not fit you know, I not acquaint / My father of this business" (4.4.412-14). In ways familiar from the preceding discussion, we find the prince keeping knowledge and the father spying out his suspicions. With an eye toward dramatic intensity, the playwright modulates this confrontation by constructing a series of shared verse lines in which the stakes become explicit before the recognition occurs:

```
POLIXENES                        Let him know 't.
FLORIZEL He shall not.
POLIXENES King, let him.
FLORIZEL                        No, he must not.
SHEPHERD Let him, my son: he shall not need
     At knowing of thy choice.
``` (11. 414-17)

The urgency of this pleading heightens the king's anger, a rage quite akin to Leontes's wrath in its violence and origin. "Know't" and "not," "know" and "no," knowledge and negation collapse in similar sounds, in a way of being in the world. Polixenes tells Perdita: "I'll have thy beauty scratch'd with briers and made / More homely than thy state" (11. 426-27). He threatens the Shepherd with a "cruel" death and threatens to deny his son's claim to the throne. Florizel accepts the doom and, like Leontes, the king is without an heir because of the way men keep knowledge.

Tyranny is always about the control of knowledge, but what moved early modern audiences most, as it still does today, is tyranny's endlessly expanding ripples of violence, a movement that begins in The Winter's Tale with Leontes's entrance in 2.1 and achieves extraordinary closure with the Clown's description of the bear's feast in 3.3. Ironically, Leontes tries to restrain his ranting when addressing the emperor of Russia's daughter lest he become the very "precedent" of "barbarism" (2.1.84). Leontes, in other words, is fearful of exchanging places with Hermione's father. Perhaps it is too late. For the king's rage breeds, even in the best-intentioned of his servants, a crude language of reciprocal ferocity. Antigonus both pleads and threatens: "If it prove / She's
otherwise, I'll keep my stables where / I lodge my wife; I'll go in couples with her" (11. 133-35). Reducing his own family to hounds and horses, Antigonus seems transported by the possibility of violent punishment for offending women, so that he promises: "Be she honour-flaw'd, / I have three daughters … If this prove true, they'll pay for 't" (11. 143-44, 46). When the mother of these three daughters rebukes Leontes, he simply spins the rage to new heights: "Hence with it, and together with the dam / Commit them to the fire!" (2.3.93-94). In the face of so much fury, Paulina has the courage to invoke the term "tyranny" (1. 119), only to have Leontes pose a question that would have puzzled even the observers of Ivan's court: "Were I a tyrant, / Where were her life? she durst not call me so, / If she did know me one" (11. 121-23).

Solving the problem of knowledge in this play means, from the outset, that Leontes will never become Ivan. As Dion puts it, Leontes's request for the truth of the oracle ensures that "something rare / Even then will rush to knowledge" (3.1.20-21). In Sicilia things "rare" still have the force of sudden, public discovery, a poetics not admitted in Ivan's world. It is at the early spectacle of revelation that Hermione wishes her father present as spectator, a whimsically appropriate thought since the superstitious Ivan might well have contributed to such a spectacle. Leontes submits but quickly discounts the revelation as "mere falsehood" (3.2.141). And it is here, in this moment of analogy, that the king's son dies and Hermione dies (it seems), too. But unlike Ivan, who seems to have waded through great scenes of death with little recognition, Leontes reckons the impact immediately: "the heavens themselves / Do strike at my injustice" (11. 146-47). By letting go of the private domain of suspicion and admitting the public rush to knowledge, Leontes has allowed himself a conversion. The playwright seems to be suggesting, as he so often does, the positive effects of spectacle in relation to personal and communal knowledge.

Finally, though, we must notice the difference gender makes to this troubled state of knowledge. Shakespeare proposes a decidedly female and English solution, precisely the kind of thing that infuriated Ivan in his dealings with Queen Elizabeth decades before. On the heels of Leontes's epiphany, Paulina steps forward in a way no Russian woman would ever have dared: "What studied tortures, tyrant, hast for me? / What wheels? racks? fires? what flaying? boiling … ?" (11. 175-76). Leontes permits the rough speech and more, for Paulina has been keeping her own knowledge of the king's household. She reports of the queen, "I say she's dead: I'll swear 't" (1. 203). Under the cover of her chiding, Paulina keeps the knowledge of the royal family, of Leontes's wife and queen, at her "poor house" (5.3.6). In the wake of the reunion that Shakespeare chooses to report rather than stage, the First Gentleman agrees that the spectators ought to hurry to Paulina's house, where the families have gathered: "Every wink of an eye, some new grace will be born: our absence makes us unthrifty to our knowledge" (5.2.110-12). As everyone gathers around the queen's statue, it is Paulina who speaks:

So her dead likeness, I do well believe,
Excels whatever yet you look'd upon,
Or hand of man hath done; therefore I keep it
Lonely, apart.

(5.3.15-18)

It is a thrifty Elizabethan solution to a Muscovite problem: women keep the house of knowledge where their labors do excel what the "hand of man hath done."

The Winter's Tale, as Autolycus puts it, ends "When daffodils begin to peer" (4.3.1). We may hearken back to the words of Clement Adams: "When the winter doth once begin there it doth still more & more increase by a perpetuitie of cold: neither doth that colde slake, untill the force of the Sunne beames doth dissolve the cold, and make glad the earth, returning to it againe." In Shakespeare's hands the English dramatic plot has resolved itself in the manner of a Russian spring, in what Purchas called "the Sunshine of peace" under James. Theater concludes with such resolutions; discussions of knowledge, as every English commentator on Russia well understood, do not. Writing to Elizabeth in 1589 about the decay of the Russian trade, Fletcher
complained of the Company's servants, the "lack of good discipline among them selves, specially of a preacher to keap them in knowledge and fear of God, and in a conscience of their service towards their Maisters." In a curious set of objections that will serve as epilogue for my own reading of Shakespeare's romance, Purchas complains most vociferously about the interaction of Englishmen and Muscovites. It seems that Ivan's love to our Nation is magnified by our Countrimen with all thankfulnessse, whose gaines there begun by him, have made them also in some sort seeme to turne Russe (in i know not what loves or feares, as if they were still shut up in Russia, & to conceale whatsoever they know of Russian occurrents) that I have sustayned no small torture with great paines of body, vexation of minde, and triall of potent interceding friends to get but neglect and silence from some, yea almost contempt and scorne.

This is what happens when England meets Russia: seeming conversion and concealed knowledge; Englishmen "turne Russe" and hide "whatsoever they know." What began in 1553 as an adventure of exploration and contact has become a problem of "no small torture," a problem of knowledge and its oblique ethnographic consequences. Englishmen have become what they meant to probe: Jacobean Muscovites.

For this reason Shakespeare's romance may be seen as marking an epoch of sorts, a new age of dispute that even Shakespeare's contemporaries could recognize. Indeed, even as the playwright was busy with his romance, Sir William Lower, having heard of Galileo's experiments, wrote to Thomas Hariot: "Me thinkes my diligent Galileus hath done more in his three fold discoverie than Magellane in openinge the streightes to the South sea or the dutch men that were eaten by beares in Nova Zembla. I am sure with more ease and saftie to him selfe and more pleasure to mee." Here were brave empirical options, the roots of modern disciplinary division, new born, knowledge derived from the calculation of distant bodies as opposed to knowledge gleaned through contact with different cultures. Shakespeare's romance stands as a provocative assay of the latter, with all its attendant pleasures and strains, knowing and negation, bears and reunions.

Notes


2 Francesca Wilson, in Muscovy: Russia Through Foreign Eyes, 1553-1900 (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1970), describes quite succinctly the exceptions to this English perception (19-20). As imperial ambassador, Sigismund von Herberstein saw the country firsthand in 1517 and 1526. The ambassador's account, Rerum Moscoviticarum commentarii, was published on the Continent in 1551; the first English translation did not appear until 1576.


4 Samuel Purchas, in Purchas His Pilgrimes (20 vols. [Glasgow: James MacLehose, 1906]), gives the reader a sense of how archetypal "Ivan Vasilowich, the Great Great Muscovite," had become, describing him as a ruler who had earned "supersuperlative of cruelte" (14:110).

6 Two studies have documented the major points of contact between English literature and Muscovy: Robert Ralston Cawley, *The Voyagers and Elizabethan Drama* (Boston: D. C. Heath, 1938), 253-71; and Karl Heinz Ruffmann, *Das Russlandbild in England Shakespeares* (Gottingen: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 1952).


9 Quoted from Pafford, ed., 191.


15 That critics have been carried away in the past with such projects is the subject of Richard Levin's famous attack on "The King James Version" of *Measure for Measure* and what he calls "occasionalism" in *New Readings vs. Old Plays* (Chicago, IL: U of Chicago P, 1979), 171-93. For admirable defenses of topical readings that respond to Levin's objections, see Bergeron, 12-13; and Marcus, 164.

16 Marcus, 37-38. Marcus enacts this more subtle method as she investigates the identification of Vienna with London in *Measure for Measure*: "What Shakespeare accomplished through the play's restlessly oscillating topicality was the initiation of a theatrical event which could be taken as Stuart propaganda, or as the expression of a contemporary nightmare, or most likely as both together" (200). Mowat concentrates on the same kinds of instabilities when describing "the struggle between infracontexts" (69).

17 Particularly relevant to my predicament is Bergeron's representation of the royal family as a text among texts: "No privileged texts, absolutely ruling out competing texts, exist; nor are there autonomous texts; all are dependent on pre-texts, written or observed" (21). Marcus aptly categorizes the kinds of topical effect in such a system as either scattering "interpretation in a number of directions" or narrowing "it along a single axis of political allegory" (109).
Marcus, for instance, is relentless in her urging that topical reading always de-essentializes (38). For a cogently argued exception to Marcus's commitment on this account, see Michael D. Bristol's review of *Puzzling Shakespeare* in *SQ* 41 (1990): 375-79, esp. 379.


In his brilliant work on *Measure for Measure*, Jonathan Goldberg, in *James I and the Politics of Literature: Jonson, Shakespeare, Donne, and Their Contemporaries* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins UP, 1983), establishes a precedent for what I propose by concentrating on how the play "manages to catch at central concerns" (235).

See, for example, Steven Mullaney's notion of "the rehearsal of cultures" in *The Place of the Stage: License, Play, and Power in Renaissance England* (Chicago, IL: U of Chicago P, 1988), 69.

Hakluyt, 1:255-56.


Commentators' explanations of Mamillius's winter tale-telling in 2.1 of *The Winter's Tale* have depended on this connection between temperature and temperament; see *A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare*, ed. Horace Howard Furness (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1898), 72-73.

Adams's account was published in London in 1554 in an edition no longer extant; I quote this passage from Hakluyt, 1:278-79.


Nutt, 260.

Quoted in Bond, ed., xxxviii-xxxix.

Quoted in Bond, ed., xxv.


Hakluyt, 1:332.

Hakluyt, 1:389-90.

Hakluyt, 1:416.

37 Purchas, 14:111.

38 Fletcher in Bond, ed., cxxxvii.


41 Koenigsberger and Mosse make this point in passing; see 196, n. 2.

42 Bergeron, 163.

43 Turberville, 442.


45 Jerome Horsey, *Travels* in Bond, ed., 153-266, esp. 195. Horsey says that Ivan was angry with the prince for showing mercy to some of Ivan's Christian victims, and other minor offenses (195). For further discussions, see Koenigsberger and Mosse, 202-3. A Jacobean frame for these events comes from Purchas: "His last crueltie was on himselfe, dying with griefe, as was thought, for the death of his eldest sonne Ivan, whom falsly accused he struck with a staffe wrought with Iron, whereof he dyed in few dayes after" (Purchas, 14:112-13).


48 Purchas, 14:112.

49 Fletcher in Bond, ed., 143. Horsey provides a distinct version of this spectacle in his narrative. When Ivan demanded great sums of wealth from the religious houses in his country, he met with resistance. So he summoned twenty of the organizers: "About seaven of those principali rebellious bigg fatt friers were brought forthe, one after another … and, through the Emperowr's great favour, a bore spare [spear] of five foate in
length in the other hand for his defence, and a wild bear was lett lose, rainginge and roaring up against the walls with open mouth, sentinge the frier by his fatt garments, made more mad with the crie and shoutinge of the people, runs feasly at him, catches and crushes his head, bodie, bowells, leggs and arms, as a cate doth a mous, tears his weeds in peces till he came to his flesh, bloud and bones, and so devours his first frier for his prey” (Bond, ed., 178).

52 Rebecca W. Bushnell, in *Tragedies of Tyrants: Political Thought and Theater in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell UP, 1990), describes what Sidney calls the "sweet violence" of tragedy: "What Foucault does not discuss is what Sidney re-counts, the possibility that the audience enjoyed the spectacle for its own sake, whether for the pleasure of sorrow or pity, or more cynically, for the pleasure of seeing blood or watching the elaborate ritual that let that blood" (4). It should also be pointed out that the playful waywardness of identification makes this kind of pleasure possible. Bears devour but they also dance. So Chamberlain wrote to Carleton on 27 May 1601 that the "Moscovie ambassador [who] tooke his leave at court on Sonday was sevenight like a dauncing beare" (1:123).

53 The phrase is used by Horsey when he introduces his own narrative of "death by bear" (Bond. ed., 178).


57 Hakluyt, 1:417.

58 Hakluyt, 1:281.

59 Hakluyt, 1:281-82.

60 Hakluyt, 1:282 (my emphasis).

61 Stephen Orgel, in "The Poetics of Incomprehensibility" (SQ 42 [1991]: 431-37), argues that a certain obscurity, appropriate to the action of *The Winter's Tale*, indeed to any Shakespeare play, cannot be escaped. Orgel points out that "modern interpretation represents an essentially arbitrary selection of meanings from a list of diverse and often contradictory possibilities and does not so much resolve the linguistic problem as enable us to ignore it" (432).

62 Stanley Cavell, in *Disowning Knowledge in Six Plays of Shakespeare* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1987), is surely right when he suggests that the play "is understandable as a study of skepticism" (198).

63 There did exist a precedent for this kind of rebuking of royal authority, in the Muscovite notion of "the fool in Christ (iurodivyi)." Jerome Horsey describes the extraordinary confrontation at Pskov between Ivan (who intended to destroy the city) and "an impostur or magician, which they held to be their oracle, a holly man, named Mickula Sweat, whoe, by his bold imprecacions and exsorsims, railings and threats, terminge him the Emperour bloudsucker, the devourer and eater of Christian flesh, and swore by his angeli that he should not escape deathe of a present thounder boltt" (Bond, ed., 161).
Shakespeare's play concludes with reunions not unlike those described by Gerrit de Veer, who explains that it was "as if either of us on both sides had seene each other rise from death to life again" (Purchas, 13:159).

Hakluyt, 1:279.


Purchas, 14:113.

Purchas continues in the most resonant terms: "This for love to my Nation I have inserted against any Cavillers of our Russe Merchants: though I must needs profess that I distaste, and almost detest that (call it what you will) of Merchants to neglect Gods glorie in his providence, and the Worlds instruction from their knowledge; who while they will conceale the Russians Faults, will tell nothing of their Facts; and whiles they will be silent in mysteries of State, will reveale nothing of the histories of Fact, and that in so perplexed, diversified chances and changes as seldom the World hath in so short a space seen on one Scene" (14:114).

Quoted in Nutt, 249.


**The Winter's Tale (Vol. 36): Introduction**

**The Winter's Tale**

Twentieth-century criticism of *The Winter's Tale* has varied widely in emphasis, reflecting the broad scope of topics suggested in the play. Since Victorian times, commentators have struggled to define the genre of the play because of the unique two-part structure. While some modern critics, such as Northrop Frye, have praised Shakespeare for achieving unity and balance in the two parts, controversy still surrounds the general design of the play. For example, Charles Hieatt has contended that a two-part view of the play represents only a portion of a larger, more complicated scheme; he focuses instead on the influence of humans over their own destiny, a principle which unifies the individual segments. Joseph Lenz has divided the play into three sections, "each associated with a specific genre and each reflecting one means by which closure can be attained." Howard Felperin has praised the "imaginative environment" constructed by Shakespeare out of the conventions of older dramatic traditions, which, he maintains, can support the lifelike characters of *The Winter's Tale*.

The relationship of Perdita and Leontes is often explored in modern criticism. Many commentators, including Patricia Southard Gourlay, have viewed Perdita's return to the Sicilian court as the key to Leontes's new life. Similarly, Bruce Young has commented that Perdita is consistently "associated with divine regenerative power and is even described as a life-giving goddess." Scholars have also focused on her role in Leontes's redemption; Robert Watson has asserted that "only Perdita's return can rouse into life the latent nature in Leontes's and Hermione's artificial poses."

Another topic of particular interest to critics is the genesis of Leontes's jealousy, which has resulted in two primary positions: that Leontes is not jealous until Hermione convinces Polixenes to stay, a position held by Rene Girard; and that Leontes's jealousy is simmering from the onset of the play, then finally erupts. Several critics, such as Martha Ronk, have also compared Leontes to another jealous Shakespearean character, Othello. Ronk argues that the sixteen-year gap in time "offers Leontes an experience denied Othello . . . . [He]
is allowed time to settle and be still." Lawrence Wright has discussed yet another approach to this topic: the distinction between "the inception of Leontes's jealousy and the start of the tragi-comic disruption."

The Winter's Tale (Vol. 36): Overviews

Northrop Frye (essay date 1962)


[In the following essay, Frye examines the dramatic contrast found in The Winter's Tale, focusing on the differences between the human arts—music, poetry, and magic—and the power of the gods and nature, as well as the truths these elements reveal.]

In structure The Winter's Tale, like King Lear, falls into two main parts separated by a storm. The fact that they are also separated by sixteen years is less important. The first part ends with the ill-fated Antigonus caught between a bear and a raging sea, echoing a passage in one of Lear's storm speeches. This first part is the "winter's tale" proper, for Mamillius is just about to whisper his tale into his mother's ear when the real winter strikes with the entrance of Leontes and his guards. Various bits of imagery, such as Polixenes' wish to get back to Bohemia for fear of "sneaping winds" blowing at home and Hermione's remark during her trial (reproduced from Pandosto) that the emperor of Russia was her father, are linked to a winter setting. The storm, like the storm in King Lear, is described in such a way as to suggest that a whole order of things is being dissolved in a dark chaos of destruction and devouring monsters, and the action of the first part ends in almost unrelieved gloom. The second part is a tragicomedy where, as in Cymbeline and Measure for Measure, there is frightening rather than actual hurting. Some of the frightening seems cruel and unnecessary, but the principle of 'all's well that ends well' holds in comedy, however great nonsense it may be in life.

The two parts form a diptych of parallel and contrasting actions, one dealing with age, winter, and the jealousy of Leontes, the other with youth, summer, and the love of Florizel. The first part follows Greene's Pandosto closely; for the second part no major source has been identified. A number of symmetrical details, which are commonplaces of Shakespearian design, help to build up the contrast: for instance, the action of each part begins with an attempt to delay a return. The two parts are related in two ways, by sequence and by contrast. The cycle of nature, turning through the winter and summer of the year and through the age and youth of human generations, is at the center of the play's imagery. The opening scene sets the tone by speaking of Mamillius and of the desire of the older people in the country to live until he comes to reign. The next scene, where the action begins, refers to Leontes' own youth in a world of pastoral innocence and its present reflection in Mamillius. The same cycle is also symbolized, as in Pericles, by a mother-daughter relationship, and Perdita echoes Marina when she speaks of Hermione as having "ended when I but began." In the transition to the second part the clown watches the shipwreck and the devouring of Antigonus; the shepherd exhibits the birth tokens of Perdita and remarks, "Thou mettest with things dying, I with things new-born." Leontes, we are told, was to have returned Polixenes' visit "this coming summer," but instead of that sixteen years pass and we find ourselves in Bohemia with spring imagery bursting out of Autolycus's first song, "When daffodils begin to peer." If Leontes is an imaginary cuckold, Autolycus, the thieving harbinger of spring, is something of an imaginative cuckoo. Thence we go on to the sheep-shearing festival, where the imagery extends from early spring to winter evergreens, a vision of nature demonstrating its creative power throughout the entire year, which is perhaps what the dance of the twelve satyr represents. The symbolic reason for the sixteen-year gap is clearly to have the cycle of the year reinforced by the slower cycle of human generations.
Dramatic contrast in Shakespeare normally includes a superficial resemblance in which one element is a parody of the other. Theseus remarks in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that the lunatic, the lover, and the poet are of imagination all compact. Theseus, like Yeats, is a smiling public man past his first youth, but not, like Yeats, a poet and a critic. What critical ability there is in that family belongs entirely to Hippolyta, whose sharp comments are a most effective contrast to Theseus's amiable bumble. Hippolyta objects that the story of the lovers has a consistency to it that lunacy would lack, and everywhere in Shakespearian comedy the resemblance of love and lunacy is based on their opposition. Florizel's love for Perdita, which transcends his duty to his father and his social responsibilities as a prince, is a state of mind above reason. He is advised, he says, by his "fancy":

If my reason
Will thereto be obedient, I have reason;
If not, my senses, better pleased with madness,
Do bid it welcome.

Leontes' jealousy is a fantasy below reason, and hence a parody of Florizel's state. Camillo, who represents a kind of middle level in the play, is opposed to both, calling one diseased and the other desperate. Both states of mind collide with reality in the middle, and one is annihilated and the other redeemed, like the two aspects of law in Christianity. As the Gentleman says in reporting the finding of Perdita, "They looked as they had heard of a world ransomed, or one destroyed." When Leontes has returned to his proper state of mind, he echoes Florizel when he says of watching the statue,

No settled senses of the world can match
The pleasure of that madness.

The play ends in a double recognition scene: the first, which is reported only through the conversation of three Gentlemen, is the recognition of Perdita's parentage; the second is the final scene of the awakening of Hermione and the presenting of Perdita to her. The machinery of the former scene is the ordinary cognitio of New Comedy, where the heroine is proved by birth tokens to be respectable enough for the hero to marry her. In many comedies, though never in Shakespeare, such a cognitio is brought about through the ingenuity of a tricky servant. Autolycus has this role in *The Winter's Tale*, for though "out of service" he still regards Florizel as his master, and he has also the rascality and the complacent soliloquies about his own cleverness that go with the role. He gains possession of the secret of Perdita's birth, but somehow or other the denouement takes place without him, and he remains superfluous to the plot, consoling himself with the reflection that doing so good a deed would be inconsistent with the rest of his character. In *The Winter's Tale* Shakespeare has combined the two traditions which descended from Menander, pastoral romance and New Comedy, and has consequently come very close to Menandone formulas as we have them in such a play as *Epitripontes*. But the fact that this conventional recognition scene is only reported indicates that Shakespeare is less interested in it than in the statue scene, which is all his own.

In *Measure for Measure* and *The Tempest* the happy ending is brought about through the exertions of the central characters, whose successes are so remarkable that they seem to many critics to have something almost supernatural about them, as though they were the agents of a divine providence. The germ of truth in this conception is that in other comedies of the same general structure, where there is no such character, the corresponding dramatic role is filled by a supernatural being—Diana in *Pericles* and Jupiter in *Cymbeline*. *The Winter's Tale* belongs to the second group, for the return of Perdita proceeds from the invisible providence of Apollo.

In *Pericles* and *Cymbeline* there is, in addition to the recognition scene, a dream in which the controlling divinity appears with an announcement of what is to conclude the action. Such a scene forms an emblematic recognition scene, in which we are shown the power that brings about the comic resolution. In *The Tempest*,
where the power is human, Prospero's magic presents three emblematic visions: a wedding masque of gods to Ferdinand, a disappearing banquet to the Court Party, and "trumpery" (4.1.186) to entice Stephano and Trinculo to steal. In *The Winter's Tale* Apollo does not enter the action, and the emblematic recognition scene is represented by the sheep-shearing festival. This is also on three levels. To Florizel it is a kind of betrothal masque and "a meeting of the petty gods"; to the Court Party, Polixenes and Camillo, it is an illusion which they snatch away; to Autolycus it is an opportunity to sell his "trumpery" (4.4.608) and steal purses.

An emblematic recognition scene of this kind is the distinguishing feature of the four late romances. As a convention, it develops from pastoral romance and the narrative or mythological poem. The sheep-shearing festival resembles the big bravura scenes of singingmatches and the like in Sidney's *Arcadia*, and *The Rape of Lucrece* comes to an emblematic focus in the tapestry depicting the fall of Troy, where Lucrece identifies herself with Hecuba and Tarquin with Sinon, and determines that the second Troy will not collapse around a rape like the first one. In the earlier comedies the emblematic recognition scene is usually in the form of burlesque. Thus in *Love's Labours Lost* the pageant of Worthies elaborates on Don Armado's appeal to the precedents of Solomon, Samson, and Hercules when he falls in love; but his appeal has also burlesqued the main theme of the play. The allegorical garden episode in *Richard II* represents a similar device, but one rather different in its relation to the total dramatic structure.

In any case the controlling power in the dramatic action of *The Winter's Tale* is something identified both with the will of the gods, especially Apollo, and with the power of nature. We have to keep this association of nature and pagan gods in mind when we examine the imagery in the play that reminds us of religious, even explicitly Christian, conceptions. At the beginning Leontes' youth is referred to as a time of paradisal innocence; by the end of the scene he has tumbled into a completely illusory knowledge of good and evil. He says:

> How blest am I  
> In my just censure, in my true opinion!  
> Alack, for lesser knowledge! How accurs'd  
> In being so blest!

Or, as Ford says in *The Merry Wives*, "God be praised for my jealousy!" The irony of the scene in which Leontes is scolded by Paulina turns on the fact that Leontes tries to be a source of righteous wrath when he is actually an object of it. Hermione's trial is supposed to be an act of justice and the sword of justice is produced twice to have oaths sworn on it, but Leontes is under the wrath of Apollo and divine justice is his enemy. The opposite of wrath is grace, and Hermione is associated throughout the play with the word grace. During the uneasy and rather cloying friendliness at the beginning of the play Hermione pronounces the word "grace" conspicuously three times, after which the harsh dissonances of Leontes' jealousy begin. She also uses the word when she is ordered off to prison and in the only speech that she makes after Act 3. But such grace is not Christian or theological grace, which is superior to the order of nature, but a secular analogy of Christian grace which is identical with nature—the grace that Spenser celebrates in the sixth book of *The Faerie Queene*.

In the romances, and in some of the earlier comedies, we have a sense of an irresistible power, whether of divine or human agency, making for a providential resolution. Whenever we have a strong sense of such a power, the human beings on whom it operates seem greatly diminished in size. This is a feature of the romances which often disappoints those who wish that Shakespeare had simply kept on writing tragedies. Because of the heavy emphasis on reconciliation in *Cymbeline*, the jealousy of Posthumus is not titanic, as the jealousy of Othello is titanic; it expresses only a childish petulance about women in general: "I'll write against them, Despise them, curse them." Similarly Leontes (as he himself points out) falls far short of being a somber demonic tyrant on the scale of Macbeth, and can only alternate between bluster and an uneasy sense of having done wrong:
Away with that audacious lady! Antigonus,
I charg'd thee that she should not come about me.
I knew she would.

This scaling down of the human perspective is in conformity with a dramatic structure that seems closely analogous to such Christian conceptions as wrath and grace. But the only one of the four romances in which I suspect any explicit—which means allegorical—references to Christianity is Cymbeline. Cymbeline was king of Britain at the birth of Christ, and in such scenes as the Jailer's speculations about death and his wistful "I would we were all of one mind, and that mind good," there are hints that some far-reaching change in the human situation is taking place offstage. The play ends on the word "peace" and with Cymbeline's promise to pay tribute to Rome, almost as though, as soon as the story ended, another one were to begin with Augustus Caesar's decree that all the world should be taxed.

No such explicit links are appropriate to The Winter's Tale, though it is true that the story does tell of a mysterious disappearing child born in the winter who has four father-figures assigned to her: a real one, a putative one who later becomes her father-in-law, a fictional one, Smalus of Libya in Florizel's tale, and a shepherd foster-father. This makes up a group of a shepherd and three kings, of whom one is African. The first part of The Winter's Tale is, like Cymbeline, full of the imagery of superstitious sacrifice. Leontes, unable to sleep, wonders if having Hermione burnt alive would not give him rest. Antigonus offers to spay his three daughters if Hermione is guilty, though he would prefer to castrate himself. Mamillius, whom Leontes thinks of as a part of himself, becomes the victim necessary to save Leontes, and the exposing of Perdita is attended by a sacrificial holocaust. Not only is Antigonus devoured by a bear, but the ship and its crew were "Wrecked the same instant of their master's death and in the view of the shepherd; so that all the instruments which aided to expose the child were even then lost when it was found." In contrast, the restoring of Perdita to her mother is an act of sacramental communion, but it is a secular communion, and the "instruments" aiding in it are the human arts. The main characters repair to Paulina's house intending to "sup" there, and are taken into her chapel and presented with what is alleged to be a work of painting and sculpture. Hermione, like Thaisa in Pericles, is brought to life by the playing of music, and references to the art of magic follow. Art, therefore, seems part of the regenerating power of the play, and the imagination of the poet is to be allied with that of the lover as against that of the lunatic.

Apart from the final scene, at least three kinds of art are mentioned in the play. First, there is the art of the gardener who, according to Polixenes' famous speech, may help or change nature by marrying a gentler scion to the wildest stock but can do so only through nature's power, so that "the art itself is nature." This is a sound humanist view: it is the view of Sidney, who contrasts the brazen world of nature with the golden world of art but also speaks of art as a second nature. Sidney's view does not necessitate, but it is consistent with, his ridiculing of plays that show a character as an infant in one act and grown up in the next, and that mingle kings and clowns in the same scene. It is also the view of Ben Jonson who, recognizing a very different conception of nature in Shakespeare's romances, remarked good-humoredly that he was "loth to make nature afraid in his plays, like those that beget tales, tempests, and such-like drolleries." We note that Polixenes' speech entirely fails to convince Perdita, who merely repeats that she will have nothing to do with bastard flowers:

No more than, were I painted, I would wish
This youth should say 'twere well, and only therefore
Desire to breed by me. . . .

—a remark which oddly anticipates the disappearance of the painted statue of Hermione into the real Hermione. It also, as has often been pointed out, fails to convince Polixenes himself, for a few moments later we find him in a paroxysm of fury at the thought of his own gentle scion marrying the wild stock of a shepherd's daughter. Whatever its merits, Polixenes' view of art hardly seems to describe the kind of art that
the play itself manifests.

Secondly, there is the kind of art represented by Julio Romano, said to be the painter and sculptor of Hermione's statue, a mimetic realist who "would beguile Nature of her custom, so perfectly is he her ape." But it turns out that in fact no statue has been made of Hermione, and the entire reference to Romano seems pointless. We do not need his kind of art when we have the real Hermione, and here again, whatever Romano's merits, neither he nor the kind of realism he represents seems to be very central to the play itself. The literary equivalent of realism is plausibility, the supplying of adequate causation for events. There is little plausibility in The Winter’s Tale, and a great deal of what is repeatedly called "wonder." Things are presented to us, not explained. The jealousy of Leontes explodes without warning: an actor may rationalize it in various ways; a careful reader of the text may suspect that the references to his youth have touched off some kind of suppressed guilt; but the essential fact is that the jealousy suddenly appears where it had not been before, like a second subject in a piece of music. "How should this grow?" Polixenes asks of Camillo, but Camillo evades the question. At the end of the play Hermione is first a statue, then a living woman. The explanations given do not satisfy even Leontes, much less us. He says:

But how, is to be question'd; for I saw her,
As I thought, dead, and have in vain said many
A prayer upon her grave.

As often in Shakespeare, further explanations are promised to the characters, but are not given to the audience: Paulina merely says, "it appears she lives."

Thirdly, though one blushes to mention it, there is the crude popular art of the ballads of Autolycus, of which one describes "how a usurer's wife was brought to bed of twenty money-bags at a burden." "Is it true, think you?" asks Mopsa, unconsciously using one of the most frequently echoed words in the play. We notice that Shakespeare seems to be calling our attention to the incredibility of his story and to its ridiculous and outmoded devices when he makes both Paulina and the Gentlemen who report the recognition of Perdita speak of what is happening as "like an old tale." The magic words pronounced by Paulina that draw speech from Hermione are "Our Perdita is found," and Paulina has previously said that the finding of Perdita is "monstrous to our human reason." And when one of the Gentlemen says "Such a deal of wonder is broken out within this hour that ballad-makers cannot be able to express it," we begin to suspect that the kind of art manifested by the play itself is in some respects closer to these "trumpery" ballads than to the sophisticated idealism and realism of Polixenes and Romano.

My late and much beloved colleague Professor Harold S. Wilson has called attention to the similarity between Polixenes' speech and a passage in Puttenham's Arte of English Poesie (1589), which in discussing the relation of art and nature uses the analogy of the gardener and the example of the "gillyvor." Puttenham also goes on to say that there is another context where art is "only a bare imitator of nature's works, following and counterfeiting her actions and effects, as the Marmoset doth many countenances and gestures of man; of which sort are the arts of painting and carving." We are reminded of Romano, the painter and carver who is the perfect "ape" of nature. The poet, says Puttenham, is to use all types of art in their proper place, but for his greatest moments he will work "even as nature her self working by her own peculiar virtue and proper instinct and not by example or meditation or exercise as all other artificers do." We feel that Puttenham, writing before Shakespeare had got properly started and two centuries earlier than Coleridge, has nonetheless well characterized the peculiar quality of Shakespeare's art.

The fact that Leontes' state of mind is a parody of the imagination of lover and poet links The Winter's Tale with Shakespeare's 'humor' comedies, which turn on the contrast between fantasy and reality. Katharina moves from shrew to obedient wife; Falstaff from the seducer to the gull of the merry wives; the King of Navarre and his followers from contemplative pedants seeking authority from books to helpless lovers.
performing the tasks imposed on them by their ladies. Similarly when Florizel says that his love for Perdita

cannot fail but by
The violation of my faith; and then
Let nature crush the sides o' th' earth together
And mar the seeds within! . . .

—he is supplying the genuine form of what Camillo describes in parallel cosmological terms:

you may as well
Forbid the sea for to obey the moon,
As or by oath remove or counsel shake
The fabric of his folly, whose foundation
Is piled upon his faith.

Puttenham begins his treatise by comparing the poet, as a creator, to God, "who without any travail to his
divine imagination made all the world of nought." Leontes' jealousy is a parody of a creation out of nothing,
as the insistent repetition of the word "nothing" in the first act indicates, and as Leontes himself says in his
mysterious mumbling half-soliloquy:

Affection, thy intention stabs the centre!
Thou dost make possible things not so held,
Communicat'st with dream—how can this be?
With what's unreal thou coactive art,
And fellow' st nothing.

A humor is restored to a normal outlook by being confronted, not directly with reality, but with a reflection of
its own illusion, as Katharina is tamed by being shown the reflection of her own shrewishness in Petruchio.
Similarly Leontes, in the final scene, is "mocked with art," the realistic illusion of Romano's statue which
gradually reveals itself to be the real Hermione.

In the artificial society of the Sicilian court there are Mamillius, the hopeful prince who dies, and the infant
Perdita who vanishes. In the rural society of Bohemia there are the shepherdess Perdita who is "Flora Peering
in April's front," and Florizel who, as his name suggests, is her masculine counterpart, and the Prince
Charming who later reminds Leontes strongly of Mamillius and becomes Leontes' promised heir. Perdita says
that she would like to strew Florizel with flowers:

like a bank for love to lie and play on,
Not like a corse; or if, not to be buried,
But quick and in mine arms.

The antithesis between the two worlds is marked by Polixenes, who is handed "flowers of winter" and who
proceeds to destroy the festival like a winter wind, repeating the senex iratus role of Leontes in the other
kingdom. But though he can bully Perdita, he impresses her no more than Leontes had impressed Hermione.
Perdita merely says:

I was not much afeard; for once or twice
I was about to speak and tell him plainly
The selfsame sun that shines upon his court
Hides not his visage from our cottage but
Looks on alike.
There is a faint New Testament echo here, but of course to Perdita the god of the sun would be Apollo, who does see to it that Polixenes is out-witted, though only by the fact that Perdita is really a princess. As always in Shakespeare, the structure of society is unchanged by the comic action. What happens in *The Winter's Tale* is the opposite of the art of the gardener as Polixenes describes it. A society which is artificial in a limited sense at the beginning of the play becomes at the end still artificial, but natural as well. Nature provides the means for the regeneration of artifice. But still it is true that "The art itself is nature," and one wonders why a speech ending with those words should be assigned to Polixenes, the opponent of the festival.

The context of Polixenes' theory is the Renaissance framework in which there are two levels of the order of nature. Art belongs to human nature, and human nature is, properly speaking, the state that man lived in in Eden, or the Golden Age, before his fall into a lower world of physical nature to which he is not adapted. Man attempts to regain his original state through law, virtue, education, and such rational and conscious aids as art. Here nature is a superior order. In poetry this upper level of nature, uncontaminated by the sin and death of the fall, is usually symbolized by the starry spheres, which are now all that is left of it. The starry spheres produce the music of the spheres, and the harmony of music usually represents this upper level of nature in human life.

Most Shakespearian comedy is organized within this framework, and when it is, its imagery takes on the form outlined by G. Wilson Knight in *The Shakespearean Tempest* (1932). The tempest symbolizes the destructive elements in the order of nature, and music the permanently constructive elements in it. Music in its turn is regularly associated with the starry spheres, of which the one closest to us, the moon, is the normal focus. The control of the tempest by the harmony of the spheres appears in the image of the moon pulling the tides, an image used once or twice in *The Winter's Tale*. The action of *The Merchant of Venice*, too, extends from the cosmological harmonies of the fifth act, where the moon sleeps with Endymion, to the tempest that wrecked Antonio's ships. In *Pericles*, which employs this imagery of harmony and tempest most exhaustively, Pericles is said to be a master of music, Cerimon revives Thaisa by music, Diana announces her appearance to Pericles by music, and the final recognition scene unites the music and tempest symbols, since it takes place in the temple of Diana during the festival of Neptune. Music also accompanies the revival of Hermione in the final scene of *The Winter's Tale*. All the attention is absorbed in Hermione as she begins to move while music plays; and we are reminded of Autolycus and of his role as a kind of rascally Orpheus at the sheep-shearing festival: "My clown . . . would not stir his pettites till he had both tune and words; which so drew the rest of the herd to me that all their other senses stuck in ears. . . . No hearing, no feeling, but my sir's song, and admiring the nothing of it." Here again Autolycus seems to be used to indicate that something is being subordinated in the play, though by no means eliminated.

In another solstitial play, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the cosmology is of this more conventional Renaissance kind. In the middle, between the world of chaos symbolized by tempest and the world of starry spheres symbolized by music, comes the cycle of nature, the world of Eros and Adonis, Puck and Pyramus, the lovegod and the dying god. To this middle world the fairies belong, for the fairies are spirits of the four natural elements, and their dissension causes disorder in nature. Above, the cold fruitless moon of Diana, whose nun Hermia would have to be, hangs over the action. While a mermaid is calming the sea by her song and attracting the stars by the power of harmony, Cupid shoots an arrow at the moon and its vestal: it falls in a parabola on a flower and turns it "purple with love's wound." The story of Pyramus is not very coherently told in Peter Quince's play, but in Ovid there is a curious image about the blood spurting out of Pyramus in an arc like water out of a burst pipe and falling on the white mulberry and turning it purple. Here nature as a cycle of birth and death, symbolized by the purple flower, revolves underneath nature as a settled and predictable order or harmony, as it does also in a third solstitial play, *Twelfth Night*, which begins with an image comparing music to a wind blowing on a bank of violets.

But in *The Winter's Tale* nature is associated, not with the credible, but with the incredible: nature as an order is subordinated to the nature that yearly confronts us with the impossible miracle of renewed life. In Ben Jonson's animadversions on Shakespeare's unnatural romances it is particularly the functional role of the
dance, the "concupiscence of jigs," as he calls it, that he objects to. But it is the dance that most clearly expresses the pulsating energy of nature as it appears in *The Winter's Tale*, an energy which communicates itself to the dialogue. Such words as "push" and "wild" (meaning rash) are constantly echoed; the play ends with the words "Hastily lead away," and we are told that the repentant Leontes

\[
o'\text{er and o'\text{er divides him}
\]
\[
'Twixt his unkindness and his kindness; th' one
\]
\[
He chides to hell and bids the other grow
\]
\[
Faster than thought of time.
\]

Much is said about magic in the final scene, but there is no magician, no Prospero, only the sense of a participation in the redeeming and reviving power of a nature identified with art, grace, and love. Hence the final recognition is appropriately that of a frozen statue turning into a living presence, and the appropriate Chorus is Time, the destructive element which is also the only possible representative of the timeless.

**Note**


**Robert W. Uphaus (essay date 1970)**


*In the essay below, Uphaus discusses the role of language in establishing the integration of tragic and comic perception in The Winter's Tale.*

There are some striking affinities between tragedy and comedy, not the least of which is their mutual concern with perception. Both kinds of plays represent actions whose fulfillment, in diverse ways, is the fulfillment of feeling. (Susanne Langer has said that feeling is the intaglio image of reality, and I see no reason to argue against this point.) Both kinds of plays frequently challenge the meaning and, ultimately, the seriousness of the universe we live in, and for this reason alone the problems of tragedy are as easily accommodated, though less easily solved, in the comic form. Both kinds of plays also work within well-defined conventions and are built on a similar dramatic paradox: their image of reality heightens and intensifies as a tighter control or artifice is exerted on the play's subject.

Yet tragedy and comedy do not share a similar permissiveness, for they do not share a similar awareness of the nature of play. Tragedy, almost of necessity, represses the kind of knowledge that comedy thrives on—the knowledge that human vitality has a way of righting the inevitable wrong. Mistakes, the subject of both dramatic forms, lead to an inevitable degradation in tragedy while in comedy they bring about a fellowship of mutual remembrance. Much of this has to do with a primary structural difference: unlike tragedy, comedy is less dependent on one character's perception, which is usually all-encompassing, than on a multiple revelation of human possibility. This difference in accommodation of perception may be stated in another way: where tragedy deals with the disintegration of a head of a family, or of a head of state, comedy plays, sometimes very seriously, with a threatened disintegration of state which culminates, however, in an integration of feeling or festivity. This integrative element in *The Winter's Tale*—the subject of my paper—may be largely explained by a discussion of the play's unique mode of perception.

If comedy is the after-hours of tragedy's curfew, it is truant in the sense that it hangs around and plays in spite of the evening's menace. And its chief source of play is language, frequently the language of tragedy. This may be seen by looking at *The Winter's Tale*, a play strikingly built on the separation of tragedy and comedy, and by gauging the way the interaction of language and theme reveals this play's distinctive mode of
perception. The integrative element of Shakespearean comedy usually involves the purgation of a kind of language, and such a purgation is always reinforced by the presentation of a representative kind of dramatic event that is itself the reciprocal of the vying sets of language. And yet it is quite a distance from the recollection of identity (a theme common to Shakespeare's early comedies) to the redemption of the "world," which is the path The Winter's Tale travels. Certainly, like many of the early comedies, The Winter's Tale deals with the disjunction between feeling and fact, but the conversions in this play require a distinctive mode of perception, one that goes beyond the external fact (though it is occasioned by it) and moves more tellingly into the realm of inner being. And this mode of perception, established through a pattern of remembrance, is nowhere better evident than in the play's first scene.

In a scene of less than fifty lines the representative forces of Sicilia and Bohemia are openly revealed, and the play's imagery is inconspicuously established. One of the keys to the play and to this scene is "difference," a matter investigated and finally torn asunder by the play's universalizing impulse. Archidamus immediately alludes to the presence of difference—"You shall see, as I have said, great difference betwixt our Bohemia and your Sicilia." The difference is more than just a climatic one, but it is not until a few lines later that the presence of difference is internalized. Difference characterizes the tentativeness of Polixenes' and Leontes' friendship; having grown together in innocence, they have been separated by kingly responsibilities:

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, as over a vast; and embraced as it were from the ends of opposed winds.

(I. i. 26-32)

It is interesting to observe that one aspect of ceremony (e.g., "royally attorneyed") is meant to overcome separation, yet the ceremony itself is evidence of the separation. Ceremony is used in these diverse ways throughout the play. Part of the play's pattern of remembrance—shaped, to a great extent, by the image of the "vast," together with the multiple functions of ceremony—appears in the last three lines of the play. Everyone, we are told, will "answer to his part / Performed in this wide gap of time since first / We were dissevered." The theatrical terms—"part," "performed"—are, of course, another aspect of ceremony.

Two other motifs related to the "vast" also appear in this scene: the revivifying power of sons and the proper regard of utterance. Of Mamillius, we are told that he is "a gallant child; one that, indeed, physics the subject, makes old hearts fresh." This medicinal power is mentioned still again, first by Polixenes:

He makes a July's day short as December, And with his varying childliness, cures in me Thoughts that would thick my blood.

(I. ii. 169-71)

And later, in a new variation, Paulina assumes this function:

... I Do come with words as medicinal as true, Honest as either, to purge him of that humor That presses him from sleep.

(II. iii. 35-38)

Shakespeare's use of language as purgation is as old as The Taming of the Shrew, but the range of implication here is considerably more varied. This is almost immediately apparent when we notice the connections between language as remedy and the dependence of such remedy on the truthfulness of
expression—"medicinal as true / Honest as either." Shakespeare has evidently suspended the wit-combats of the earlier comedies, a form of excess meant to effect "remedy," and replaced them with a form of plain statement counterpointing the excess of "sick" people. Buttressed by some powerful disease imagery, health becomes less a pose than a real, almost tragic issue. Archidamus gives the linguistic formula for health, and by implication the index to illness, when he says to Camillo, "I speak as my understanding instructs me, and mine honesty puts it to utterance." (In this regard, it is well to recall Edgar's comment at the end of King Lear: "Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say.") The point is, something other than honesty puts Leontes' language to utterance.

Act I, scene ii dramatizes the divergence of language hinted at in I. i. Each dramatic occasion—Leontes' request of Polixenes to remain, Polixenes' resistance, Leontes' request of Hermione to intervene and her eventual intervention, and finally Leontes' jealousy—is supported by a corresponding rift in language. The exterior "vast" of separation seeps down into Leontes' language, and he becomes estranged by his own perverted suspicion. His initial request begins innocently enough, but the play's early attentiveness to language indicates the possibility of serious conflict:

LEONTES. Tongue-tied, our Queen? Speak you.
HERMIONE. I had thought, sir, to have held my peace until
You had drawn oaths from him not to stay. You, sir,
Charge him too coldly. Tell him you are sure
All in Bohemia's well. . . .
LEONTES. Well said, Hermione.
HERMIONE. To tell he longs to see his son were strong;
But let him say so then, and let him go; But let him swear so, and he shall not stay. . .

(I. ii. 27-31, 33-36)

"Tongue," "speak," "tell," "charge," "say," "swear"—these frequent references to language underlie the play's rhythm of events. It would be difficult to call all of this deception comic, for the source of conflict is language in toto, rather than wit alone. Leontes quickly associates language with the highest human events—his own marriage—and therefore as his suspicion grows he subverts all human discourse. To Hermione he says, "thou never spok'st / To better purpose" (with the exception of her marriage vow), only now he associates her purpose with the destruction of that vow. For the moment, then, it is the play's intention to "stab the center."

This sudden reversal of trust in turn brings about a mistrust of the "real." Leontes rejects his wife, his friends, his children—all in the name of "play." Where play in the earlier comedies is linked with the verbal, with dexterity of identity and enhancement of event, play now challenges the universe; it perverts the memory of human goodness and sullies human belief. Play intensifies suspicion where formerly it mediated mistrust:

Go play, boy, play: thy mother plays, and I
Play too—but so disgraced a part, whose issue
Will hiss me to my grave; contempt and clamor
Will be my knell. Go play, boy, play.

(I. ii. 187-90)

The pun on "issue" distorts the revivifying powers of children; their innocence is corrupt because they reflect the memory of events gone sour; memory is brought to focus through suspicion:

Physic for't there's none;
Know't
It will let in and out the enemy,
With bag and baggage. Many thousand on's
Have the disease, and feel't not. How now, boy!

Leontes links birth, once symbolic of innocence, with disease. Act I closes, however, with an effective counterpoint to Leontes' suspicion—the assertion of trust. Camillo implores Polixenes to flee the diseased kingdom, and for evidence he urges truth unverified as the only requirement: "Be not uncertain / . . . I / Have uttered truth; which if you seek to prove / I dare not stand by" (I. ii. 442-45).

Except for the important introduction of Paulina, Act II pretty well mirrors the design of Act I. The issues of language, belief, knowledge, play, disease, are all present, though the use of language seems to receive the thematic nod. Paulina is another in the long line of Ladies of the Tongue, yet her thematic function carries associations far exceeding the possibilities of a Kate or Beatrice. Indeed, as the "vast" widens and the characters are further separated from one another, Paulina becomes the character who perpetuates the play's pattern of remembrance: the re-creation of the past, and ultimately the regeneration of Leontes, is left almost entirely up to her. And, although Paulina dates back to Shakespeare's early use of "practicers," she performs a mediating function rather unlike any other in the earlier comedies: on her the redemption of the "world" and the final sanctity of art depend.

The three scenes of Act II successively trace out the play's pattern of illness and correspondingly they allude to the play's pattern of regeneration through memory. Scene i, centered around Leontes' repudiation of Hermione, abounds with references to the perversion of reason: "In my just censure, in my true opinion! / Alack, for lesser knowledge" (II. i. 37-38); "All's true that is mistrusted" (II. i. 48); "You smell this business with a sense as cold / As is a dead man's nose; but I do see't and feel't" (II. i. 151-52); "What, Lack I credit" (II. i. 157)—and this pattern of suspicion culminates in Leontes' final assertion that

Our prerogative
Calls not your counsels, but our natural goodness
Imparts this. (II. i. 163-65)

which is a perversion of Archidamus' opening statement (I. i. 19-21): "Believe me, I speak as my understanding instructs me, and as mine honesty puts it to utterance."

Scene ii works toward the redemptive power of Paulina's speech, itself established through her continual association with nature (particularly the cycle of Perdita's birth and Hermione's "death"). Paulina's medicinal powers, her power to evoke memory as a remedy to suspicion, lie of course in language—"If I prove honey-mouthed, let my tongue blister" (II. ii. 32); and far more conclusively:

Tell her, Emilia,
I'll use that tongue I have; if wit flow from't
As boldness from my bosom, let't not be doubted
I shall do good. (II. ii. 50-53)

Her ability to mediate the play's "tragic" conflict is unquestioned: "Do not you fear—upon mine honor, I / Will stand betwixt you and danger" (II. ii. 64-65). Act II, scene iii is built around two crucial and mutually interpenetrating speeches. Presenting herself as Leontes' "physician" and his most obedient "counsellor,"
Paulina attempts to purge Leontes of suspicion, only to experience an explicit dramatization of the "vast":

... I
Do come with words as medicinal as true,
Honest as either, to purge him of that humor
That presses him from sleep.
LEONTES. What noise there, ho?
PAULINA. No noise, my lord, but needful conference . . .

(II. iii. 35-39)

There is an evident distinction between "needful conference" and "noise," and it is the space separating the two views that Paulina directs her comments to. She has the unenviable task of mediating a potentially tragic conflict within a comic mode. Paulina is a practicer, but she is not Cassandra, nor is she, as Leontes thinks, "a most intelligencing bawd." Perhaps the following speech, seen against the background of Shakespeare's earlier comedies will explain why the first three acts are "tragic" though not tragedy:

PAULINA. . . . for he,
The sacred honor of himself, his queen's,
His hopeful son's, his babe's, betrays to slander,
Whose sting is sharper than the sword's; and will not
(For as the case now stands, it is a curse
He cannot be compelled to') once remove
The root of his opinion, which is rotten
As ever oak or stone was sound.

(II. iii. 82-89)

All the elements of tragedy are here—honor, curse, diseased perception. But there is no "plague," for Leontes' disease is centripetal not centrifugal. Leontes' tragic uncertainty may appear to shake the "world," so to say, but Paulina's assurance—as unwavering "as oak or stone was sound"—more than compensates for a potentially tragic disillusionment.

Paulina, then, brings us back to language, the source of this play's and the earlier comedies' mode of perception and illusion. In betraying his family to "slander," Leontes joins his predicament, at least in form, with Claudio's repudiation of Hero in *Much Ado About Nothing*. And the comic formulation of remedy in *The Winter's Tale* is similar to that of the earlier comedies: like Hero in *Much Ado*, Hermione will "die to live," and like Kate in *The Taming of the Shrew*, Leontes will be "killed in his own humor." Though the comic resolution of *The Winter's Tale* is a good deal more resonant, Leonato's explanation of Hero's "resurrection" in *Much Ado* aptly formulates the conditions for Hermione's reappearance: "She died, my lord, but whiles her slander lived."

Act III is almost exclusively taken up with three forms of ceremony, embodying, as they do later, the conjunction of diverse events into one pure and all-encompassing reconstruction of memory. The divine, the secular, and the natural are the three forms of ceremony; and each takes its substance from the dramatization of the "vast." The oracle is the divine, and Cleomenes' description of the island—"delicate," "most sweet," "fertile"—anticipates the later pastoral qualities of Perdita and Florizel. At the same time Cleomenes' and Dion's language in III. i. in some ways anticipates the reverence of V. ii. and V. iii. The tribunal in III. ii. dramatizes the "vast" by pointing to the diseased disjunction of feeling and fact. Certain of his accusation, Leontes dismisses Hermione's resistance, and she immediately recognizes the source of her estrangement; "and / The testimony on my part no other / But what comes from myself, it shall scarce boot me / To say, 'not
guilty" (III. ii. 22-25). Acknowledging Leontes' rejection of honesty, Hermione reasons in much the same manner as Friar Francis does of Hero's predicament in Much Ado: "To me can life be no commodity."

However, the nature of Hermione's appeal clearly differentiates the depths of The Winter's Tale from Much Ado. For in The Winter's Tale, the source of conciliation must be in "powers divine." Apollo will be Hermione's judge; so the appeal is to a higher principle of "reality." Moreover, the disjunction between feeling and fact is, for the moment, absolute:

HERMIONE. You speak a language that I understand not.
My life stands in the level of your dreams,
Which I'll lay down.
LEONTES. Your actions are my dreams.
You had a bastard by Polixenes,
And I but dreamed it. As you were past all shame—
Those of your fact are so—so past all truth;

(III. ii. 78-83)

As with Paulina, so with Hermione: they both, in Leontes' view, speak "noise."

Soon Hermione and Mamillius perish, with a suddenness as startling as Leontes' initial fit of jealousy. Yet with their "deaths" the tragic action exhausts itself: one vein has been mined, one set of purposes has been realized. But Leontes' perceptions to this point are as fool's gold to the rich vein of human experience that Paulina uncovers. Twice in the first three acts Leontes makes an important request. The first—asking his wife to detain Polixenes—brings about his "tragedy," and the second, made of Paulina, greatly affects, in a far deeper way than he appreciates, the restoration of life:

I have too much believed mine own suspicion.
Beseech you tenderly apply to her
Some remedies for life. Apollo, pardon
My great profaneness 'gainst thine oracle.

(III. ii. 148-51)

Hermione "dies," a necessity for the revitalization of life, and Paulina at once purges memory and promotes a reconstruction of the past through the resources of language. Correspondingly, the references to speech abound: "I have deserved / All tongues to talk their bitt'rest" (III. ii. 213-14), "Say no more" (III. ii. 214), "th' boldness of your speech" (III. ii. 216), "Thou didst speak but well" (III. ii. 230). Indeed, Paulina's use of speech is so well established that her medicinal language no longer requires utterance, for Leontes' memorialization of his own past through the ritual reenactment of guilt becomes a symbolic expression of Paulina's medicinal language.

Act III, scene iii dramatizes the modulation of tragic illusion to comic perception through the reenactment of death. The scene pulls away from the secular, the logic of tribunals, and immerses itself in the natural. Perdita's desertion awakens the life impulse, for she is not so much deserted as planted in the earth, there to awaken, without memory, into pure time. Destiny in the guise of Fortune prevails; accident awakens life. Even when the bear kills Antigonus, there is no evidence of malignity but rather a natural purpose doused with some humor—"They [the bears] are never curst but when they are hungry." The dark side of death is illuminated by the comic mode of perception; great creating nature is beneficent as well: "Heavy matters, heavy matters! But look thee here, boy. Now bless thyself; thou met'st with things dying, I with things new born." The tone of "heavy matters, heavy matters" aptly commands the remainder of the play, shaping the perspective necessary for the blossoming of human feeling. The "savage clamor" of the tempest, to some
extent an analogue to the tragic, quickly subsides with Perdita's awakening into life; she is the birth of the floral.

With Paulina absent, Act IV sustains the play's pattern of remembrance through the presentation of new memory as it merges with the old. Camillo and Polixenes talk about the old, as do Perdita and Florizel about the new, but their conversations remain smaller instances of the play's dramatization of memory. The Bohemia scenes to a large extent parallel the events of Sicilia, with the notable addition of Autolycus. The play, having now digested death in III. iii., reworks old memories within an evident comic mode, and Autolycus is one aspect of that impulse. He is the new practicer, but it is interesting to see how he is separated from any significant encounter (save one) with the "high" plot. He is rightly submerged, though his presence is continually felt; his impulse is fundamental to the comic mode, but it is, nevertheless, the very impulse that comedy must master. His presence mirrors, to a degree, the play's sense of transformation: Autolycus' forays on society stand in effective relief with Leontes' more serious pillages on human integrity. The two men amount to diverse aspects of disorder, aspects of the Dionysian if you will, and the play, we should recall, steadfastly moves toward an Apollonian assertion of the primacy of form. Autolycus, then, is one part of the re-creation of memory, but Act IV provides many additional instances.

Time is fundamental to the play's reconstruction of remembrance. Sixteen years have passed, sixteen years for things to change; and some things have changed. For one thing, there is a list of new characters. Yet in another sense the situation remains the same. Time refers to "that wide gap," which is a clear allusion to the "vast" of the first three acts; and this allusion in turn leads us to a reconsideration of Archidamus' initial comment in the play (I. i. 3-4): "You shall see, as I have said, great difference betwixt our Bohemia and your Sicilia." Obviously the theme of "difference" remains a vital issue, performing diverse functions, some ironic. There are at least two possible uses of "difference": difference between and difference within. There are several differences between Bohemia and Sicilia: they are separated by the sea (geographic difference), and one is temporarily more peaceful than the other (social and psychological difference). There is yet another difference between Bohemia and Sicilia, for they are in conflict with one another, though at the time of Archidamus' comment this was not so. Finally, and more fundamentally, there is not (ironically) a great difference between the two countries because the same differences within Bohemia occur within Sicilia.

Memory, then, is dramatically established and revivified through the recapitulation of former events. Bohemia becomes Sicilia. Act IV scene ii opens with Polixenes' imploring a wistful Camillo to remain, just as Leontes and Hermione earlier begged Polixenes to stay. Yet for Polixenes the remembrance of Sicilia is still divisive: "Of that fatal country Sicilia, prithee speak no more, whose very naming punishes me with . . . remembrance." Having said this, he then asks for his son, dramatically a displaced memory of Mamillius, and a note of suspicion is heard. In fact, his suspicion is so familiar to Leontes' (in form) that Shakespeare invests his speech with one of Leontes' images. At the height of his jealousy, Leontes said:

I am angling now,
Though you perceive me not how I give line.

(I. ii. 180-81)

And now Polixenes:

That's likewise part of my intelligence; but,
I fear, the angle that plucks our son thither.

(IV. ii. 48-49)
But there remains a significant difference of commitment, one indicative of the play's modulation from the tragic to the comic. Polixenes carries out his plan in disguise, comedy's special form of illusion, so no serious loss of identity is involved. Furthermore, before Polixenes finds his son and before he can go through the gestures of suspicion, Shakespeare presents Autolycus' use of disguise (IV. iii.). Here we have a new variation of the theme of theft, an analogue, in other words, to Leontes' and Polixenes' accusations: Autolycus traffics in "sheets," his form of prize, and not in wives, daughters, and sons. In the one instance disguise effects theft; in the other case it confirms theft (e.g., Polixenes' jealousy). But the point is, in Bohemia disguise governs all.

The subject of disguise carries over into IV. iv., unquestionably the most important scene in Bohemia. Disguise is viewed as at once indicative of difference and symbolic of transformation. First Perdita is fearful and chides Florizel:

Your high self,
The gracious mark o' th' land, you have obscured
With a swain's wearing;

(IV. iv. 7-9)

and later she says (IV. iv. 17) "To me the difference forges dread." Then the language of transformation accumulates, tracing a unifying line from the divine to the natural. Of the god's transformations, Florizel observes:

Their transformations
Were never for a piece of beauty rarer,
Nor in a way so chaste . . .

(IV. iv. 31-33)

and Perdita, still aware of opposition, remarks "that you must change this purpose, / Or I my life" (IV. iv. 38-39). It is, of course, the latter possibility which occurs, again through disguise: "sure this robe of mine / Does change my disposition" (IV. iv. 134-35). And the line of transformation through disguise culminates with the convergence of high and low plot. Autolycus and Florizel exchange garments, signifying, perhaps, both the dexterity of the comic mode and the fertility of the "world." At least Autolycus would have it so:

What an exchange had this been without boot! What a boot is here, with this exchange! Sure, the gods do this year connive at us, and we may do anything extempore. (IV. iv. 678-82)

Fortune "drops booties" in more than one mouth and in more than one way. There is Perdita for the high plot and Autolycus for the low plot: flowers for one, gold for the other.

The most important re-enactment of memory, however, occurs with Polixenes' attempted interference with Florizel and Perdita. Now in Bohemia the roles and reversed: Polixenes, not Leontes, plays the jealous father, and Florizel and Perdita play youthful versions of Leontes and Hermione. All the issues of speech, reason, counsel and remedy reappear, save that the play this time is better prepared to absorb the conflict. Polixenes urges "Reason my son / . . . hold some counsel / In such a business," but the former theme of separation, mirroring the division between feeling and fact, still obtains:

   FLORIZEL. Mark our contract.
   POLIXENES. Mark your divorce . . .

(IV. iv. 421)
This time, though, love commands an affirmative avowal. Florizel honors love as steadfastly as Leontes has repudiated it; he is as certain of his own identity as he is of his own faith: "What I was, I am" (IV. iv. 468). It is especially important to notice how Shakespeare associates the memory of Polixenes and Leontes with the urgency of Florizel's vow. The very thing that Leontes and Polixenes are unable to accomplish, Florizel does with ease. He reaffirms the sanctity of one form of ceremony—the constancy of love—and in doing so he rejects a form of reason and counsel. Contrary to Leontes' and Polixenes' madness, Florizel's madness, to borrow from Emily Dickinson, is "divinest sense." But Florizel does ask the counsel of Camillo, who like Paulina effects a mediating and medicinal experience: "Camillo—/Preserver of my father, now of me, / The medicine of our house—how shall we do?" (IV. iv. 589-91).

Overall, Act V presents the miracle of transformation spoken of in IV. iv. The play moves through the purgation of language (V. i.) and advances experience into the realm of the ineffable (V. iL, V. iii.). With the return to Bohemia, the drama abounds with redemptive language. Cleomenes speaks of Leontes' "sain'tlike sorrow" and his being "redemmed"; and Leontes' who has been urged to "forgive" himself, later says "sorry" to Florizel several times. However, the antagonism between Paulina and Leontes (III. ii.) reappears, except this time the conflict is softened by the bittersweet remembrance of the past. Responding to Paulina's reminder that he "killed" Hermione, Leontes says "it is as bitter / Upon thy tongue as in my thought" (V. i. 18-19), and yet he realizes that Paulina "hast the memory of Hermione." Now, having purged Leontes' language Paulina becomes the oracle; her recommendation to Leontes about marriage closely resembles the oracle's edict: "That / Shall be when your first queen's again in health / Never till then." But memory is pushed into an even higher realm, one beyond speech where madness is "divinest sense" (IV. iv. 486-88). Though Leontes welcomes Florizel "as is the spring to th' earth" (displacing, in other words, the "winter" of the past), he is afraid that his former madness will re-emerge with Florizel's appearance:

Sure
When I shall see this gentleman, thy speeches
Will bring me to consider that which may
Unfurnish me of reason.

(V. i. 120-23)

But the play's final appeal rests with the restorative power of remembrance: Leontes becomes the advocate of Florizel's love and arbitrates what he formerly repudiated—the union of father and son, a motif as old as life.

Language, the center of Leontes' disease, has been cleansed, and with this purgation there occurs in V. ii. the celebration of a new level of perception. Reason is set aside; the limitations of language are dramatized; the way for belief—assent without proof—is prepared. The miraculous converges with the ineffable:

They seemed almost, with staring on one another, to tear the cases of their eyes. There was speech in their dumbness, language in their very gesture; they looked as they had heard of a world ransomed, or one destroyed.

(V. ii. 12-17)

Later in this scene the Third Gentleman asks the Second, "Did you see the meeting of the two kings?" and when he answers "no," the Third Gentleman replies, "Then have you lost a sight which was to be seen, cannot be spoken of." Still later the Third Gentleman continues, "I have never heard of such another encounter, which lames report to follow it, and undoes description to do it." All this amounts to a preparation for the highest madness, enacted through Hermione's "resurrection"—namely, the perception of the unity of being.
Looking back, one can trace this ever-widening perception of transformation by charting a line beginning with the divisions of language, seen at first as an aspect of the "unreal," later modulated by the introduction of art, and finally explicitly presented through its dramatic reciprocal—the resurrection of Hermione. In the first instance (I.ii.) the division is all too evident:

Thy intention stabs the center.
Thou dost make possible things not so held,
Communicat'st with dreams—how can this be?—
With what's unreal thou coactive art,
And fellow'st nothing. (I. ii. 138-42)

In IV. iv. the mediating function of art, its power to "make possible things not so held," is presented; and art is clearly able to overcome the opposed forces that Leontes' suspicion cannot contain:

You see sweet maid, we marry
A gentler scion to the wildest stock,
And make conceive a bark of baser kind
By bud of nobler race. This is an art
Which does mend Nature, change it rather; but
The art itself is Nature.

(IV. iv. 92-97)

Finally, in V. iii. Leontes, stunned by Hermione's reemergence into life, concludes:

No settled senses of the world can match
The pleasure of that madness. Let't alone.

(V. iii. 72-73)

Art is nature, for Hermione's statue lives. The "vast" no longer exists.

One more comment about the play and then I will "Let 't alone." In a sense, the conclusions to Much Ado and The Winter's Tale are similar. The rebirth of Hero and Hermione is dependent on the purgation of language. We are told about Hero, "She died, my lord, but whiles her slander lived"; and early in The Winter's Tale (I. ii, 94) Hermione utters a similar formulation: "Our praises are our wages." Yet the mode of perception in The Winter's Tale is different, in that, as one character says, "Every wink of an eye some new grace will be born." In a word, where the earlier comedies tentatively establish the need for a belief beyond understanding, The Winter's Tale uncovers the articulate silence of the peace that passes all understanding.

Notes


2 All textual references are to Frank Kermode's edition of The Winter's Tale (New American Library, 1963). Although I have refrained from citing secondary sources in this essay, I would like to express my special indebtedness to the work of C.L. Barber, Northrop Frye, G. Wilson Knight, Susanne Langer, and D.A. Traversi.
Literally as well as figuratively, Time stands at the center of *The Winter's Tale*, giving strikingly emblematic stage life to a theme that had resonated in Shakespeare's imagination since the sonnets and the earliest plays, through the often turbulent drama of the playwright's middle years, and into the romances, those strangely fabulous works that play variations on all that came before. The confusions of Syracuse and Illyria sort themselves out in the movements of time; Richard of Gloucester and Macbeth draw back to seize time's promise; an aging poet reminds his younger friend—still in its graces—of time's quiet ravages: "That time of year thou mayst in me behold / When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang. . . ." Though time constitutes an organizing motif in Shakespeare's nondramatic work, as this last example makes clear, its presence is structurally more central to the world of the plays, where characters must confront dramatic time—its threats as well as its opportunities—as it unfolds in the present, and where actors must navigate through the temporal movement of performance. In drama, time is a theme by necessity, for in the medium of performance it stands as an inescapable backdrop to dramatic action, as well as a fundamental condition of theatrical life.

*The Winter's Tale*—with its memories, fond and bitter, its plans and prophecies, its tales and ballads, and its striking leap of sixteen years—reveals this temporal background with a prominence and self-consciousness unusual even in Shakespeare. In keeping with the other pairs that serve to organize this dramatic diptych (Sicilia and Bohemia, youth and age, Nature and Art, rosemary and rue), *The Winter's Tale* presents the experience of time in terms of a duality—one that edges into paradox. On the one hand, man lives in the present, a moment so complete in its immediacy that it seems to escape time entirely. This experience of the Now, and all its apparent eternity, infuses Polixenes' description of the childhood innocence that he and Leontes shared:

```
We were, fair queen,
Two lads that thought there was no more behind
But such a day to-morrow as to-day,
And to be boy eternal.
```

(I.ii.62-65)

His lines subvert the very idea of time, for the words "behind," "to-morrow," and "to-day" work upon each other in such a way that their distinctions, which underlie the notion of temporal succession, blend and dissolve, warping past and future into the seemingly boundless expanse of the present, opening the moment into eternity.

For all its apparent timelessness, however, this Edenic state is a memory, telescoped into what Prospero calls "the dark backward and abysm of time," in part by the very tense through which it is articulated. The stage presence of Leontes and Polixenes, both adults, constitutes a pressing visual reminder of Time's hourglass, where the present is barely an instant, gone before it can be grasped. As Time boasts,

```
I witness to
The times that brought them in; so shall I do
To th' freshest things now reigning, and make stale
```
The glistening of this present, as my tale
Now seems to it.

(IV.i.11-15)

His speech recalls the temporal world of the sonnets, where existence is subject to the ironies of mutability as it plays its movement from "glistening" to "staleness"—a world where "every thing that grows / Holds in perfection but a little moment" (Sonnet 15, lines 1-2). From this vantage point, time confronts man with the fact of change and with the inevitability of consequence, since action, in the temporal realm, always has outcomes, foreseen or unforeseen: "I, that please some, try all, both joy and terror / Of good and bad, that makes and unfolds error . . ." (IV.i.1-2). The contrast is pronounced: if the present in The Winter's Tale is the realm of an almost prelapsarian joy, time is the province of memory and anticipation, nostalgia and eagerness, regret and foreboding.

This duality of man's experience—immediate and temporal—is highlighted during the course of The Winter's Tale, most pointedly in the play's second half, where characters are forced to come to terms with time's changes and consequences. But the sixteen-year gap signaled by Time's appearance is only one of many instances in which temporal change dramatically and ironically counterpoints the present. Down to the level of individual lines, like those fondly spoken by Polixenes, the play displays a temporal intricacy rivaled, perhaps, only by Shakespeare's other romances. As William Archer noted early this century, Shakespearean drama is generally characterized by little exposition: unlike the drama of Sophocles or Ibsen, its action lies largely within a present that moves forward to its culmination. But the past bears on the present of the play through a number of subtler inclusions: the childhood of the two kings; the courtship of Hermione; the Old Shepherd's wife; the man who " Dwelt by a churchyard," frozen in Mamillius' "sad tale" (II.i.25-32); numerous moments of story and remembrance. This layering of past on present, and present on past, becomes more pronounced as the very stage moment in which the characters move is set against the broader passage of years. As The Winter's Tale progresses, in other words, it acquires—like Pericles, Cymbeline, and The Tempest—a temporal double vision strangely reminiscent of the opening lines of a fourth-century Chinese poem: "Swiftly the years, beyond recall. / Solemn the stillness of this fair morning."

But Shakespeare's investigation of the relationship between the present and its temporal contexts is not restricted to the play's dramatic world; it extends, as well, to his audience's temporal experience of the play in performance—an experience that significantly parallels, in its duality, the experience of the play's characters. Drama unfolds in time, unmediated by the authorial "voice" of literary narrative, and it accordingly places specific demands on audience comprehension of its developing action. For one thing, spectators must impose coherence on the stage events they witness—locate the present within a specific framework of "dramatic time," construct a past out of planted clues, and project possible outcomes to complete this temporal whole. At the same time, like dramatic characters, spectators are faced—during performance—with a stage present which is actual, changing, always somewhat outside the temporal structures created to enclose it. Shakespearean drama is built, in part, out of the tension between these two poles of the audience's theatrical experience: in the irony with which we watch a stage event, aware of all its contexts and consequences, and—often most powerfully—in those moments when the stage reveals itself with an immediacy beyond such frameworks of comprehension. Lear howls blankly over the dead Cordelia, Feste fills the theater with the music of his lute—at these points the stage acquires a momentary autonomy, a presence slightly beyond time, which lasts until the audience returns the moment to its temporal outlines.

As a medium that fuses narrative with physical actuality, the theater engages the twin experiences of time and presence in unusually strong counterpoint. It is not surprising, therefore, that The Winter's Tale—Shakespeare's most explicit treatment of time—should manipulate these experiences, not only in its dramatic action, but also in its theatrical effect. As Inga-Stina Ewbank rightly observes, "while in The Winter's Tale time has largely disappeared from the verbal imagery, it is all the more intensely present as a controlling
and shaping figure behind the dramatic structure and technique." In general, close study of Shakespearean structure and technique—and of the ways in which these dramatic elements shape response—demonstrates how fully his plays ground thematic issues within the theatrical experience, and how essential this experience is to dramatic meaning. This article will trace Shakespeare's dramaturgical balancing, in *The Winter's Tale*, of time's rhythms with a dramatic and theatrical present that can never be fully "staled." In doing so, it will suggest that this strange but powerful play forges clear experiential links between the dramatic action on stage and the stage's "action" on its audience.\(^5\)

When Time exits from the middle of *The Winter's Tale*, he leaves a dramatic world disrupted by his passage. For the play's characters, time's impact is concentrated in "that wide gap" (IV.1.7) between the dramatic present and the events of the first three acts, a span during which, as Time informs us, Leontes has continued to mourn "Th' effects of his fond jealousies" (18) and during which Perdita and Florizel have grown up. The past, though, bears differently upon different characters. Those who have lived through it—the members of the now older generation—have hardened themselves against time by maintaining a sharp remembrance of its losses, a remembrance that they are nonetheless powerless to erase. Camillo misses Sicilia and still feels bonds of loyalty to Leontes, whose "sorrows" remain so tangible that Camillo calls them "feeling" (IV.ii.7-8). Polixenes, too, lives in memory, burdened with a past that refuses to fade:

> Of that fatal country Sicilia, prithee speak no more, whose very naming punishes me with the remembrance of that penitent (as thou call'st him) and reconcil'd king, my brother, whose loss of his most precious queen and children are even now to be afresh lamented. (20-25)

Time, for these three, only fixes the memory of what has been lost, and in these losses the past seems more real than the present which has taken its place.

Polixenes, however, has more recent concerns to temper his bitterness. Shifting from friend to father, he urges Camillo to accompany him on a mission to discover the cause of his son's disappearance from court. The scene likewise shifts, and before the two arrive at the Shepherd's cottage the stage is given to Perdita and Florizel, who demonstrate a markedly different sense of past and present. Neither is burdened by the events at Sicilia, and both show an attitude toward their more immediate pasts unlike that of their elders. Perdita says nothing of her early years as a shepherdess, and Florizel hides the signs of his past by donning rustic clothes. To Perdita's concern over his father's disapproval of their match, he replies by affirming a love outside such threat and its consequences, modulating between the languages of present and future:

> To this I am most constant,
> Though destiny say no. Be merry, gentle!
> Strangle such thoughts as these with any thing
> That you behold the while. Your guests are coming:
> Lift up your countenance, as it were the day
> Of celebration of that nuptial, which
> We two have sworn shall come.

(IV.iv.45-51)

Both are characterized by this forward-gazing anticipation, conceiving of the future as a never-ending continuation of the present, free of change, with "such a day to-morrow as to-day." In their innocence they dwell on this present and on the sounds, objects, and gestures that constitute it. Florizel's description etches Perdita within the moment:

> Each your doing
> (So singular in each particular)
Crowns what you are doing in the present deeds.
That all your acts are queens.

(143-46)

Perdita, more the realist, nevertheless allows hope to "strangle such thoughts." "O Lady Fortune," she exclaims, "Stand you auspicious!" (51-52).

When Polixenes and Camillo enter disguised and the sheep-shearing scene gets under way, the stage contains a mixture of attitudes toward time and its relationship to the present. On the one hand, it presents the lovers, with their sense of the immediate and their vision of possibility; on the other, it presents the king and counsellor, aged by time and scarred by its memories, their awareness of consequence a potential threat to Perdita and Florizel. By this point in the play, though, the audience has had its own experience of dramatic time shifted and modulated, through techniques more subtle than the mere passage of years. Theatrical versions of immediacy and temporality are counterpointed throughout the play's development—often in sharp juxtaposition, as we can see if we review the audience's comprehension of dramatic time in the first three acts. There is, for instance, the play's beginning, in which the stage image of friendship between Polixenes and Leontes—the present's version of the past's innocence—is abruptly dispelled by the King's distorted jealousy. William H. Matchett points out sexual ambiguities in the lines between Polixenes and Hermione and claims that the audience is made to feel suspicious (pp. 94-98), but these ambiguities are subliminal and largely recollected, if at all, in light of Leontes' misinterpretation of them. Vastly more pronounced is our sense of their "timeless" friendship—of which Archidamus has said "I think there is not in the world either malice or matter to alter it" (I.i.33-34) and of which Polixenes has described the childhood origins. The initial stage interaction between the characters does little to dispel these accounts: gracefulness and compliment characterize the beginning of the scene, and the "gestural dialogue" of hands that Charles Frey discerns throughout the play (pp. 134-38) here expresses bond and affection. When Leontes' "tremor cordis" does appear, it constitutes an intrusion of dissonance into the scene's easiness, and the stage present becomes abruptly shadowed by the disturbing threat of consequence: "I am angling now, / Though you perceive me not how I give line" (I.ii.180-81). The words "angling" and "line" are revealing, for it is the essence of Leontes' jealousy to form imaginary connections between people and between incidents, quickly generating a web of misperception and suspicion that includes even Mamillius and Camillo. As Leontes begins to act on these misperceptions, consequences multiply with rigorous inevitability, and the stage present becomes increasingly pressured by a network of events, imaginary as well as real.

One of the most remarkable features of the developing Sicilia sequence is its tightness and autonomy; omitting Perdita's survival, it could stand by itself, brief but complete. Its incidents are relentlessly forward-moving and continuous. For one thing, the narrative line of Leontes' jealousy and its effects is—to an extent unusual even in Shakespearean tragedy—unrelieved by breaks. Hermione's exchange with Mamillius constitutes only 32 lines, and the scene in which Cleomines and Dion describe their visit to Delphos is shorter still (22 lines). Far from serving as self-contained interruptions, both are themselves interrupted, and swallowed up, by the omnivorous main action: the former by Leontes' entrance, the latter by a reminder of the proclamations against Hermione. For another thing, incidents and details are introduced and linked with a high degree of narrative continuity. Shakespeare changed the source material of Pandosto to increase the "probability" of the story's incidents, and he did so, in part, by tightening its plot connections: whereas Greene's young prince Garinter dies suddenly, for instance, Shakespeare's Mamillius sickens and dies specifically out of grief concerning his mother's situation. This tight sense of antecedents and consequences focuses audience attention even more closely on the unfolding narrative sequence, on dramatic time in its actual and potential outlines.

The sequence concludes with a pronounced note of closure, heightened by the rapidity with which its final events take place. The oracle's tersely declarative pronouncements reveal the truth concerning the preceding
actions, a truth which the audience and all the characters save Leontes have known. Entering with news of Hermione's death, Paulina condemns his folly by outlining the consequences of his misconceived actions on Polixenes, Camillo, his abandoned daughter, Mamillius, and Hermione: "O, think what they have done. / And then run mad indeed—stark mad!" (III.ii.182-83). Her speech rings with summary force and—together with Leontes' heartbroken resolve to bury his wife and son in a single grave, to display an account of the "causes of their death" (237), and to visit it every day for the rest of his life—it gives the sequence of the play's Sicilian first half what J. H. P. Pafford has called "a Miltonic close fitting for the end of a tragedy" (p. lv).

"The King shall live without an heir, if that which is lost be not found" (III.ii. 134-36). A strand remains incomplete—an opening, as it were, in the closed sequence of action and its consequence which the audience has followed for over two acts. With Antigonus' entrance in III.iii, the narrative line continues. But the audience's temporal comprehension of the play's events and its orientation toward the stage and its actions shift in two important ways. First, attention no longer centers on the inevitable triumph of truth and the stripping away of a central character's delusion. Throughout the Sicilian sequence, the audience has had a kind of Olympian distance from Leontes' jealousy, secure in its awareness of the actual state of events. The audience, in other words, stands in the position of superior awareness that Bertrand Evans considers one of the characteristic dramatic principles of Shakespearean drama; and although its awareness is far from complete, the audience's understanding of temporal outlines is more closely aligned to that of Time than to that of any of the action's participants. Once the truth is revealed, though, subsequent action becomes open-ended: although the oracle's pronouncement suggests further resolution, this final clause is cast as a riddle and contains no details as to how the resolution might be achieved. Uncertainty, therefore, replaces inevitability; the outcome of events becomes less determinate, less subject to rigorously constrained consequence. Evans's ironic awareness is replaced by uncertainty, and the audience, like Perdita, is left in the wilderness—a wilderness, in this case, of the stage and its unpredictability.

Second, the coherent narrative of the first part is replaced by a remarkable sequence of incidents, each of which is characterized by a striking immediacy, and all of which stand in sharp juxtaposition to each other. Immediacy is achieved partly through a dazzling array of "theatrical" effects—effects of sound, movement, and spectacle that display the stage at its most physical. Such effects are strikingly absent from the Sicilian sequence of the play's first half. Although the earlier sequence is characterized, as Daniel Seltzer points out, by numerous examples of "intimate stage business" between characters, there is nothing to compare with the storm effects (suggested by the text), the bear, the sound of hunting horns, or the archaic staginess of Time's entrance. The immediacy of the sequence's incidents is heightened by their almost Brechtian juxtaposition: the mixture of tones and effects gives each a kind of discontinuous autonomy on stage, and this sudden, unprepared-for variety—following the vastly more streamlined narrative of the first half—forces abrupt, disorienting shifts in audience response.

Matchett observes that this sequence wrenches us "from our response to the plot and the action to a wider perspective. . . . Challenging our awareness, it opens us to fresh experience" (p. 101). He discusses this shift in terms of the art/nature opposition, but his observations apply still morevaluably to the basic level of audience attention that this sequence engages. On this level, the sense of "fresh experience" is a result of elements that draw attention away from broader temporal outlines and heighten the autonomy of individual stage moments, much as the storm scene does to the dramatic world of King Lear. Such "fresh experience" in Shakespearean drama (and in drama generally) is that experience uniquely available in the theater: an experience of a stage present existing in its own right, intruding itself into the very "tales" that dramatists make it tell. When Time stands forward to signal the leap of years, in other words, he addresses an audience that is already undergoing its own experiential leap—from comprehension and irony to bewilderment and surprise—in the face of a stage turned strange and new.

As with the graceful present of the play's first scene, this scenic presence is dispelled, distanced. The couplets of Time's soliloquy telescope the seacoast sequence into the past and return the audience to the play's main
narrative line. But this line, with its rigid chain of consequence, has been weakened by the appearance of incidents and stage elements outside its projected outcomes, and the theatrical moment in all its presence and autonomy looms large in time’s subsequent developments. Indeed, the stage is now set for one of the longest scenes of stage presence in all of Shakespeare: the "sheepshearing" scene. Interestingly, this scene is introduced three times—by Time, by Polixenes and Camillo, and by Autolycus—and each introduction contributes a "timelessness" to the scene. The first two are usually viewed as "connective" scenes, linking past and present, and indeed (as we have seen) each does include references to the play's first half. Oddly, though, these references are less conjunctive than disjunctive: Time's reference to Leontes, after all, is offered to take "leave" of him (IV.i.17), and Polixenes finally urges Camillo to "lay aside/the thoughts of Sicilia" (IV.ii.51-52). Both scenes look ahead to Florizel and Perdita, and both do so, in part, by distancing the past. The result is that the sheepshearing scene bears few reminders of the Sicilian past. Even the Bohemian past is made less consequential to the scene: Shakespeare omits the marriage plans that Greene's Egistus made for his son Dorastus and has Polixenes visit the Shepherd's cottage as much from curiosity as from suspicion.

The third introduction to the sheep-shearing scene also introduces one of its main participants. Despite the number of critical attempts to integrate Autolycus into the play's thematic structure, this stage rogue continues to baffle the play's readers (while delighting its spectators). He is introduced later (IV.iii) than probably any other major Shakespearean character, yet he plays no part in the play's concluding scene. He becomes almost a genius of the Whitsun pastoral, yet he was once a member of Florizel's retinue—a detail introduced so casually (between stanzas of a song) that it risks being missed. But if we put aside attempts to incorporate Autolycus into the play's thematic framework and concentrate instead on his stage presence, his dramatic function in the play (and in the sheepshearing scene in particular) becomes clearer. In a play that counterpoints modes of time and presence, Autolycus represents life (and drama) at their most theatrically immediate.

Speaking to the Clown in a self-dramatizing third-person, Autolycus characterizes himself as a figure of Protean identity:

I know this man well; he hath been since an apebearer, then a process-server, a bailiff, then he compass'd a motion of the Prodigal Son, and married a tinker's wife within a mile where my land and living lies; and, having flown over many knavish professions, he settled only in rogue. Some call him Autolycus. (IV.iii.94-100)

On stage he displays a similar fluidity of roles, moving between them with an improvisational randomness that suggests his opportunism and delight in mischief. Like the Vice figures of earlier morality drama—or like Ben Jonson's comic knaves—he plays upon the moment, and the impulsiveness of his actions makes them strikingly self-contained. His major contribution to the main plot (discovering the Old Shepherd's secret and deciding to act on it) originates largely out of whim: "Though I am not naturally honest, I am so sometimes by chance" (IV.iv.712-13). Moreover, his incessant acting and his tumbling prose are charged with a vibrant selfassertiveness that draws attention away from more serious matters and toward himself. His wonder at the rustics' response to his ballads—"No hearing, no feeling, but my sir's song, and admiring the nothing of it" (IV.iv.612-13)—captures much of the distracting effect of his stage presence as a whole. Like the wares he hawks, Autolycus himself is largely an "unconsider'd trifle" (IV.iii.26), "inconsequential" in the strictest sense.

His appearance before and during the sheep-shearing scene, then, contributes to its self-contained immediacy: along with the shepherds' dance which precedes him and the "Saltiers" who succeed him, his presence during the scene—with his "ribbons of all colors i' th' rainbow" (204-5), songs and ballads, and other antics—provides some of the play's most frenetic stage activity. Even before Autolycus' entrance as balladmonger, this scene has drawn characters and audience alike into an experience of less consequential timelessness. Among the characters, the past is suspended almost by consent: as we have seen, Polixenes and
Camillo dismisses memories of Sicilia, and Perdita and Florizel "strangle" thoughts of his superior rank. Time and its effects (as well as its threat) remain present during the scene, especially in the disguised visitors, but the emphasis is on the moment, and even age is brought within its domain. Matching Florizel's "timeless" admiration, Camillo tells Perdita: "I should leave grazing, were I of your flock, / And only live by gazing" (109-10). Polixenes, too, participates in the festival atmosphere to an extent not generally acknowledged in discussions of the scene; his famous debate with Perdita concerning the "streak'd gillyvors"—for all its potential allusion to Perdita's station and its implications—is largely playful, a quality more evident in the theater than in the text, and one that tends to undercut threat. Moreover, when later in the scene the Clown remarks, "My father and the gentlemen are in sad talk" (310), Polixenes is "refreshed" enough by the entertainment to request the Saltiers. It would be a mistake to claim that Polixenes "forgets" his mission, even temporarily, but it would also be a mistake to neglect the extent to which even he surrenders to his disguise and submits to the scene and its diversions. Both visitors could, with truth, join Perdita in her confession: "Methinks I play as I have seen them do/In Whitsun pastorals. Sure this robe of mine / Does change my disposition" (133-35).

It is important to stress that the audience, too, is offered a "fresh experience" of the stage present, one that tends to subsume awareness of time and its consequences. Francis Berry claims that the audience, remembering the play's first half, "frames" the sheepshearing scene and modifies its response to the lovers "in the light of their parents' . . . experience." But pictorial metaphors such as this are misleading, since the theater is a temporal, as well as a spatial medium: earlier moments are rapidly distanced in performance, and memory often requires explicit reminders if it is to "frame" the stage present with past action. Such reminders are few, and the audience's awareness of threat is subordinated, in large part, to the scene's compelling immediacy—an immediacy heightened by the timeless love of Perdita and Florizel, by Autolycus' antics, and by a gracefulness of gesture that finds its natural culmination in dance. The audience may never completely abandon its apprehensive detachment from the lovers, but we must not underestimate how much the stage draws all who watch into its easiness.

With the exit of the dancing Saltiers, however, and Polixenes' interruption of the festivities, the audience is abruptly returned to an awareness of consequence and the claims that time exerts on the present. If Leontes' earlier attack of jealousy is painful because of the idyllic picture we have been given of his childhood friendship with Polixenes, the latter's remark to Camillo—"'Tis time to part them" (344)—is even more chilling, because we have been given an extended stage version of such carefreeness. Polixenes' subsequent explosion, like Prospero's truncation of his wedding masque, completes the disillusionment for the audience and for Perdita and Florizel, returning the audience to its awareness of consequence as it returns the lovers to the realities of their disparate stations. Perdita tells Florizel,

Beseech you
Of your own state take care. This dream of mine
Being now awake, I'll queen it no inch farther,
But milk my ewes, and weep.

(447-50)

Just as Time makes "stale" the "glistering" present, so Polixenes' rage makes the festival timelessness seem itself a dream.

When Camillo persuades the lovers to sail to Sicilia, the audience returns one last time to the play's broader narrative outline, reassuming a more privileged distance concerning events. But, relieved of the tragic irony of the first three acts, the audience now enjoys a new perspective of comic irony. Possessed of the secret of Perdita's recovery, the audience watches the characters—each of whom lacks at least one piece of information—move toward a reconciliation with romance inevitability. All converge on Sicilia—Florizel with
Perdita, Polixenes with Camillo, Autolycus with the rustics and their secret. Audience attention centers on the logic of events, which unfolds with a neatness both providential and artistic; time, "that makes and unfolds error," begins to right the situation, and the audience is allowed the omniscience to appreciate its workings. Anticipation runs high, looking forward to a reconciliation that will redeem the present from the apparent irrevocability of the past, awaiting the wonder on the part of the characters when the apparently miraculous is disclosed.

It is part of the dramaturgical brilliance of The Winter's Tale that these expectations are at once fulfilled, unfulfilled, and more than fulfilled. On the one hand, the Gentlemen who report the reunion between Leontes and Perdita underscore the miracle of the encounter, calling it "so like an old tale, that the verity of it is in strong suspicion" (V.ii.28-29). On the other hand, despite the attempt of Nevill Coghill to defend the effectiveness of these messenger speeches (p. 39), if there is any clear scène à faire in the play, the disclosure of Perdita's identity is it, since, in fulfilling the oracle's prophecy, it gives Leontes an heir, Florizel a wife, and Perdita a royal family. The reunion effects a reconciliation between age and youth, past and present, Sicilia and Bohemia. Such a scene, the audience expects to see; ironically, the messenger scene is disappointing precisely because The Winter's Tale is not a tale, but a play, and a play's most powerful moments are stage moments. The very quality of the reunion which "lames report to follow it, and undoes description to do it" (57-58) is that quality of immediacy which the stage provides. We want the scene to be a dramatic present, not deflected into a narrative past.14

The usual justification for the messenger scene is that the reunion is described to lend focus to the final scene, but this explanation underestimates both the disappointment of the former and the theatrical coup of the latter. For the audience, there is no play beyond this reunion; at least this is what the earlier scenes have indicated. The oracle's only prophecy concerns the lost child, as does Time's anticipation of the play's second half:

What of her ensues
I list not prophesy; but let Time's news
Be known when 'tis brought forth. A shepherd's daughter,
And what to her adheres, which follows after,
Is th' argument of Time.

(IV.i.25-29)

In terms of the audience's expectations since the shipwreck, Perdita's return represents the projected end of the narrative movement, and the audience has anticipated it as final. To extend the play beyond this promised conclusion is to press stage action, once again, beyond the apparent confines of plot.

We have been studying The Winter's Tale in terms of two interrelating experiences: that of time, understood through its effects of change and consequence, and that of the moment, experienced as something seemingly beyond these effects. We have explored, too, how the play represents a complex dramaturgical manipulation of temporality as it is experienced within performance—drawing attention away from narrative outlines into the stage present, distancing the present by the perceived intrusion of time and its effects. In the play's own vocabulary, occasioned by Perdita's gift of "rosemary and rue" to the disguised king and counsellor, we have been exploring the interacting rhythms of something like "Grace and remembrance" (IV.iv.76) and the ways in which Shakespeare builds these rhythms into the play's dramaturgy and stagecraft. The statue scene, justly praised as one of the culminations of Shakespeare's art, represents the play's crowning interpenetration of these two poles of temporal experience.

As in The Tempest, the final reunion of this play is orchestrated by a master of ceremonies in command of the secrets behind all events. When Paulina reappears with Leontes in the fifth act, however, she does so, not as a provider of second chances, but as a spokesman for memory, keeping fresh the remembrance of an apparently
irretrievable past and feeding its hold on the present with almost unpleasant insistence. Cleomines appeals to Leontes to "Do as the heavens have done, forget your evil, / With them, forgive yourself (V.i.5-6), and Dion urges him to consider his heirless kingdom; but Paulina, who "hast the memory of Hermione .. . in honor" (50-51), pressures his conscience with the claims of the past:

Were I the ghost that walk'd, I'd bid you mark
Her eye, and tell me for what dull part in't
You chose her; then I'd shriek, that even your ears
Should rift to hear me, and the words that follow'd
Should be "Remember mine."

(63-67)

After sixteen years, in other words, she appears as a rather grim spokesman for time's irrevocability. To the servant's praise of Perdita's beauty, Paulina laments:

O Hermione,
As every present time doth boast itself
Above a better gone, so must thy grave
Give way to what's seen now!

(95-98)

Her lines deny the possibility that loss can ever be replaced, or that the present can in any way heal the past. At the same time, unknown to Leontes and to the audience, these lines are half-truths, since the play's conclusion will dramatize a transcendence of memory and a better "present" that will fill time's grave. In their paradoxical truths and untruths, Paulina's lines anticipate the transformation of time that structures the statue scene itself.

This transformation is seamless in its movement from one temporal vision to the other. Leontes' initial response to the statue unveiled before him is one of acute "remembrance" of a past so cunningly recreated in stone that its image is resurrected, with equal vividness, in memory: "O, thus she stood, / Even with such life of majesty (warm life, / As now it coldly stands), when first I woo'd her!" (V.iii.34-36). The statue, in short, confronts Leontes with the past and with his responsibility for its loss, while paradoxically bringing it so vividly into the present that this loss seems to vanish. As he continues to gaze, the harsh line between past and present blurs, shading the memorial presence of the statue into the living presence of Hermione. In a word that reverberates throughout the scene, time's apparent irrevocability is "mocked" by a reappearance that seemingly occurs outside time's laws, and memory is both dissolved and brought to life in the face of the present's revelation. With this dramatic stroke, Shakespeare steps beyond Aristotle, whose third form of anagnorisis bears striking resemblance to the statue scene:

The third kind of recognition is through memory: we see one thing and recall another, as a character in the Cyprians of Dicaeogenes saw the picture and wept, or the recognition scene in the lay of Alcinous, where Odysseus listens to the bard and weeps at his memories, and this leads to the recognition.16

Recognition in The Winter's Tale, by contrast, moves beyond memory into the miraculous—it occurs when what is seen actually becomes what is recalled.

Paulina commands the statue to "Strike all that look upon with marvel" (100), and the final brilliance of Shakespeare's stagecraft in The Winter's Tale lies in the audience's inclusion in the striking marvel of this
scene. The stage reconciliation that the audience was denied in V.iii takes place, but the disclosure that makes it possible—Hermione's survival—comes as a revelation for the audience as well as for the characters. The earlier image of Hermione falling to the stage floor, Paulina's confirmation of her death, Leontes' plans to bury her, and Antigonus' ghostlike dream-apparition (recalling "visitors from the dead" elsewhere in Shakespeare), all establish the queen's death as a dramatic reality for the audience, breaking sharply with Shakespeare's usual practice (in plays such as Twelfth Night and Pericles) of making his audience confidants to all secrets and partners to all contrivance. Much more in the manner of Beaumont and Fletcher, Shakespeare withholds a narrative detail the revelation of which transforms both the outcome of the play and the significance of what has preceded it.

That the play hinges on such a deception is, by now, a commonplace in criticism of The Winter's Tale. But, like many Shakespearean commonplaces, its implications for audience response, and Shakespeare's manipulation of this response, remain imperfectly understood, even though (as this article has tried to suggest) dramaturgical decisions invariably adjust the audience's relationship with the developing stage action. Most obviously, the audience is forced into a collective experience which mirrors that of the stage characters, and chiefly that of Leontes, whose discovery constitutes the scene's focus. Like Leontes, the audience is initially forced into its own moment of remembrance. It matters little at what point the audience realizes that Hermione is alive; when the statue shows signs of life, the audience scans its memories, recalling the play's earlier scenes, trying to find the connections that could justify a development so beyond expectation. Hermione explains to Perdita that she remained in hiding to await the fulfillment of the oracle's prophecy, but this detail—like all others in the closing scene—is subsumed in the moment itself, luminous in its freedom from expectation. In place of the ironic superiority over characters that audiences usually enjoy during such dramatic reconciliations, Shakespeare creates a theatrical experience that we have no word for, an experience that constitutes the opposite of irony, for in this instant, as the statue becomes that which it has commemorated, the present is suddenly vastly more than we thought—fuller and richer, freed from irony's frameworks.

By setting the statue scene outside the audience's comprehension of plot and time, in other words, and by making the stage action, literally, beyond the anticipation that has sought to contain it, Shakespeare allows the stage itself, one last time, to assume a heightened autonomy and presence. As in the sheep-shearing scene, attention is directed toward individual objects, movements, and gestures, carefully orchestrated by dramatic speech highlighting the particular. Polixenes' "The very life seems warm upon her lip" (66) and Leontes' "The fixture of her eye has motion in't" (67) recall, in their specificity, Autolycus' ribbons, the "flow'rs of winter," and (most tellingly) Florizel's admiration of Perdita's movements:

> When you do dance, I wish you  
> A wave o' th' sea, that you might ever do  
> Nothing but that; move still, still so,  
> And own no other function.

(IV.iv.140-43)

Ewbank writes of this scene:

> Speeches are short, the diction plain, the language almost bare of imagery: as if Shakespeare is anxious not to distract attention from the significance of action and movement. ... An unusual number of speeches are devoted just to underlining the emotions and postures of people on-stage, as in Paulina's words to Leontes: "I like your silence, it the more shows off Your wonder." (p. 97)
This shift of emphasis away from language and toward gesture is heightened by the audience's own attention on the actress playing Hermione, as it watches for signs of breathing and movement, trying to detect the gesture that will reveal whether or not Hermione lives. The final discovery of *The Winter's Tale*, then, lies in a surrender to the moment; and for the audience, this involves surrender to the stage moment, a moment in which the most riveting activity is pure gesture; outlined, almost pictorially, within the stage's stillness, and to which the most appropriate response is rapt attention and "wonder." Indeed, so self-contained is this moment in its theatrical immediacy that, with the accompanying music, gesture approaches the expressive fluidity of dance.

It is easy to see why the play's conclusion has tempted critics toward Christian interpretations of the play—especially in light of Paulina's reference to redemption from death and her pronouncement that "It is requir'd / You do awake your faith" (94-95), and in light of the word "grace," which recurs throughout the play like a musical motif. Though strictly Christian frameworks are hard to attach to the play as a whole, the final scene is indeed charged with an almost religious sense of grace as something freely given, beyond desert. Hermione's reappearance provides characters and audience with a development beyond the apparent consequence of events as the play has suggested them, with "the experience of restoration after total loss" (Matchett, p. 106). In this sense, the scene is beyond time, or at least beyond time as it has constituted a reality in the minds of characters and audience alike. If time participates in the play's denouement, it is less the stock figure of the play's middle than a force of mystery, always outside comprehension's grasp, revealing itself in the miracles of the present. For the audience, grace is born in the "wink of an eye" (V.ii. 110), when the stage action severs itself from rigorous connection with the "dramatic time" which has ruled for much of the play.

In the midst of its transformations, however, such grace is never completely free of remembrance. The first four acts have presented grace in terms of freshness, innocence, and simple gracefulness: Hermione has been called "a gracious innocent soul" (II.iii.29), and Perdita was first described as "now grown in grace / Equal with wond'ring" (IV.i.24-25). This grace, like the youth of Polixenes and Leontes, is timeless because it has not yet been subjected to change and consequence. The grace of the final scene, however, is richer because more dearly bought, and the passage of time out of which it emerges leaves traces to spark remembrance. For one thing, the scene contains reminders of irreversible change. Hermione has grown old: "Hermione was not so much wrinkled, nothing / So aged as this seems" (28-29). And while Perdita has found a mother, she has also acquired a history, which, like Prospero's narration to Miranda in Act I of *The Tempest*, marks her emergence into a world that contains, among other things, time and its changes.

Also present are reminders of consequences not rescued from time. Paulina recalls the dead Antigonus with moving regret, and Leontes' decree that she should marry Camillo does not fully dispel this awareness of "wither'd" loss (133). Similarly, the scene lacks Mamillius, who actually was buried. Although he is never explicitly mentioned in the final scene, he has been mourned as recently as V.i, and his absence leaves the reunited family vaguely incomplete. While Florizel serves as a replacement for Mamillius, he is also a reminder of his loss. In other words, with its image of a world ransomed from time, the play's conclusion resolves the plot, but it nevertheless remains marked by the memory of that which time has destroyed.

In the play's closing lines, Leontes alludes to "this wide gap of time, since first / We were dissever'd" (154-55). Shakespeare's investigation of time in *The Winter's Tale* has left the audience with both poles of its temporal experience in balance. The audience has seen, in the end, that time's effects are inescapable, since action, for all the world's miracles, does have consequences. Nor can one escape the reality of change in a sublunary world ruled by mutability's "staling" hand. Whitsuntide must end: Perdita and Florizel enter the cycle of the generations, and Autolycus, after his appearance in the penultimate scene, simply vanishes. Nonetheless, through Shakespeare's manipulation of the stage and its possibilities, the audience feels the rigor of time open, again and again, into a stage presence always slightly beyond time's changes and consequences. Sicilia gives way to the wilderness of Bohemia; Polixenes, in spite of his age and station, succumbs in part both to the festival's liveliness and Perdita's charm. Most of all, in the play's final stroke, the audience
discovers that, when it tries to predict time's outlines and outcomes, it risks amazement—that the present can mock, not only consequence, but comprehension as well.

Notes


2 "In sum, then, it was Shakespeare's usual practice, histories apart, to bring the whole action of his plays within the frame of the picture, leaving little or nothing to narrative exposition" (Play-Making: A Manual of Craftsmanship [New York: Dodd, Mead, 1912], p. 98).


6 Shakespeare, after all, makes the relationship between Hermione and Polixenes much less "ambiguous" than Greene did in *Pandosto*, where Bellaria, "willing to shew how unfainely she loved her husband, by his friends entertainment, used him likewise so familiarly, that her countenance bewrayed how her mind was affected towards him: oftentimes comming her selfe into his bedchamber, to see that nothing shuld be amisse to mislike him" (*The Descent of Euphues: Three Elizabethan Romance Stories*, ed. James Winny [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957], p. 69). For a discussion of ways in which this question has been addressed in productions of *The Winter's Tale*, see Dennis Bartholomeusz, "*The Winter's Tale*" in *Performance in England and America, 1611-1976* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), esp. pp. 229-32.


8 Though Mowat disputes the claim of critics such as E. M. W. Tillyard that the first three acts constitute the equivalent of Shakespearean tragedy (pp. 5-21), it is nonetheless striking how dramaturgically similar this concluding scene is to the tragedies, and how many devices it borrows from them: the stage configuration of assembled characters grouped around a *locus* of suffering, commemoration of the tragic events in the form of narrative, the ironic counterpointing of knowledge and loss.

It is also significant, in this regard, that Shakespeare here abandons Greene's narrative, which has helped structure the events of the play's first half, and moves into his own dramatic material, though the theatrical implications of this shift into unfamiliarity would be more strongly felt by the play's original audience.


One of the most extensive thematic studies of Autolycus' role within the play is Lee Sheridan Cox, "The Role of Autolycus in The Winter's Tale," SEL, 9 (1969): 283-301.

"Word and Picture in the Final Plays," in Later Shakespeare, p. 93.

To a much lesser extent, the reunions between Leontes and Polixenes and between Leontes and Camillo are also "obligatory," and these too are merely reported.

In this role, she anticipates Ariel, who likewise scourges memory in his "ministers of Fate" speech to Alonso, Antonio, and Sebastian:

But remember
(For that's my business to you) that you three
From Milan did supplant good Prospero,
Expos'd unto the sea (which hath requit it)
Him, and his innocent child. . . .

(The Tempest III.iii.68-72)


The Winter's Tale (Vol. 36): Leontes And Perdita

Patricia Southard Gourlay (essay date 1975)


[Here, Gourlay traces Shakespeare's use of female metaphors in the play to explore elements of Leontes' own nature, and asserts that he opposes dark masculinity with the qualities of love, art, and nature represented by the three principal women.]
Early in *The Winter's Tale*, while all is still compliment and courtesy, Polixenes describes the innocent idyll he and Leontes shared as boys. He says to Hermione:

O my most sacred lady,
Temptations have since then been born t'us, for
In those unfledged days was my wife a girl;
Your precious self had then not crossed the eyes
Of my young playfellow.1 (I. ii.77—81)

When Polixenes makes his little joke, no one, least of all the gracious Hermione, takes exception to his comic aspersion on women, accompanied as it is by the honorific address, "sacred lady." Polixenes rightly takes for granted that his audience shares his own assumptions about the perfection of his childish friendship and recognizes in it the metaphor of a prelapsarian Eden. Only indirectly does he suggest that woman is the cause of Adam's fall. Yet Polixenes' courtly teasing introduces the complex theme of "femaleness" which Shakespeare expands to major importance in this play.

The identification of women with sexual temptation, the ready analogy to Eve in the garden, is a commonplace. It reflects a conception of women's nature deeply rooted in Shakespeare's society. That society is, of course, masculine, with male and female roles, in general, conventionally defined. Because men rule, the "masculine" values are power, law, and reason; a man is hardheaded, disciplined, practical, as well as honorable.2 Weakness is "womanish," as are those elements of their own nature that the men deny or repress. With some encouragement from Aristotle, St. Paul, and the Christian fathers, male smugness can shade off easily into fear and even abhorrence of sexuality and then of women. Sexual guilt can be displaced by blaming women as tempters; Eve's seduction of Adam is an archetypal expression of such attitudes. At the other extreme, women can be idealized by Neoplatonic philosophers and courtly lovers, adored as repositories of those ideal qualities not accommodated in the "real" world of men.

Renaissance treatment of the goddess Venus typifies this uncomfortable polarity, which Shakespeare turns so adroitly to his dramatic purpose. In most Renaissance mythography Venus' province seems to be mere sexuality.3 Golding, in the Preface to his translation of the *Metamorphoses*, declares that Venus stands allegorically for "such as of the fleshe too filthie lust are bent."4 A favorite myth is Venus' seduction of Mars; she is commonly seen as corrupting his "inner virtus" by her female arts.5 Shakespeare himself draws on these familiar associations fairly often. So Adonis accuses Venus as "sweating lust" in *Venus and Adonis*, though Shakespeare makes her pleasures appealing to the reader as well as to Adonis. Most particularly, the Romans in *Antony and Cleopatra* express their disapproval of Cleopatra and her influence by comparing her to Venus.6 Cleopatra "unmans" the Mars-like Antony by her mysterious sexual magic. At the same time, the Venus/Mars myth is associated with Eve's responsibility for Adam's fall; Cleopatra is the "serpent of old Nile," who brings about the "fall of Antony."

In his use of both the Venus and Eve myths Shakespeare invites from us a double response. Venus has another face in the mythography of the age, deriving very largely from the Neoplatonists. She often stands for the Neoplatonic concept of ideal love, for that beauty which draws men to the good. In Neoplatonic astrology, Venus is the moderating force who softens the harsher influences of Mars. Her sexuality becomes not merely lust, but a fertile and creative principle. Botticelli paints her in his *Primavera* as the beneficent Venus, reflected in the three Graces, presiding over the earth's flowering, suggestive of the Virgin herself. Botticelli's Venus may, as Frances Yates indicates, have magical properties as a talisman "to draw down the Venereal spirit from the star, and to transmit it to the wearer or beholder of her lovely image."7

In *Antony and Cleopatra*, Shakespeare also reflects a beneficent side to Cleopatra's femaleness, as well as a destructive one. He balances the flat Roman condemnation of Cleopatra with a life-giving Venus/Cleopatra who transcends the Roman conception of her; their hostility and fear reflect more upon themselves than upon
her. Suggesting an identification of Cleopatra's femaleness with imagination—in fact, with art—Shakespeare suggests the hollowness and sterility of the Roman world. If, like Eve, Cleopatra causes Antony's fall, yet as artist she re-creates the fallen Antony by her imagination, as Sidney's poet re-creates the lost golden world. When he writes *The Winter's Tale*, then, Shakespeare has already used "femaleness" to imply the limitations of a masculine world. Introducing the theme into pastoral romance, Shakespeare finds a form singularly suited to his theme and his method. Walter Davis, in his account of Elizabethan fiction, credits medieval romance writers with turning Greek romance to serious purposes by adding moral questioning to a mode previously innocent of it. In the Renaissance, Sidney particularly develops the philosophical potential of fictional romance by giving it a strong Neoplatonic bias. In his * Defence of Poesie*, Sidney has described the poet's art as leading men to the divine Idea as the courtly lover's lady leads him to ideal beauty. In the *Arcadia*, Sidney offers the reader the "golden world" which his poetic theory describes as the end of art. His heroes experience ideal value in a pastoral paradise and return to the "real" world of action enriched by that encounter. The *Arcadia*, as Davis puts it, is "a speculation about the possibility of reaching perfection in this life."

Greene's *Pandosto*, which Shakespeare adapts to his purpose for *The Winter's Tale*, is not itself a serious philosophical romance. Shakespeare, however, gives its gratuitous improbabilities mythic significance. The pastoral Eden is offered as an alternative to the fallen world; now that ideal world is associated with femaleness, and the actual world with what the masculine social order takes for its truth. Like Theseus in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Leontes speaks for that order, but he does not typify it. Rather, his conduct makes explicit the worst assumptions of his society. His despairing cynicism is the extreme form of Polixenes' gentlemanly misogyny. Like Othello, his claim to justice and his perversion of law and reason to support his madness suggest the dangerous possibilities in his masculine social order. To Leontes' dark vision Shakespeare opposes the ideal qualities represented in the play by the three women, Hermione, Paulina, and Perdita, who suggest the subversive and creative power of love, art, and nature. In *The Winter's Tale* they triumph totally over Leontes' "reality."

Leontes' court seems idyllic in the opening scene, as Camillo and Archidamus vie in courtesy. Its defects, however, are suggested rapidly, as Shakespeare develops and expands the few hints of sexual hostility he finds in Greene. At the same time he offers the first hints of that idealization which treats the three women, damned by their husband-father-king, as near-divinities. The tension develops slowly, beginning with protestations of love: friend to friend, husband to wife. Yet below the smiling surface, Shakespeare already suggests the polarization between male and female and makes the connection between the fallen world and female frailty in Polixenes' joking reference to the women as "temptations." (Only later are we to recognize that, at a deeper level, Polixenes means what he says: in Act iii he will denounce Perdita, blaming her as seducer of his son, in terms as brutal as Leontes' own.)

In her initial appearance Hermione is already identified for the first time with that highest of Neoplatonic qualities, grace. She answers Polixenes' teasing accusation by calling on "grace to boot" (I.ii.80). When Leontes reminds her of her earlier "good deed," she says, "Would her name were Grace," and then, a shade more seriously, she comments, "tis Grace indeed." Her playing with the word, even as she exemplifies the quality, also implies the story's pattern: the grace she brings Leontes will save him from the consequences of his justice.

Leontes' jealous fit comes upon him very suddenly here, to the consternation of literal-minded critics. But Shakespeare is deliberately manipulating appearance. We are reminded of the deceptiveness of social forms: Leontes' sudden seizure suggests a reality that his social mask conceals. He does not need an Iago to subvert his truth; the destroyer is entirely within.

To achieve his effect Shakespeare discards the perfectly good motivation Greene provides for the king in *Pandosto*. Pandosto falls prey to jealousy, after observing a continuing and extraordinary intimacy between
his wife and his friend; he considers in terms quite appropriate to romance "that Love was above all lawes and, therefore, to be staied with no law; that it was hard to put fire and flax together without burning. . . . He considered with himself that Egistus was a man and must needes love, that his wife was a woman, and therefore, subject unto love, and that where fancy forced, friendship was of no force."11 As the wronged husband, Pandosto is remarkably sympathetic to the claims of love; he distributes blame for its temptations about equally between his friend and his wife.

Shakespeare's treatment of the issue is more significant. Leontes has been silent during the exchange between Polixenes and Hermione. When he speaks of his courtship, he gives perhaps a first hint of the attitudes behind his gallantry:

Why, that was when
Three crabbed months had soured themselves to death
Ere I could make thee open thy white hand
And clap thyself my love. Then didst thou utter
"I am yours forever."

(I.ii.101-05)

The intensity of feeling suggested by his diction belies the lightness of his tone. He thinks in terms of conquest and possession: "I could make thee" . . . "clap thyself my love" . . . "yours forever." Of course this is conventional lovers' language, but Shakespeare insists on Leontes' possessiveness a touch more than necessary, thereby implying the egotism in his love. Hermione's innocent answer ironically lends itself to Leontes' poisoned imaginings:

'Tis Grace indeed.
Why, lo you now, I have spoke to the purpose twice;
The one for ever earned a royal husband,
Th'other for some while a friend.

(11. 106-09)

While Leontes still holds her hand, she extends the other to Polixenes; the innocent gesture only feeds his jealousy. He recognizes the possibility of innocence in her behavior, but he moves from his awareness that appearance can deceive to a certainty that it does so:

This entertainment
May a free face put on, derive a liberty
From heartiness, from bounty, fertile bosom,
And well become the agent. Tmay, I grant.
But to be paddling palms and pinching fingers,
As now they are, and making practiced smiles
As in a looking glass. . . .

(11. 111-17)

His diction here and in the speeches that follow makes plain his disgust with all sex, which comes to symbolize for him the human condition itself. The sexuality he loathes in himself may be displaced to Hermione, but there it is out of his control. He cannot fully own her; neither can he trust her. His conversation with Mamilius is especially revealing. His son is his "copy"; they are "almost as like as eggs." In Mamilius, he sees that other self who played innocently with Polixenes. When he doubts his son's paternity, he doubts
both love and the very possibility of innocence. Sexuality is as dangerous as a dagger:

Looking on the lines
Of my boy's face, methoughts I did recoil
Twenty-three years, and saw myself unbreeched,
In my green velvet coat, my dagger muzzled,
Lest it should bite its master and so prove,
As ornaments oft do, too dangerous.

(11. 153-58)

Even the question, "Will you take eggs for money?," restates the thesis that the wise man is an empiricist who knows "true" value.

As Leontes moves rapidly from his general distrust of women's truth—"Women say so, that will say anything" (11. 130-31)—faith seems to him mere stupidity, like the rustics' acceptance of Autolycus' lies. Like Othello, he chooses a negative certainty rather than the ambiguity of appearances; then he makes a law of it. His distrust includes all women and extends even to his probably uneasy audience, required to participate in his suspicions:

And many a man there is, even at this present,
Now, while I speak this, holds his wife by th'arm,
That little thinks she has been sluiced in's absence
And his pond fished by his next neighbor, by
Sir Smile, his neighbor. . . .

(11. 191-95)

Again his emphasis is on his property; Hermione is the "gate" he cannot guard. Like Pentheus in Euripides' Bacchae, he reveals in his imagery of restraint that he has objectified his own feelings in the person to be controlled:

No barricado for a belly. Know't,
It will let in and out the enemy
With bag and baggage. Many thousand on's
Have the disease and feel't not.

(11. 203-06)

Hermione is merely another "belly"; sexuality is the "enemy" and a "disease"; to destroy Hermione is to heal himself.

By the time he reveals his suspicion to Camillo that Hermione is "slippery" and a "hobby-horse," the suspicion is fact. Unless it is, he says, then there is no truth at all:

Why, then the world and all that's in't is nothing,
The covering sky is nothing, Bohemia nothing,
My wife is nothing, nor nothing have these nothings,
If this be nothing.

(11. 292-95)
When Camillo contradicts him, he insists, as if his absoluteness is proof, "It is: you lie, you lie." His truth is, he believes, a hardheaded "reasoning" man's assessment of reality; so he credits superior intelligence for perception of the truth to which others are blind: "... Not noted, is't, / But of the finer natures, by some several / Of head-piece extraordinary?" (11. 224-26). It follows, then, that he will use his civil power to stamp out those who disagree, who accept ambiguity. Camillo is a "mindless slave" if he can "at once see good, and evil, inclining to them both." Camillo knows Leontes' is a "diseased opinion," but he accepts the order of things: "I must believe you, sir." He will not do Leontes' bidding, but neither will he defy him openly, because he accepts his place as subject in Leontes' order, as he shares Leontes' masculine assumptions in general. His departure merely confirms Leontes' own certitude: "How blest am I / In my just censure, in my true opinion" (II.i.37-38). Again, like Othello, he identifies certainty with truth, so that only what is worst can be true: "All's true that is mistrusted" (I. 48).

Accusing his wife, Leontes can exercise his royal power to prevent any defense of her: "He who shall speak for her is afar off guilty / But that he speaks" (11. 103-04). The few who speak for Hermione are quickly silenced by command. Her strongest defender is Antigonus, who dares to tell Leontes he is "abused." Yet even he offers a curiously inverted defense: if any woman is honest, then Hermione is. Such a position makes explicit the implications which have been there all along, and Antigonus states them clearly: "For every inch of woman in the world, / Ay, every dram of woman's flesh is false, / If she be" (11. 137-39). It is a sign of the schism between their worlds that even the best disposed of the men think of women generically rather than individually. Antigonus' offer to geld his daughters if Hermione is guilty, so they will not "bring false generations," points ironically to the conclusion Leontes has already made: there is no woman who is not corrupt. Even Antigonus will, after all, accept the ugly mission his king gives him. Later, he even seems to accept the idea of Hermione's guilt after she appears to him in his sleep (III.iii). Though she comes "in pure white robes, / Like very sanctity" (11. 21-22), he misinterprets his dream, deciding the baby is Polixenes', and that the child is punished for its mother's "fault."

Having put down all dissent, Leontes now rests his "truth" absolutely in his own sovereignty:

- Our prerogative
  - Calls not your counsels, but our natural goodness
  - Imparts this, which if you—or stupefied
  - Or seeming so in skill—cannot or will not
  - Relish a truth like us, inform yourselves
  - We need no more of your advice.

(11. 163-68)

The men who serve him have no real choice. Shakespeare has neatly defined in their response to Leontes the fault in their social order. They cannot know Hermione's value for sure, because it cannot be demonstrated empirically. Neither can they assert that value in defiance of their king. So Shakespeare invents a female character to do it for them.

Paulina has no counterpart in Greene nor, apparently, in any other possible source for the play. Unlike Antigonus and Camillo, Paulina refuses to know her place. She asserts Hermione's goodness in defiance of Leontes' vilification; she keeps alive Hermione's memory, and, by implication, the possibility of her goodness; she serves ultimately as the agent by whom Leontes recovers what he has lost. She is subversive woman, truth-teller and, finally, artist, whose truth challenges Leontes' masculine order.

Shakespeare presents Paulina first as a negative female stereotype, a comic scold. Leontes tries to dismiss her as a shrew, a mere "Dame Partlet," but we recognize almost immediately the difference between his appraisal of her and her real quality. From the start, the lines of battle are clearly drawn between two kinds of power:
Paulina's female tongue versus Leontes' masculine rule.

Before she takes his new-born infant to Leontes, Paulina declares: "He must be told on't, and he shall. The office / Becomes a woman best; I'll take't upon me. / If I prove honey mouthed, let my tongue blister ..." (II.ii.31-33). When the jailer tries to stop her from visiting Hermione, he uses the diction of Leontes' "commandment," which Paulina satirizes when she asks, "Is't lawfull, pray you, / To see her women?" (II.i.11-12). The jailer worries that she has no "warrant," but she has already promised "I'll use that tongue I have" (I.53).

Paulina's "tongue" is emblematic for "words," in this case for the truth which cannot be coerced. Like the poets', Paulina's can be a "truth-telling tongue." It expresses other perceptions than Leontes' self-deceptive and cynical "truths," which are, in fact, as Hermione declares, "dreams."

To Leontes, Paulina is a noisy "Dame Partlet" who will not be "ruled" by her king, much less by her husband who, Leontes contemptuously charges, "dreads his wife" (II.iii.79). Again Leontes extends his loathing from one woman to the whole sex: his baby is a "bastard" and a "brat"; Paulina is a "bawd" and a "hag," "Dame Margery, you midwife." Most significantly, Paulina is a "crone" and a "mankind witch."

When Paulina keeps talking, Leontes falls back on force. He has "charg'd" Antigonus to keep Paulina out; he now commands his servants to "force her hence," to "push her out." Antigonus should be hanged because "thou wilt not stay her tongue." She shall be "burn't," presumably as a witch. He thinks his tyranny is merely assertion of his rightful male authority. The violence of his reaction suggests the degree to which his world is shaken by Paulina's refusal to play the part assigned to her. It is her tongue that frightens him, because he cannot stop it by his civil power. He calls her "a callet / of boundless tongue" and offers to hang Antigonus, a more pliant subject, because he can't "stay her tongue." When he punishes Antigonus, it is for his inability to stop his "lewd-tongued wife."

Paulina challenges simultaneously both Leontes' power and his "truth." Of course Leontes is mad, like Othello, but Shakespeare suggests in him a madness to which even a paragon of rationality like Octavius or Theseus may be liable. Paul Siegel sees in Leontes a classical tyrant whose passion has conquered his reason. Leontes' passions, he says, "make him dash the social order to pieces." But Shakespeare shows no conflict between reason and passion taking place in Leontes; the conflict is between Leontes the king and the subversive Paulina. Leontes' society is not "dashed to pieces." Leontes' alienation from his wife is, in fact, symptomatic of his society's alienation from the qualities the women metaphorically represent.

For the men in the play, women in general seem to be on trial in the person of Hermione. For the audience, however, Leontes' masculine world itself is on trial; the very foundations of its truth are in question. "The spider in the cup" defines Leontes' sour and narrow conception of a fallen world of "fact," to which the only response is force. Hermione's "grace" offers the play's alternative to Leontes' harsh vision of reality. "Grace" suggests a wide range of qualities, all of them displayed by the queen: feminine charm and beauty, the Christian grace which transcends Leontes' narrow justice, and Neoplatonic divine "grazzia." Hermione is always "the gracious Lady," a "gracious innocent soul," Leontes' "gracious dam," remembered as "tender as infancia and grace."

Leontes has seen Hermione's grace only as her charming "entertainment"; even that superficial grace has seemed a means to deceive him, disguising lust with the "free face" of "entertainment." He "derive a liberty / from heartiness." But Hermione's social grace is a reflection of her spiritual quality, evidenced in her response to Leontes' accusations. She declares, "This action I now go on / Is for my better grace" (II.i.121-22). Leontes' accusation tests and enriches that "grace," providing the occasion for a dramatic display of it at many levels.
Hermione's grace manifests itself in Acts I and II as gentleness and mercy. More concerned for Leontes than for herself, she forgives him repeatedly. He does "but mistake" in his accusations (II.i.81). She worries "how this will grieve you" and finds in her prison the consolation that she does not deserve it. Even speaking in her own defense, she does not reproach Leontes directly; she only declares that condemnation on "surmises" would be "rigor, not law" (III.ii.113). She wishes her father could be present to see her, "Yet with eyes / Of pity, not revenge" (11. 120-21). "Pity, not revenge": those are among the last words Shakespeare gives her before her "death." Her merciful quality is especially striking in contrast with Leontes' demand for punitive justice.

Hermione's grace, even in the first half of the play, acquires a generalized sanctity with strong Neoplatonic implications. Shakespeare takes time for Cleomenes and Dion to discuss the "sweet air" of Apollo's precincts, and Dion is impressed by the "celestial habits" and "reverence of the grave wearers" (III.i.6-7), as if he were describing a procession of participants in the mysteries. Hermione's own grace is associated with Apollo's powers when Cleomenes and Dion hope the issue of their visit will be "gracious." Later, Antigonus will see her in his dream wearing "pure white robes / Like very sanctity," (m.iii.21-22) as if she were an initiate. When she reappears in Act v, it will be in this same ambiguous blending of Neoplatonic and conventional Christian divinity.

Hermione is, in her unrealistic perfection, both symbol and talisman for that value which Leontes has shut out of his world. His "reason," "justice," and power enforce his "truth": he lives in a fallen world of "fact," in which women's falseness is both a cause and a symptom. But this play is romance, not tragedy. In the golden world of romance, the "truth" of the artist is triumphant; Paulina asserts and enforces that truth in defiance of Leontes. So when the oracle speaks in Act II, the play turns itself completely around. Paulina has so far been the "truth-telling tongue," insisting on Hermione's worth. She has also offered her truths as antidote to Leontes' sick imagination. Forcing her way to him, she has told the guard:

I come to bring him sleep. 'Tis such as you
That creep like shadows by him and do sigh
At each his needless heavings, such as you
Nourish the cause of his awaking. I
Do come with words as medicinal as true. . . .

(II.iii.33-37)

She sees herself as his "physician," trying vainly to persuade him to "remove / the root of his opinion, which is rotten" (11. 88-89).

When Hermione dies, Leontes reverses himself completely and submits to Paulina's caustic healing. Shakespeare shows the change in stages. When the oracle is revealed, Leontes first declares its truth too is "mere falsehood"; only the prince's death persuades him of his "injustice." Even when Hermione faints, he smugly thinks he can undo the harm like a Claudio or a Cymbeline: "I'll reconcile me to Polixenes, / New woo my queen, recall the good Camillo . . ." (III.ii.153-54). Only Paulina's histrionic announcement of Hermione's death brings him up short. Now he accepts her wildest reproaches. Paulina's "apology" for her anger causes some confusion among the critics, but it seems clear enough when read as irony. Paulina seems to emphasize the "I," contrasting herself with Leontes, when she says, "All faults I make, when I shall come to know them, / I do repent" (III.ii.217-18; my italics). "I have showed too much / The rashness of a woman" pointedly emphasizes the Tightness of her woman's anger compared to Leontes' masculine "rashness" disguised as reason. When she tells him,

Do not receive affliction
At my petition. I beseech you, rather
Let me be punished, that have minded you
Of what you should forget

(11. 221-24; my italics),

she is in fact reminding him of his earlier pattern of action. Her subsequent persistence in keeping his memory of his misdeeds fresh indicates that this disclaimer is ironic. Each promise she makes not to mention Leontes' victims is, of course, a deliberate reminder of them.

"Take your patience to you, / And I'll say nothing," would be entirely out of character for Paulina if we took it at face value. As an ironic summing up, it is more a threat than a promise. So Leontes acknowledges when he says, "Thou didst speak but well / When most the truth, which I receive much better / Than to be pitied of thee" (11. 230-32). Their exit together, which marks the end of this first section of the play, points to their future relationship. Leontes' "Come and lead me to these sorrows" refers not only to the bodies of his wife and son, but also to his future penance, dictated by Paulina. When they reappear in Act v, Leontes—who mocked Antigonus' failure to rule his wife—will himself be her subject.

Leontes' education by Paulina represents a marked departure from Greene's Pandosto, whose repentance is conventionally shallow. Pandosto builds his wife the obligatory "rich and famous" tomb with a self-accusing epitaph, and he makes his daily visits there to "bewail his misfortune." His character, however, is quite unchanged. When the fleeing couple are unmasked, he reviles Fawnia in terms as harshly anti-feminine as any in Shakespeare's play: "Thou disdainfull vassal, thou currish kite, assigned by the destinies to base fortune . . . how durst thou presume, being a beggar, to match with a Prince: By thy alluring looks to inchant the sonne of a King to leave his owne countrie to fulfill thy disordinate lusts. . . . " Before this denunciation, he has already shown himself as tyrannical as Leontes in his cruelty to Dorastus and in his amorous attempts on Fawnia herself. Even after the happy reconciliation, he "fell into a melancholic fit, and to close up the Comedy with a Tragicall stratageme, he slewe himselfe. . . ."

Shakespeare's Leontes, schooled by Paulina, cannot behave like this, because Shakespeare's romance has its own rules which transform the stratagems both of comedy and of tragedy. But Shakespeare borrows the attack of father upon daughter from his source and assigns it instead to Polixenes. Shakespeare makes Polixenes' misogyny as savage as Pandosto's. When he confronts the girl his son loves, he says: "And thou, fresh piece / Of excellent witchcraft, who of force must know / The royal fool thou cop'st with . . ." IV.iv.415-17). Leontes has already expressed his fear of Paulina's female powers by calling her a witch. Now Polixenes calls Perdita a "knack," an "enchantment," who has seduced Florizel and against whose sexuality his son must be protected:

if ever henceforth thou
These rural latches to his entrance open,
Or hoop his body more with thy embraces,
I will devise a death as cruel for thee
As thou art tender to't.

(IV.iv.430-34)

So the theme of sexual hostility is repeated in this second part of the play. Leontes and Hermione are reflected in Polixenes and Perdita. Like Leontes, Polixenes blasts the joy of a gathering with accusations and threats of death, enforcing his will by civil power. As Hermione's worth has been asserted by Paulina, so Florizel contradicts Polixenes' devaluation of Perdita. But because he is a lover in the golden world of pastoral, Florizel already knows what Leontes must learn the hard way: like poets and madmen, he sees in his lady the value to which the kings are blind. Florizel's estimate of Perdita is also ours; like Hermione, she is presented
to us in terms of her symbolic qualities. The diction and imagery used for mother and daughter are in both cases strongly suggestive at once of the Virgin and of the Neoplatonic Venus, whose love leads the way to truth.

From the first, Perdita is presented to us pictorially; Hermione herself will be a living icon in her reappearance. In Perdita, Shakespeare suggests the Venus Genetrix who "gives life and shape to the things in nature and thereby makes the intelligible beauty accessible to our perception and imagination."16 Her resemblance to Botticelli's *Primavera* is interesting. Edgar Wind has suggested that the *Primavera* and *The Birth of Venus* are companion pieces celebrating iconographically the two Neoplatonic aspects of Venus, the "natural" and the "celestial";17 they are also rather neatly suggested in Perdita and Hermione. The richly suggestive fertility symbolism surrounding Perdita has been discussed by many critics. The outcast "brat" returns as a goddess-queen, ruling in nature. Presiding over the sheep-shearing, she seems to Florizel "no shepherdess but Flora, / Peering in April's front" IV.iv.2-3). She is "most Goddess-like pranked up"; all her "acts are queens" and even Camillo declares her "Queen of curds and cream." She declares her full alliance with "great creating nature" when she scorns the gillyflowers.

Gifted with the courtly lover's sight, Florizel explicitly spurns the values of the sublunary world where his father exercises power. When he pledges his faith to Perdita, he declares he would not prize empire, beauty, "force and knowledge / More than was ever man's" (IV.iv.367-68) without Perdita's love. Later, put to the test, he renounces his right of succession; he is "heir to my affection."

As Leontes is later to choose "madness" over the "real" world's reason, Florizel tells Camillo he is "advised" by his love: "If my reason / Will thereto be obedient, I have reason; / If not, my senses, better pleased with madness, / Do bid it welcome" (11. 475-78). Shakespeare uses his theatrical metaphor here to emphasize the Tightness of Florizel's evaluation. Although Perdita seems to the realistic observers, shepherds and kings alike, to be a shepherdess playing a queen, she is in fact to be revealed as a true queen, in defiance of appearances.18 Like the other women in the play, she is more, not less, than she seems.

When the lovers arrive at Leontes' court, Perdita's value is evident to everyone. She is praised now in quasi-religious terms: "This is a creature, / Would she begin a sect, might quench the zeal / Of all professors else, make proselytes / Of who she but bid follow" (v.i.106-09). She is a "woman / More worth than any man" (11. 111-12). When he receives the couple, Leontes calls Perdita a "goddess" and "a paragon." He is not merely honoring her royalty. Even when told she is a shepherd's daughter, he is "sorry" that "Your choice is not so rich in worth as beauty / That you might well enjoy her" (11. 212-14). The term "worth" seems to imply a distinction between the narrow "worth" of high birth and wealth and Perdita's worth in Leontes' eyes. The same distinction is suggested when Florizel asks Leontes to intercede for him with his father, who will grant him "precious things, as trifles"; Leontes answers: "Would he do so, I'd beg your precious mistress / Which he counts but a trifle" (11. 222-23).

The consolations Perdita brings her father are nature's own. Her innocent sexuality is life-creating; it is the antidote to her father's barrenness. When Perdita returns, Leontes welcomes back into his world the creative and fertile power of Venus. Such consolations, however, require us to transfer our affections from the old, which is lost, to the new which takes its place.

Greene's *Pandosto* is subtitled "The Triumph of Time." Curiously, Greene goes on to explain his subtitle in terms of Time as Revealer: it shows how "Truth may be concealed yet by Time in spirit of fortune it is most manifestly revealed." Yet in the novel there is no mention of Time, and mere "Fortune" gets credit for the reunion of father and daughter. Shakespeare introduces the quaint figure of Father Time himself as "Chorus" for the second half of the play. His Time, however, unlike Greene's, is both threatening and comical. As Destroyer and Creator, he boasts:
it is in my power
To o'er throw law and in one self-born hour
To plant and o'erwhelm custom. Let me pass
The same I am, ere ancient'st order was
Or what is now received. I witness to
The times that brought them in. So shall I do
To the freshest things now reigning, and make stale
The glistening of this present, as my tale
Now seems to it.

(IV.i.7-15)

Perdita's recovery is a demonstration of his powers, working through the cycle of nature.

But Shakespeare goes far beyond Greene in his plot by giving us Hermione's restoration; it is not a gift of Time but a defiance of it. In IV.i he has his fun with Time, both as a fusty theatrical device and as a character. In the last act, time in general is mocked, as are those temporal powers exercised by men. Paulina exercises the power of the artist to confute time, both in preserving Hermione's memory and in restoring her to life.19

As Act v opens, Paulina is still reproaching Leontes for Hermione's death. Paulina's persistence serves to keep Hermione both a real and an ideal presence. As Leontes says, "Whilst I remember / Her and her virtues, I cannot forget / The wrong I did myself . . ." (v.i.6-9). While she keeps Leontes repentant, Paulina is defying time, and rejecting the solace it can offer. So Cleomenes complains of her bluntness: "You might have spoken a thousand things, good lady, that would / Have done the time more benefit and graced / Your kindness better" (v.1. 21-23). But for Hermione's restoration to have meaning, Hermione must be irreplaceable. No second wife will do, nor can even Perdita make up for her loss.

The courtiers hope Leontes will "forgive himself and marry again. When Perdita arrives and the servant praises her, he declares he has "almost forgot" Hermione, and promises Paulina that Perdita "will have your tongue too." But Paulina's bitter tongue continues to insist on Hermione's unique value. In the celebration of Perdita, therefore, Paulina stands a little apart. She is skeptical and even jealous, on Hermione's behalf, of any praise of Perdita. So she asserts Hermione's greater worth: "Not a month / 'Fore our queen died, she was more worth such gazes / Than what you look on now" (v.1. 224-26). She holds out for the reconciliation impossible in nature, the return of Hermione herself. Of course her obstinacy serves the purposes of the plot. More than that, her "magic" takes precedence over nature; the effect of Perdita's return is subsumed in the dazzling and mysterious resurrection of Hermione. . . .

Notes

1 All textual references are to The Winter's Tale, ed. Baldwin Maxwell (Baltimore, 1956).

2 Theseus, king of Athens in A Midsummer Night's Dream, is representative of these "masculine" attributes; appropriately, he rejects the lovers' tale of their "dream" experiences in the wood as "more than cool reason ever comprehends" (v.i.6). Hippolyta, the wife he has won by conquest, does not agree.


Robert P. Miller cites this interpretation as typical of "standard patterns of conflict" between the sexes, to be found also in Adam and Eve, Samson and Delila, Alcido and Rinaldo in Gerusalemme Liberata, and Verdant and Acrasia in The Faerie Queene. See "The Myth of Mars' Hot Minion in Venus and Adonis," ELH, 26 (1959), 473.

I.i.1-13; II.ii.191-204.


P. 62.


"Leontes a Jealous Tyrant," RES, 1 (1950), 302-07.

The phrase comes from the queen in Greene's Pandosto; she, however, defends herself aggressively, attacking the king and herself demanding an embassy to the oracle (p. 256).

Greene, p. 314.


Wind, pp. 100-20.


Compare the poet's claim in Sonnet 81: "And tongues to be your being shall rehearse / When all the breathers of this world are dead."

Robert N. Watson (essay date 1984)


In the excerpt below, Watson discusses the physical and spiritual reunification of the natural and artificial worlds of The Winter's Tale; including Perdita's rejection of the dead world of Sicily and her role in the redemption of Leontes' ambitious identity.

Redemption and the Bohemian Garden
Immediately after Leontes resigns himself and his country to wintry stagnation, the scene shifts to an entire new world. The first three lines after his despairing vow tell us that we are in wild Bohemia, under an open sky, and tossed by swiftly changing weather. The shift of locale from one country to another is only the geographic aspect of this scene's highly complex transition, which is an exhilarating but frightening release from physical, spiritual, and temporal claustrophobia. The forces of nature Sicilia imprisoned and slandered lie waiting here in ambush, and attack the courtier Antigonus as the hapless emissary of that artificial world. Antigonus is carrying some dangerous baggage: his own version of Leontes' dream-induced doubt about Perdita's legitimacy (3.2.82-84; 3.3.16-46), and a ludicrously overcivilized notion of the workings of fallen nature. Taking up Perdita to begin the mission Leontes spitefully assigned him, Antigonus says,

Come on, poor babe.
Some powerful spirit instruct the kites and ravens
To be thy nurses! Wolves and bears, they say,
Casting their savageness aside, have done
Like offices of pity.

(2.3.185-89)

Such handsome notions do not apply, as the young shepherd mentions, when the creatures are hungry (3.3.130-31). A real bear soon enforces a more realistic idea of its character on the emissary, despite his distinctly Sicilian protest, reported by the young shepherd, that "his name was Antigonus, a nobleman." The bear, not impressed, then "mock'd him" and consumed him (3.3.96-101).

The brutality of the scene raises for the audience a question that has troubled Christian minds over the centuries: "But how did man so lose his mastery over creation that irrational animals can devour him? [Augustine's] answer is that the present state of mankind is the consequence of sin. In paradise it had been totally different, and man's forfeited powers will be restored to him at the time of the resurrection."49 The devouring of Antigonus by the bear, like the devouring of Leontes by the wild beast within him, is fallen nature's appropriate (if harsh) response to the presumption of paradise. Antigonus is truly "gone for ever" (3.3.58), and Leontes will be trapped in a barren ritual until the babe spared by the bear returns from Bohemia, first to symbolize, then to inspire, the redemptive resurrection of Hermione. On the Bohemian shore, Antigonus has only a very marginal understanding of the regenerative force he holds in his arms. He expresses the hope that the money and documents he leaves with the child will "breed thee" (3.3.48), whereas her breeding will depend more on the kindly nature of the shepherds than on such civilized Sicilian artifacts. The shepherds soon arrive to bury Antigonus and nurture this "Blossom" (3.3.46) who receives from his death a new life.

The brutality of the scene itself follows this transitional scene, and speaking (like Duncan and Malcolm) in terms of "growth" and "planting," propels us into Bohemia's ongoing natural life. When Leontes accused Hermione and Polixenes of "wishing clocks more swift; / Hours, minutes; noon, midnight" (1.2.289-90), he simply meant that they eagerly awaited each night's adulterous pleasure; but in the context of his other implicit denials of time, we may infer on a secondary level that he was accusing them of accelerating time itself, thereby compromising the roles of boy eternal and eternal host by which he claimed immortality. As long as he holds his wife's seduction responsible for bringing sexuality into his garden, he may as well also hold it responsible for the intrusion of time. But his effort to deny and even overthrow Father Time proves as futile as the earlier filial rebellions, and the ambitious figure again sees even his normal patrimony threatened when the father retakes authority. When the figure of Time requests that we "imagine me, / Gentle spectators, that I now may be / In fair Bohemia," the phrasing implies more than a change of setting. Time itself, as the character of Leontes' crime invited, and as the character of his penance indicates, has virtually ceased to exist in Sicilia. With his wife's "death," Leontes, like Macbeth, disappears into a series of meaningless "to-morrows," and renewal takes place only outside his kingdom, among his more "natural" enemies.
But the transition to Bohemia is not simply a renaissance of nature; it is the first step in a rapprochement between nature and artifice. The second half of the play points less to the abandonment of custom and civility than to the redemption of those notions by rediscovering their foundations. By the same token, the tragic portrayal of an ambitious identity destroyed gives way to the romantic portrayal of an ambitious identity saved by the recovery of its hereditary basis. The choral figure of Time, the most conventional sort of theatrical artifice, serves to introduce the drama of nature. Time's boasted ability "To plant and o'erwhelm custom" resubordinates social habit to a regenerative process, and his offer to "give my scene such growing / As you had slept between" provides a dramatic transition by the very forces of maturation and restfulness that distinguish the new locale from the old. The self-defeating manners of Leontes' overextended hospitality stand in grim contrast to the basic hospitality of the shepherds, which is a spontaneous response to Perdita's real human needs. At the sheep-shearing festival, guests are greeted with flowers and food rather than prolonged encomia, and the hosts worry more about buying and preparing the meal than they do about "customary compliment."

The language of the play similarly supports the ethical pattern, regaining health as it regains contact with literal meanings. The rhetorical absurdity of the first scene, where the metaphors clash with their forgotten literal meanings, prepares the social absurdity of the second scene, where good manners, out of touch with their basic purpose, clash with the underlying human sentiments. The overpopulation of dead metaphors in Sicilian speech foreshadows and helps create the ghost-town of Leontes' penance. Ernest Schanzer points out that Polixenes' "poetic embroideries" comparing himself and Leontes to "twinn'd lambs" yield later in the play to the shepherds' practical discussions of real sheep, and that the figurative references to planting and growing in the first half of the play "reappear in the second half on a more literal level in the horticultural debate between Perdita and Polixenes."

The same rule may be applied to images of birth: "issue" is generally used metaphorically early in the play (2.2.43; 2.3.153; 3.1.22), but from the moment Antigonus arrives in Bohemia (3.3.43) to the final reconciliation (5.3.128), the term tends to refer to actual human offspring.

The play now appears to be systematically divided into two opposing camps:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sicilia</th>
<th>Bohemia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>city</td>
<td>country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>art</td>
<td>nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ceremony</td>
<td>spontaneity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social artifice</td>
<td>human nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>figurative lang</td>
<td>literal language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>age</td>
<td>youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>linear time</td>
<td>cyclical time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dreams</td>
<td>senses/sleep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acts 1-3</td>
<td>act 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Such a chart reveals the range of levels on which Shakespeare creates the contrast we feel. And if Shakespeare had permitted Bohemia to wage a vengeful war to free Sicilia from its withered tyrant, the right hand column marching against the left, we would have a play strongly resembling Macbeth in its ethical pattern and symbolic action. But Shakespeare's last plays tend to resolve, by miraculous reconciliations, the same sorts of divisions and conflicts that proved fatal in plays written only a few years earlier. The romances find ways to defuse the tragic threats of usurpation, political naiveté, premature death, incest, and the illusion of adultery; and The Winter's Tale defuses the subtler threat of moral idealism that defeated Coriolanus. As families in the romances ultimately reunite after a long and hazardous separation, so do the two sets of values charted above, and so, therefore, do the adopted and hereditary identities. Without the natural Bohemian basis, artificialities—manners, morals, language, marriage—become monstrosities. But with that basis, they become the "art / That Nature makes" which Polixenes defends so strongly (4.4.91-92), facets of the world's beauty,
such as gillyvors, which only human endeavor can incite nature to produce.

The first scenes in Bohemia establish the opposed terms, and alert us to the need for a combination, by showing us a starkly natural world that is refreshing after three acts in Sicilia, but not altogether desirable in itself. The depredations of the storm on the crew, the bear on Antigonus, even Autolycus on the clown, remind us that natural law can be as capricious and tyrannical as ceremonial law. Where Sicilia denies the forces of time, sexuality, and mortality, Bohemia is obsessed by them. The old shepherd's first speech begins by lamenting the misbehavior accompanying puberty, and ends with the deduction that Perdita is the product of heated fornication; he then calls his son over to "see a thing to talk on when thou art dead and rotten" (3.3.59-81). Sin and death are on the son's mind too. Seeing the gold left with Perdita, he tells his father, "if the sins of your youth are forgiven you, you're well to live" (3.3.120-21); he then talks about the drowning of the mariners, the eating of Antigonus, and the obligation to bury what is left of him. The figure of Time itself appears next, followed by Camillo's complaint that "It is fifteen years since I saw my country; though I have for the most part been air'd abroad, I desire to lay my bones there." Polixenes resists this plea with a similarly morbid figuration: "'Tis a sickness denying thee any thing; a death to grant this" (4.2.2-6). Their conversation then turns to the illicit sexual motives that have apparently been drawing Florizel away from the court. Autolycus begins the following scene by singing about seasons, flowers, animals, and "tumbling in the hay," worrying about the prospect of hanging rather than about any "life to come."

By the time we arrive at act four, scene four, we may therefore be ready to regret the abandonment of the moral struggle that felt so oppressive in Sicilia. At the sheep-shearing festival, the chain of being seems to lie in a chaotic heap on the grass. Perdita speaks casually and publicly of Florizel's "Desire to breed by me" as if they belonged to some lower order of creation (4.4.103). Conversely, when she describes a flower closing at night and opening in the morning wet with dew, her wording fairly drips with overtones of human seduction and subsequent regrets: "The marigold, that goes to bed wi' th' sun, / And with him rises weeping"

(4.4.105-06). Florizel's remarks show even less respect for hierarchies and solemnities:

Apprehend
Nothing but jollity. The gods themselves
(Humbling their deities to love) have taken
The shapes of beasts upon them. Jupiter
Became a bull and bellow'd; the green Neptune
A ram and bleated; and the fire-rob'd god,
Golden Apollo, a poor humble swain,
As I seem now. Their transformations
Were never for a piece of beauty rarer,
Nor in a way so chaste, since my desires
Run not before mine honor, nor my lusts
Burn hotter than my faith.
Perdita O but, sir,
Your resolution cannot hold when 'tis
Oppos'd (as it must be) by th' pow'r of the King.

(4.4.24-37)

She means that his intention to marry her must yield to his ceremonial duties, but his speech should also make her fear that his resolution to respect her chastity "cannot hold when 'tis / Oppos'd (as it must be)" by the appetitive power that Bohemia embodies. The speech is laden with Freudian slips, most prominently the entire comparison of his disguise to those of various gods who descended from higher stature only long enough to seduce or rape maidens and then abandoned them. Perdita should think carefully about her own image of the marigold, which is left weeping after the sun takes her to bed. Florizel hastens to cover his tracks in the
second half of his speech, but the lurking pun on "chaste" and the image of his desires not running before his honor only further remind us of Apollo's destructive pursuits of mortal maidens. At the same time, his diction may remind us of Christ as a much purer sort of deity whose love led him to humble his shape and walk among his inferiors. That better sort of love, and the Incarnation by which it answers man's Fall from Grace, are far beyond the ken of the Bohemians, who are celebrating a merely natural sort of regeneration. Their innocent ignorance of the need for Grace prepares us to appreciate the Christian aspects of Hermione's mock-incarnation, just as Leontes' willful ignorance of the Fall's impact on nature prepares us to appreciate the natural aspects of Hermione's survival.

The excesses that disturb the harmony of the sheepshearing festival and prevent the marriage are opposite to the ones that disrupt the Sicilian court and its central marriage. The faults in Florizel's language and behavior are negatives of the same faults in Leontes, and may therefore serve to redress the imbalance. The young man's desire to eternize Perdita's graceful youth bears some resemblance to Leontes' determination to remain "boy eternal" with Polixenes:

When you speak, sweet,
I'd have you do it ever; when you sing,
I'd have you buy and sell so; so give alms;
Pray so; and for the ord'ring your affairs,
To sing them too. When you do dance, I wish you
A wave o' th' sea, that you might ever do
Nothing but that; move still, still so,
And own no other function. Each your doing
(So singular in each particular)
Crowns what you are doing in the present deeds,
That all your acts are queens.

(4.4.136-46)

However greatly they differ in pleasantness and mental health, Florizel and Leontes alike become so entranced by a mundane representation of grace that they forget the need for otherworldly Grace. Natural affection can no more assure such perpetuation than ceremonial manners can: only the combination of the two, resulting in legitimate procreation, can perpetuate the youth and beauty of humankind. But if Florizel commits a version of the error that ruined Leontes' marriage—a neglect of the rule of Ecclesiastes, that each thing has its own time and season—his image of eternity as "A wave o' th' sea" suggests an awareness that this world offers eternity only through cyclical renewal and not through stasis. There may be no new thing under the sun, but each new wave or babe reproduces a former one as if it were new again—as the blossom Perdita reproduces her mother's lily-like betrothal. Perdita is playing three overlapping roles in this scene: she is partly a new bride, the symbol of human regeneration, partly Flora, the goddess of vegetative renewal (4.4.2), and partly Proserpina, the figure who connects the cyclical human escape from death with the cyclical return of vegetation. While playing these roles, she necessarily perceives death as only a normal and unthreatening counterpart to sexuality, and is utterly unshaken by the idea of Florizel's flower-strewn "dying," in either sense (4.4.129-32). So Florizel may be half-consciously acknowledging something essential and redemptive about Perdita, in the very sort of praise that represented Leontes' half-conscious decision to overlook the essential mortality of those closest to him.

In the last two lines of his speech, Florizel implies that physical "acts" take precedence for him over the ceremonial heritage of royalty—a heritage dismissed as "dreams" three times in this scene. Where Leontes dreams of rampant appetitive nature (3.2.82), the shepherd predicts (with inadvertent acuity) that the hidden princess Perdita will bring Florizel "that / Which he dreams not of," and the hidden prince Florizel promises Perdita "more than you can dream of yet" (4.4.179-80, 388). When her royal marriage seems doomed, Perdita
announces, "This dream of mine / Being now awake, I'll queen it no inch farther" (4.4.448-49). The natural and sexual values the Sicilians repress, and the ceremonial and hierarchical values the Bohemians repress, surface exactly where a psychoanalyst would expect repressed material to surface: in their respective dreams.

Perdita consistently represses the artificial on behalf of the natural, inverting her father's errors in the process. Florizel refuses to buy her any of Autolycus' finery, because "She prizes not such trifles as these are. / The gifts she looks from me are pack'd and lock'd / Up in my heart" (4.4.357-59). This is an admirable alternative to the hollowly gift-laden way love was formerly exchanged between the two royal families (1.1.24-31). Furthermore, if David Kaula is correct in claiming that Autolycus' trumpery represents Catholic relics and indulgences,53 then Perdita's emphasis on gifts of faith is an admirable alternative and an appropriate corrective to her father's implicit belief in the saving power of worldly ornamentation. But the Puritanical mistrust of ornament can be carried too far, even in defense of nature. In expressing this same strict preference during the debate about the gillyvors, Perdita commits an inverted version of the error her father committed in rejecting her. He banished her as a "bastard," apparently because unrefined nature had a part in her making. She banishes these "blossoms" (the name Antigonus gave her) from her "garden" (the name the Sicilians gave the place where Leontes perceives the adultery) because she considers them adulterated by the artificial part of their creation. She desires such a mixture "No more than were I painted I would wish / This youth to say 'twere well, and only therefore / Desire to breed by me" (4.4.101-03). Cosmetics, revealingly popular with the women of the Sicilian court (2.1.8-15), may represent an ethical danger analogous to the other Sicilian excesses. As Ben Jonson writes, the thicker the lady is painted and ornamented with "'th' adulteries of art," the safer it is to assume that underneath "All is not sweet, all is not sound."54 In fact, Paulina characterizes Leontes' jealousy as that sort of extravagance: "Here's such ado to make no stain a stain / As passes coloring" (2.2.17-18).

But meretriciously painting over one's faults differs crucially from eliciting one's natural beauty by artificial additions, just as denying one's fallen nature differs crucially from nurturing one's remaining virtues by sensible social customs. By showing Perdita and Leontes overlooking these distinctions, The Winter's Tale urges us to remember them. The sheep-shearing scene evokes and then shatters the supposition that keeping in touch with agricultural nature corresponds to keeping in touch with hereditary nature. In the pastoral setting that Renaissance writers often used to espouse a primitivist ethic, Shakespeare compromises the apparent primitivist ethic of several earlier plays. Here human life and legacy can be as badly disrupted by a pure obedience to nature as by the pursuit of artificial ambitions. The dark undertones of Macbeth and Coriolanus, which resemble Florentine philosophy in suggesting that mere submission to nature is itself unnatural for human beings, become forthright and redemptive toward the end of The Winter's Tale. As Pico's Oration suggests, God's gift to Adam of choice and self-consciousness authorizes us to improve on our original nature, if such a thing can be said to exist at all; the same legacy of free will that permitted original sin to occur remains with us as an obligation to virtue. To respect our heritage is to battle our hereditary frailties.

Shakespeare hints at this paradox by making Florizel necessarily deny his royal patrimony in pursuing an exclusively natural passion, just as Leontes must deny his fallen patrimony to pursue a strictly artificial purity. As his ambush by the unconscionable guilt of Adam's accident renders Leontes a wild-acting "feather for each wind that blows" (2.3.154), so Florizel describes his father's intervention as "'th' unhought-on accident" that "is guilty / To what we wildly do" as "flies / Of every wind that blows" (4.4.538-41). The verbal echoes where there is little parallel in meaning are Shakespeare's invitation to associate the two incidents. In fleeing the constraints that are, Polixenes would tell them both, hereditary theirs, Leontes and Florizel perform desexualized versions of the ambitious man's Oedipal crime, and briefly lose their procreative hopes as a result. Both attempt to defy and even replace their limiting fathers: Adam, who forbids Leontes to ignore his natural impulses, and Polixenes, who forbids Florizel to obey them. Where Leontes imagines himself as something like Adam, Florizel imagines himself as his own "heir" and as King of Bohemia, promising Perdita, "Or I'll be thine, my fair, / Or not my father's; for I cannot be / Mine own, nor anything to any, if / I be not thine" (4.4.42-45). Obviously he would not be much without beings his father's as well: Shakespeare's
plays are full of characters who become nullities, not "anything to any," by thus defying paternal authority. After the paternal force—this time the father himself—confronts him and forbids the marriage, Florizel reasserts this claim, but he sounds as if he were trying to reassure himself that his identity is still intact, like a man feeling himself after a bad fall: "Why look you so upon me? / I am but sorry, not afeard; delay'd, / But nothing alt'red. What I was, I am" (4.4.462-64). Fruitful marriage in Shakespeare generally requires a dutiful filial identity; Florizel's loving promise effectively invites disaster to befall his engagement.

Florizel's narrow devotion to natural values also determines the type of disaster that will occur. Where Leontes' devotion to artificial values caused the vengeful return of the old Adam within him, along with brute sexuality and mortality, Florizel's father spies on him from behind a theatrical artifice, then attacks him on behalf of ceremonial royalty. Polixenes bursts from behind his mask, threatening to punish in kind what he sees as Perdita's crime against decorum and his son's crime against succession:

Mark your divorce, young sir,
Whom son I dare not call. Thou art too base
To be acknowledg'd. Thou, a sceptre's heir,
That thus affects a sheep-hook!

I'll have thy beauty scratch'd with briers and made
More homely than thy state. For thee, fond boy,
If I may ever know thou dost but sigh
That thou no more shall see this knack (as never
I mean thou shalt), we'll bar thee from succession,
Not hold thee of our blood, no, not our kin,
Farre than Deucalion off.

(4.4.417-31)

In threatening to avenge these offenses, Polixenes virtually recommits them. Perdita's beauty is actually the proper representation of her royal birth; and forbidding her father's wish "To die upon the bed my father died,
/ To lie close by his honest bones" (4.4.455-56) can hardly serve the hereditary order. In the last part of his tirade, Polixenes makes the same sort of ethical error in disavowing his son—an act reminiscent of Leontes' disowning of Perdita—as his son made in disavowing him. This speech only serves to escalate the conflict in Florizel, who now echoes his father's parenthetical threat—"he shall miss me (as, in faith, I mean not / To see him any more)" (4.4.494-95)—and simultaneously (like Macbeth) sets the entire process of generation against his hereditary obligations. If he leaves Perdita at his father's command, "Let nature crush the sides o' th' earth together, / And mar the seeds within! Lift up thy looks. / From my succession wipe me, father, I / Am heir to my affection" (4.4.478-81). He cannot be heir to his natural affection any more than Leontes could be heir to his artificial affectations; his phrase recalls such failures of ambition to supplant heredity as Richard III's promise to make Tyrell "inheritor of thy desire," and Volumnia's announcement that she has seen in Coriolanus "inherited my very wishes."

Camillo repeatedly interrupts Florizel's oaths with pleas for reason and reconsideration, as he did Leontes' tirades earlier. Throughout the play Camillo is the good and steady advisor, retaining the balance between natural and artificial values that is lost in the two kingdoms he serves, and leading an exodus to the opposite when the imbalance precipitates a crisis. The parallels between these two hasty departures suggest graphically the play's mistrust of both extremes. The first follows Leontes' plea that Polixenes stay yet longer away from his homeland; the second follows Polixenes' similar appeal to Camillo, against similar objections. The Sicilian crisis emerges when Leontes watches his wife and friend embrace, and murmurs, "'Tis far gone" (1.2.218); the Bohemian crisis surfaces when Polixenes watches Florizel and Perdita embrace, and whispers, "Is it not too far gone? 'Tis time to part them" (4.4.344). Intriguingly, Camillo is given a soliloquy on both occasions to
weigh his choices, and each time his decision to flee to the other kingdom is based on a perfect balance of principled Sicilian philanthropy and pragmatic Bohemian self-serving:

If I could find example
Of thousands that had struck anointed kings
And flourish'd after, I'd not do it; but since
Nor brass nor stone nor parchment bears not one,
Let villainy itself forswear't.

(1.2.357-61)

Now were I happy if
His going I could frame to serve my turn,
Save him from danger, do him love and honor,
Purchase the sight again of dear Sicilia.

(4.4.508-11)

Camillo is therefore precisely the counselor this couple needs in its struggle to convert natural affection into a ceremonial bond. He prescribes for them a theatrical ploy which both literally and symbolically assists their effort to reach Sicilia and there achieve marriage. Echoing the phrase "royally attorney'd" that typified the overceremonious marriage of the two kingdoms at the start of the play (1.1.27), Camillo promises to have the couple "royally appointed, as if / The scene you play were mine" (4.4.592-93). Perdita sees that "the play so lies / That I must bear a part," and Florizel adds, "Should I now meet my father, / he would not call me son." (4.4.655-58). Camillo thus helps interrupt generational continuity, but only for the sake of curing such a breach. By giving them roles and disguises—they are not "like themselves" in the interim, as both Florizel and Leontes note (4.4.588, 5.1.88-89)—Camillo corrects their excessive naturalism, using the same theatrical device that led to their wedding's postponement. Such a correction symbolically qualifies them for entrance into Sicilia, where life has become the poor player's meaningless and monotonous hour upon the stage, just as it practically permitted their escape from Bohemia. Like the statue of Hermione, they are nature smuggled back into the dead kingdom under an artificial guise. The dramatic metaphor that haunted ambition in the earlier plays now serves as a corrective, bringing back the procreative order in a form the self-alienated king and kingdom can assimilate. As the Bohemian ships hastily set sail, they set a course back from the destructive extremes.

The new garments therefore disguise the young people's natures only for the purpose of restoring them to their fathers and their ceremonial identities. The notion that garments can lastingly change one's social standing, implicit in Lady Macbeth's and Volumnia's metaphors and evident in the period's sumptuary laws, here is located only in the clowns, where it can be pleasantly satirized. As Perdita's nobility shows through her peasant trappings, so Autolycus' baseness is evident even to the gullible Bohemians: the old shepherd concludes, "His garments are rich, but he wears them not handsomely" (4.4.731-50). Autolycus gains his revenge two scenes later, when the shepherds absurdly insist that their expensive new "robes" are themselves "gentlemen born" and make their wearers such. At the same time, the shepherds take their metaphorical greeting by the royal family as "brother" and "father" literally, a humorously disarming version of Leontes' overly literal reading of "customary compliment" earlier in the play. The shepherds' mistake also playfully disarms the ambitious "family romance" of earlier plays, in which people claimed to be part of an exalted lineage to which their original birth gave them no right. To have been "gentlemen born . . . any time these four hours" is, as Autolycus suggests, entirely ridiculous (5.2.125-45). But it is ridiculous in a way that distances the characteristic errors of ambition from the main characters' redemptive reunion.
We arrive back in Sicilia shortly before the first Bohemian ship, and we quickly recognize how badly Sicilia needs the reunion. The repetitive cycle of Leontes' mourning has not forestalled aging, and the Sicilian lords, worried about "his highness' fail of issue," open the scene by urging him to remarry:

*Cleomines* Sir, you have done enough, and have perform'd
A saint-like sorrow. No fault could you make
Which you have not redeem'd; indeed paid down
More penitence than done trespass. At the last
Do as the heavens have done, forget your evil,
With them, forgive yourself.

(5.1.1-6)

Paradoxically, this assurance that Leontes' penance has eradicated all his earlier faults actually indicates that those faults still infect the Sicilian court. The diction is relentless in its theological implications, which are all too similar to those of earlier remarks underestimating the residual burden of original sin. Cleomines credits his king with "saint-like" conduct that has already "redeem'd" every conceivable "fault," that has actually outweighed his primal "trespass." Such forgiveness belongs only to heaven, according to Elizabethan doctrine, but this speech makes Leontes a co-executor of God's elective Grace. Cleomines' plea that Leontes "forget your evil" is another example of Sicilia's careless diction concerning innocence: he simply means that Leontes should now put his mistreatment of Hermione out of his mind, but his phrase reminds us that he mistreated her because he was determined to forget his evil in a more general sense.

But, under Paulina's guidance, Leontes is no more susceptible to his former sort of presumption than he is to his lords' entreaties for a new marriage. He tells Cleomines that his childlessness is the rightful punishment for his violation, and when Paulina reminds him that the mortal sin which destroyed his marriage is permanent in its effects, he accepts that the wages of his error is death, though that fruit is "bitter / Upon thy tongue as in my thought" (5.1.6-19). The reward for this new-found humility is the return of the lost regenerative flowers, Perdita and Florizel, a counterpart to the destructive return of "the seeds of Banquo" and those of Duncan to Macbeth's Scotland. In greeting the young couple, Leontes carefully acknowledges his own sinfulness and his kingdom's diseased mortality:

*The blessed gods*
Purge all infection from our air whilst you
Do climate here! You have a holy father,
A graceful gentleman, against whose person
(So sacred as it is) I have done sin,
For which the heavens, taking angry note,
Have left me issueless; and your father's bless'd
(As he from heaven merits it) with you,
Worthy his goodness.

(5.1.168-76)

Like the Sicilians discussing innocence earlier in the play, like Caliban dreaming of the heavens in *The Tempest* (3.2.140-43), Leontes is groping with the darkened outlines of a Christian revelation, but unable yet to see it face to face. Instead, he displaces onto Polixenes the characteristics of the Christian God, the "sacred," "graceful" and "holy father" whose "goodness" actually "merits" every conceivable "blessing," and "against whose person" Leontes has "done sin." The theological emphasis of this passage is far too persistent to be accidental, and what it suggests is Leontes' growing recognition of his more abstract sin, though he cannot yet recognize its real character or its real victim.
Leontes' first words to the young couple suggest that his moral convalescence in other areas is similarly encouraging but incomplete:

Your mother was most true to wedlock, Prince,
For she did print your royal father off,
Conceiving you. Were I but twenty-one,
Your father's image is so hit in you
(His very air) that I should call you brother,
As I did him, and speak of something wildly
By us perform'd before. Most dearly welcome!
And your fair princess—goddess! O! alas,
I lost a couple, that 'twixt heaven and earth
Might thus have stood, begetting wonder, as
You, gracious couple, do; and then I lost
(All mine own folly) the society,
Amity too, of your brave father, whom
(Though bearing misery) I desire my life
Once more to look on him.

(5.1.124-38)

The first sentence acknowledges that a child's physical resemblance to the husband proves the wife's fidelity—precisely what Leontes refused to believe, in his deep mistrust of the senses, at Perdita's birth. The last six lines submit "wonder" to the process of "begetting," and credit both to the "grac[e]" expressed in the couple's bodily nobility. The final few lines clearly contrast with the Sicilians' former denial of time, suffering, and death, specifically as displayed in their patriotic but unrealistic attitude toward Mamillius: "They that went on crutches ere he was born desire yet their life to see him a man" (1.1.39-41). Faced with Florizel, Mamillius' parallel in age and role (1.2.16372; 5.1.115-23), Leontes hopes only to survive in pain long enough to see the boy's father, not the boy's own maturity. Certainly the Leontes who declares himself "a friend" to the young couple's "desires" at the end of the scene accepts human sexuality better than the man who furiously rejected the idea that he could have fathered Perdita.

The middle part of his speech, however, indicates that Leontes' education on these points is not yet complete. He perceives Perdita as a "goddess"—what her costume at the sheep-shearing had made her—and places the couple "'twixt heaven and earth." As he displaces his earlier godly role more humbly but still wrongly onto Polixenes, so he displaces his role as an immortal inhabitant of Eden onto this pair; good and lovely as they may be, they are not Adam and Eve any more than he and Hermione were. The hard-won generational distinction threatens to collapse in Leontes' impulse to embrace young Florizel as if he were the young Polixenes. Though for the moment Leontes keeps this impulse safely in the subjunctive, as Polixenes did his "not guilty" plea, we sense its appeal to him.

Later in the scene, the time-denying impulse returns and conquers him in a parallel case of substitution, a case clearly designed to make us morally mistrustful of such a tendency:

Florizel Beseech you, sir,
Remember since you ow'd no more to time
Than I do now. With thought of such affections,
Step forth mine advocate. At your request
My father will grant precious things as trifles.
Leontes Would he do so, I'd beg your precious mistress.
Which he counts but a trifle.

Paulina Sir, my liege,
Your eye hath too much youth in't. Not a month
Fore your queen died, she was more worth such gazes
Than what you look on now.

Leontes I thought of her,
Even in those looks I made.

(5.1.218-28)

As plausible and sufficient as this reply may seem, it reveals the dangerous absurdity of a moral idealism that leads toward incest; indeed, in Shakespeare's source, the Leontes-figure tries to seduce his unrecognized daughter, and threatens her with rape when she resists him. Even with his only son dead, Leontes finds himself in a sort of Oedipal struggle, because his desire to be "boy eternal" leads him to desire a girl-eternal version of his wife.

The same problem recurs when, on seeing the statue, Leontes protests,

Hermione was not so much wrinkled, nothing
So aged as this seems.

Polixenes O, not by much,
Paulina So much the more our carver's excellence,
Which lets go by some sixteen years, and makes her
As she liv'd now.

(5.3.28-32)

He still tends to prefer the version of Hermione that time-denying art would conventionally strive to create, rather than the version nature would have created had she survived. But art and nature are so thoroughly interwoven in the symbolic presentation that Hermione and Perdita form a web of integrated identity, a safety net through which he cannot fall, because "the art itself is Nature," to use Polixenes' earlier formulation (4.4.97). The human Perdita is praised as static art, and only the supposed statue shows nature's progress. Where Macbeth could reunify himself neither by resolute advance nor by tedious retreat, Leontes finds a saving integration of natural and artificial identities every way he turns.

But only Perdita's return can rouse into life the latent nature in Leontes' and Hermione's artificial poses. Leontes declares the young couple "Welcome hither, / As is the spring to th' earth," and a servant calls Perdita "the most peerless piece of earth, I think, / That e'er the sun shone bright on" (5.1.151-52, 94-95). Paulina immediately chides the servant for forgetting Hermione "As every present time doth boast itself / Above a better gone," but Perdita is rightly time's choice to replace Hermione. The servant's poem, which Paulina bitterly reminds him had declared that Hermione "had not been, / Nor was not to be equal'd," was merely a typical piece of Sicilian art, emptily flattering the royal family with the illusion that it could overcome time. The very fact that the poem has itself been refuted by time is the most fitting commentary on it.

As the transplanting of Bohemia's flora restores Sicilia's natural foundation and thereby ends its unnaturally prolonged winter, the fantastic "winter's tale" regains a reality that allows it to progress toward a happier season. The stories of destructive and redemptive nature are repeatedly described as "like an old tale" (5.2.27-29, 61; 5.3.116-17), but they are also described in words that associate them with the procreative miracle that allows them to be true. The report that Leontes has "found his heir" is "Most true, if ever truth were pregnant by circumstance," and the story of Paulina's statue gives hope that "some new grace will be born" (5.2.29-31, 110-11; cf. 132). The play's ethical pattern forbids it to win its audience with unnatural
events, as Autolycus' ballads about unnatural births and diets do. Instead, the restoration of naturally-born children and natural appetites makes the reunions so wonderful "that ballad-makers cannot be able to describe it" (5.2.24-25). The elements of fantasy and artificiality persist in these closing scenes, but in a form that allows Shakespeare to show they are actually part of a natural reality whose scope and worth (as in Macbeth) have been badly underrated, and whose miracles are so frequent and ubiquitous that we tend to overlook them. The characters on stage disable our suspicions that this is all merely an old tale or a magical conjuration, by echoing those suspicions and then putting them aside as the miracle of nature unfolds.

Act five, scene two, returns the linguistic arts to their natural basis, and prepares us for the statue's reconciliation of art and nature, by the way it describes the reunion of Sicilia with its Bohemian exiles. The play has moved from the courtiers' dangerous assumption, in the opening scene, that flowery language could fully embody their kings' mutual affection, to concessions by two Sicilian gentlemen that their words cannot adequately describe the wordless expressions of the kings' reunion (5.2.9-19, 42-58). Natural feeling, once smothered by ambitious language, is here protected from language by a double wall of humility. The Third Gentleman reports the next reunion in terms that suggest the convergence of artificial elements of identity with natural ones: he speaks of "unity in the proofs," which include Hermione's garment and Antigonus' letters as well as "the majesty of the creature in resemblance of the mother; the affection of nobleness which nature shows above her breeding; and many other evidence [that] proclaim her with all certainty, to be the King's daughter" (5.2.30-39). The association of nobleness with nature, and of majesty with hereditary physical appearance, suggests that the false distinctions that disrupted Bohemia are disappearing along with those that disrupted Sicilia.

In closing his description of the reunion scene, the Third Gentleman furthers our impression that art is being reincorporated into nature, by remarking that "Who was most marble there chang'd color" (5.2.89-90). This grand metaphor, like those of the play's opening speeches, will soon become much more literal than its speaker can anticipate; but this time the literal level provides reconciliation rather than "separation" (1.1.26). Four lines later, he informs us that the court have all gone to see the statue of Hermione, "a piece many years in doing and now newly perform'd by that rare Italian master Julio Romano, who, had he himself eternity and could put breath into his work, would beguile Nature of her custom, so perfectly he is her ape." This description recalls Leontes' promise in the preceding scene not to remarry "Unless another, / As like Hermione as is her picture, / Affront his eye," which will only be "when your first queen's again in breath," when the work of art becomes again a work of nature (5.1.73-84). But Julio Romano's potentially Promethean powers are kept safely in the subjunctive here, like Polixenes' earlier speculations on escaping original sin, or Leontes' recent ones on ignoring generational time. The Sicilian court has learned that cultural endeavors alone, however skillfully refined, can provide neither eternity nor natural life to inhabit it. The Gentleman adds, "Thither with all greediness of affection are they gone, and there they intend to sup" (5.2.102-03). The hearty affections and appetites that were Bohemia's great merits have returned to cold, abstemious Sicilia.

Paulina promptly puts this new naturalness to the test—a sort of Rorschach test—by presenting the statue for evaluation in a radically cultural and ceremonial context. The setting as well as the occasion encourage distant reverence rather than human interaction. We are not only in Sicilia but in a chapel, not only in a chapel but in an art gallery within that chapel, with the theater's own discovery-space curtain probably hiding the statue itself. This is typical of the benevolent misleadings performed by Shakespeare's comic heroines, such as Rosaline and Portia and Rosalind, who test the results of their educational programs under the most trying circumstances available, to be sure that the romantic maturity of a Berowne, Bassanio, or Orlando will last. Paulina wants the audience in general, and Leontes in particular, to acknowledge the beneficent natural basis for even the most artificial-seeming of phenomena. Before revealing the statue, she assures him that it "Excels whatever yet you look'd upon, / Or hand of man hath done" (5.3.16-17), which is a beautifully equivocal clue. It encourages and then forbids him to view the statue as a superhuman creation of human art; it forbids and then encourages him to view it as the divinely created woman he has known.
At first, in their eagerness for reunion with Hermione, Leontes and Perdita nearly fail the test: they choose the artificial basis for reunion, making themselves into companion statues instead of eliciting the statue's living humanity. Leontes says he feels "more stone than it," and observes Perdita "Standing like stone with thee" (5.3.37-42). When Perdita and Leontes yield in turn to a natural desire to kiss the statue, Paulina restrains them by asserting again—in hopes of curing entirely—the delusion that this woman is a work of static and cosmetic art rather than nature, and should be treated as such. These warnings challenge father and daughter to appreciate the "art / That Nature makes." Perdita, who earlier preferred natural to cosmetic colors, here has trouble telling the difference (5.3.46-48). Leontes asks,

> What fine chisel
> Could ever yet cut breath? Let no man mock me,
> For I will kiss her.

*Paulina* Good my lord, forbear.
> The ruddiness upon her lip is wet;
> You'll mar it if you kiss it; stain your own
> With oily painting. Shall I draw the curtain?

(5.3.78-83)

By kissing the statue, Leontes would not turn into a painted companion-piece; he would return fully to life, as her conjugal companion.

Leontes has earned such a transformation essentially by wishing for it. He no longer views conjugal relations as a mutual staining and marring, and retracts his implicit foolish wish for a pure, cold, unchanging version of his wife. Instead, like King Lear holding the dead Cordelia, he insists that a single breath of life in her would surpass all that human art can achieve, however fine its chisel. By insisting on staying with the statue, insisting that the curtain not fall on this imitation of life, Leontes makes the crucial choice for a living Hermione over an elegantly artificial one;

> *Paulina* I'll draw the curtain.
> My lord's almost so far transported that
> He'll think anon it lives.
> *Leontes* O sweet Paulina,
> Make me to think so twenty years together!
> No settled senses of the world can match
> The pleasure of that madness. Let't alone.
> *Paulina* I am sorry, sir, I have thus far stirr'd you; but I could afflict you farther.
> *Leontes* Do, Paulina;
> For this affliction has a taste as sweet
> As any cordial comfort.

(5.3.68-77)

An appetite for life has replaced Leontes' life-denying madness of the first act, typified by the transition from the poisoned "cordials" he imagines drinking and serving Polixenes to this sweet and salutary one. He finds a value in affliction, a use for adversity, and leaves his "settled senses of the world" to restore Hermione's life rather than (as earlier) to destroy it. In making this choice for the statue, and in fondly making his visitors represent his lost children, he in effect wills his family back into existence; and he thereby becomes the natural self he "might . . . have been" that would have saved him from losing his family in the first place (5.1.176-78).
But to maintain the play's moral pattern, Shakespeare must emphasize that these fantasies come true because they have a basis in nature, and not solely because of Leontes' life-affirming imagination. He takes the trouble to explain that Paulina "hath privately twice or thrice a day, ever since the death of Hermione, visited that remov'd house" where the statue is lodged, and where the royal family now retreats "to sup" (5.2.103-07). We may infer in retrospect, after the statue awakens, that Paulina brought Hermione meals—a significant inference, because the play often uses eating as a symbol or synecdoche of ongoing natural life. From this perspective, it is dangerously wrong to indulge in the fantasy (as some critics do) that Hermione has essentially "come back to life. We do not, that is to say, seek to explain the impossible away. Instead, we gladly accept the impossibility for the sake of the symbolic pattern." Shakespeare's didactic pattern, like Paulina's, demands natural explanations that dispel the tempting illusion of impossibility. Northrop Frye suggests that "in The Winter's Tale nature is associated, not with the credible, but with the incredible: nature as an order is subordinated to the nature that yearly confronts us with the impossible miracle of renewed life." What we must remember is that the appearance of a new generation is finally as miraculous a phenomenon as the survival and reappearance of the old. As the witches induced Macbeth to forfeit regenerative nature in favor of supernatural tricks, so Shakespeare's and Paulina's plays lead us, together with Leontes, to overlook temporarily the miracle of "great creating Nature" (4.4.88) in our fascination with the apparent miracle of art, the enlivened statue. Only if our values shift in retrospect, and we come to respect food and shelter and human patience as the necessary basis for such impressive art, have we shared in Leontes' successful education.

Paulina therefore insists repeatedly that no one mistake her awakening of the statue for the black arts. She intends to restore the very sort of regenerative order that witchcraft subverted in Macbeth's Scotland, and were she to recreate Leontes' family by conjuration, she would contradict the lesson in obedience to nature. If supernatural Grace is at work here, and for complete salvation it must be, a sort of prevenient grace arising from nature rather than descending from above it must also contribute. So Paulina declares that she is not "assisted / By wicked powers," that hers is not "unlawful business," and that her "spell is lawful" (5.3.90-105). If this is magic, it is magic of an allowed sort, and therefore similar to the play's allowed sort of ambition. The only kind of magic generally considered lawful in the Renaissance was "intransitive," intended not to impose on nature but rather to elicit the best qualities already inherent in people or objects.

Earlier Leontes had demanded that Paulina be burnt as "A mankind witch" (2.3.68) for her efforts to make him acknowledge his paternity of Perdita. Now, confronting him with another instance of natural survival and his human kinship, Paulina is understandably fearful that it will again be dismissed as witchcraft. When he first sees that statue, Leontes clearly demonstrates the threat to Paulina's project:

O royal piece,
There's magic in thy majesty, which has
My evils conjur'd to remembrance, and
From thy admiring daughter took the spirits,
Standing like stone with thee.

(5.3.38-42)

The living Hermione is here portrayed as a conjurer who revives past evils, steals people's spirits, turns them to stone as if she were a Medusa, and uses magic to simulate majesty—hardly a generous description of a woman who is standing passively, displaying the natural majesty of her birth. When the same majestic nature wins Florizel's heart for Perdita, Polixenes errs in strikingly similar terms, calling her an "enchantment" and a "fresh piece / Of excellent witchcraft" (4.4.434, 422—23).

Both women might well complain to the kings (as Othello does to the Senate at 1.6.169) that a noble nature is the only witchcraft they have used; but the very fact that they are thus accused demonstrates how easily the
blessings of nature can be mistaken for strayings from nature. Since Eve, women have been accused of witchcraft merely for eliciting an amoral sexual impulse that men fear and deny in their own nature. Only when Leontes can make himself reach lovingly out for Hermione does he correct these characteristic errors:

Paulina Nay, present your hand.
When she was young, you woo'd her; now, in age,
Is she become the suitor?
Leontes O, she's warm!
If this be magic, let it be an art
Lawful as eating.

(5.3.107-11)

Paulina is reminding us, as she reminds Leontes, of the courtship that took place exactly a generation ago, when at last he clasped Hermione's flower-like hand in marriage (1.2.102-04). That cycle of winter and spring has repeated itself, yielding the nubile "Blossom" Perdita, and Leontes has regained the ability to appreciate such miracles of nature. His fond embrace of Hermione contrasts sharply with his earlier disgust at physical expressions of affection, and his endorsement of eating contrasts with his earlier revulsion from food and drink, which in him as in Coriolanus evinced an effort to deny his bodily frailties. . . .

Notes

49 Rondet, Original Sin, p. 115, cites De Genesi contra Manichaeos, I, 29; PL col. 187.

50 Schanzer, "The Structural Pattern," p. 95.

51 C. L. Barber, Shakespeare's Festive Comedy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), discusses a similar dialectical pattern in the earlier comedies.


54 The words are from Clerimont's song in Epicoene, 1.1.91-102. John Byshop, Beautifull Blossomes . . . from the best trees of all kyndes (London, 1577), pp. 21-24, warns against the delusive appeal of elaborate clothing and cosmetics. Arthur O. Lovejoy, Essays in the History of Ideas (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1948), p. 330, notes Tertullian's warning against betraying God as the "Author of nature" by coloring one's garments. See also Erasmus on Fucus in the Praise of Folly.

55 See Burgundy's rejection of the newly disowned Cordelia, King Lear, 1.1.206. Thomas F. Van Laan, Role-Playing in Shakespeare (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), pp. 37 and 170, observes that the paternal interventions blocking marriage in Midsummer Night's Dream and Romeo and Juliet bring familial identity dangerously into conflict with personal identity. Near the end of Sidney's Arcadia, Euarchus resembles Polixenes in denying his disguised son and nephew any special rights as princes, and instead condemning them for allowing sexual passions to displace them from their royal roles into false, degrading identities and circumstances.

The parental blessing was one of the most important and pervasive rituals of Renaissance England. Indeed, it seems to have been peculiar to England during the Renaissance. It goes back at least to the fourteenth century, and probably much earlier; and it appears to have been practiced by Catholics and Protestants, Puritans and non-Puritans, with little variation in form or meaning into the early seventeenth century. In "wellordered" households the ritual took place daily, morning and evening, with each child kneeling before its parents, both father and mother, and saying (to quote William Perkins), "Father I pray you bless me, Mother I pray you bless me" (469), or words to that effect. Each parent would respond to the request by calling on God to bless the child and using one or both hands to signify the conferring of the blessing.

Renaissance writers describe several different forms of the blessing, suggesting that the precise gesture used may have varied from person to person or from time to time. Richard Hooker, the great Anglican theologian, refers to the "imposition of handes" (2:321). This would mean the placing of one or both hands on the head of the child who is kneeling before the parent. The same gestures are described by an eighteenth-century traveler visiting England, with the added information that children may kiss the hands that have blessed them (César de Saussure, A foreign view of England in the Reigns of George L and George II [1902], quoted in Legg 168). Another possible form of blessing, supported by pictorial and literary evidence, is the holding of one or both hands above the head of the recipient, not actually on it (see Whitforde, sig. D4v).

The child's kneeling to receive the blessing was in part a recognition of the parent's superior authority and maturity and an expression of respect for the parent's age, status, and (in some cases) virtue and wisdom. By kneeling, children—and this apparently included the adult children of aging parents—also acknowledged the parent as one of the sources of their own being and identity. The ritual thus symbolized and affirmed the intimate connection, physical, spiritual, and emotional, between parent and child and brought to mind the duties of both: the parent's duty to educate, nourish, love, and discipline the child; the child's duty to love, honor, obey, and (when necessary) care for the parents. Though subordination—that is, location at a lower point in a hierarchical system—was certainly one of the notions conveyed by the child's kneeling, this subordination did not necessarily imply unconditional submission to a parent's wishes; it certainly did not mean that the child's agency and identity were entirely subsumed within those of the parent.
Besides its symbolic, social, and emotional functions, kneeling served the practical function of enabling the parent to conveniently place hands on the child's head. The child's kneeling also effectively stationed the parent between the child and the heavens as a kind of quasi-priestly intermediary ready to bestow heavenly influence on the child. That is how Richard Hooker depicts the parent's role in giving a blessing, which he compares both with blessings described in the Bible and with blessings given in his own time by ministers. In these various blessings, someone with a special "calling" and "duty" to act for the good of others is able, through prayer, to "blesse"—that is, "to obteine the graces which God doth bestowe" (2:321). Besides viewing the parental blessing as a sacred act, involving heavenly grace, Hooker also sees it as a sign of the parent's feeling of responsibility and love for the child and of the connection between them. The "imposition of handes," he says, betokens "our restrayned desires to the partie, whome wee present unto God by prayer" (2:321). The hands serve as an instrument for conveying heavenly power that will bless the child, but they also allow physical contact between parent and child and thus enable the blessing to serve as an expression of parental affection. Affection is also expressed by the child's kissing the parent's hands, an action that is sometimes made explicit in Shakespeare's depiction of the ritual.

In *The Winter's Tale*, a parental blessing takes place in the climactic scene—perhaps the most prominent appearance of the ritual in the Shakespearean canon—and its function is emphatically to convey grace. *Grace*, as a host of critics have perceived, is a crucial word and a crucial concept in *The Winter's Tale*, F. C. Tinkler, for instance, asserts that "Grace and Graciousness" are the "keynote of the play" (345). The concept, though not the word, occurs in the play's short first scene. When Archidamus, one of Polixenes' courtiers, laments that Bohemia can never adequately repay the hospitality he and his fellow courtiers have received in Sicily, Camillo responds, "You pay a great deal too dear for what's given freely" (I.i.17-18). The idea is repeated in the last scene, when Paulina tells Leontes that his visit to her "poor house" is "a surplus of [his] grace, which never / [Her] life may last to answer" (V.iii.6-8). *Grace* here means "bounty," "generosity"; it refers to giving that expects no repayment, that is motivated solely by a desire for another's good. Such "grace" is an expression of good will, of a desire to bless, of the value placed on others for their own sake, not for what they can give in return.

Perhaps the most memorable occurrences of the word *grace* are in act I, scene ii, where the word is repeated three times within twenty-five lines. The word takes on a different sense with each appearance, but the effect of the scene is to associate and even mingle these several senses. In its first appearance, when Hermione exclaims, "Grace to boot!" it means heavenly influence. In context—Polixenes has just suggested that he and Leontes have fallen from their childhood innocence—the word brings to mind the divine influence needed to regenerate sinful hearts and redeem humankind from their fallen state. Nineteen lines later, playfully asking Leontes to tell her on what previous occasion she spoke well, Hermione uses the word *grace* as a personal name, with the meaning of "virtue," applied to this earlier good deed ("O, would her name were Grace!"). When he identifies the deed—her offer of herself to him as wife—she says, "'Tis Grace indeed." *Grace* here means graciousness and generosity, as well as virtue, all these meanings being implied by the words Leontes quotes her as having said years before: "I am yours for ever" (I.ii.80, 99, 100, 105).

We shortly learn that Leontes doubts Hermione's gracious offer at the very moment he remembers it. Yet Hermione soon makes it clear, if it has not been clear before, that she is the play's most powerful figure of grace. Even when she defends herself most vigorously, she retains the abundant good will that marked her first responses to false accusation: "you, my lord, / Do but mistake"; "How will this grieve you, / When you shall come to clearer knowledge"; "I never wish'd to see you sorry, now / I trust I shall" (II.i.80-81, 96-97, 123-24). Generous, virtuous, associated with "great creating Nature" and with the divinely endowed power to give life, Hermione (like the women of *All's Well That Ends Well*) has the power to bless and redeem. She is so close to ideal, in fact, that we may find it hard to accept her as a real human being. Yet what helps make her believable and appealing is that, though associated with sanctity and grace, she is vulnerable and human as well. She is capable of playful joking and camaraderie and can talk openly, though chastely, of sexual matters. Throughout the play she is associated with the concrete processes of life—pregnancy, childbirth, and her own
warm, bodily presence. She is physically affectionate, so much so that her physicality threatens Leontes and arouses his suspicions. And though she may sometimes seem close to perfect, she, like other humans, requires grace—that is, blessing from a source outside herself. Having fallen out of "grace"—that is, out of favor—with her husband (III.ii.47), she trusts in "pow'r's divine" and holds that the unjust treatment she is receiving will be for her "better grace" (III.ii.28,II.i.122). She thus acknowledges not only her less than perfect humanity, but her dependence on other human beings and on the favor and providential care of heaven.

Grace is responsible in several senses for the restoration of happiness in the final scene. Leontes has undergone a fundamental change of heart and has, according to Cleomines, been forgiven by the heavens (V.i.1-6). Divine grace has also been at work in the restoration of Perdita and her betrothal to Florizel (V.i.35-36, V.iii.150-51). Paulina's whole project, culminating in this scene, may be viewed as a work of grace, even in its harsher aspect of confronting Leontes with his misdeeds and provoking his repentance. Though the heavens do not literally restore Hermione to physical life, they aid in restoring her to life within her family. The "grace" with which the play ends is thus not a state of purely isolated personal virtue, but a condition that requires the blessing of the gods and that depends on generous, trusting relationships with other human beings. Hermione is now restored to her husband's favor (i.e., "grace")—as he, having undergone a far more radical change, is to hers. Though she does not yet speak to him, she "hangs about his neck" and has apparently offered her hand before he gives his. She gives every evidence of being now, as Leontes remembers her, "as tender / As infancy and grace" (V.iii. 105-12, 26-27).

The word *grace* is also associated with Perdita. She is "grown in grace / Equal with wond'ring" ("grace" here suggesting "beauty," "virtue," "graciousness," and "gracefulness") (IV.i.24). She and Florizel are a "gracious couple," "gracious" (as Leontes's words make clear) suggesting qualities that beget "wonder" and even approach divinity (V.i. 131-34). Perdita, product, we are told, of "good goddess Nature," is the most radiant example of the sanctity and divinity infused from heaven into the human world (II.iii.104). But Perdita is more than merely "radiant": she is passionate, plainspoken, even stubborn. She is associated with fertility and the forces of nature. Indeed, the "grace" with which she is endowed includes these forces and has come to her by natural means. Grace in its various senses has come to her especially from her mother, acting in cooperation with "great creating Nature" (IV.iv.88), an entity which in turn is the "instrument" or "handmaid" of the gods.27

Another instrument of grace, also associated closely with Hermione and Perdita and combining the human with the divine, is the parental blessing. Unlike *Richard III* and *All's Well That Ends Well* where the blessing ritual is most prominent near the beginning, *The Winter's Tale* does not actually present the ritual until the climactic closing scene. Indeed, the preceding action may be viewed from one angle as a series of failed blessings, lost or incomplete opportunities that find their fulfillment at the end of the play. The first such opportunity is offered in act II, scene iii, when Paulina presents a newborn daughter to Leontes and "commends it to [his] blessing" (line 67). Instead of taking the child in his arms and praying for divine protection—as Henry VIII does in giving the newborn Elizabeth her first father's blessing (*H8* V.iv.10-11)—Leontes refuses to acknowledge the child as his, and even threatens its life. His horror of being linked with "another's issue" leads him to imagine seeing Perdita grow up to "kneel / And call [him] father," as if requesting a blessing (*WT* II.iii.155-56). In other words, he imagines—and again rejects—another opportunity to bless his child.

After sixteen years of separation from her, Leontes is again given the opportunity to bless his daughter. He blesses her unwittingly in act V, scene i, when he welcomes her and calls her "goddess" (lines 130-31); and a formal blessing doubtless takes place as part of the reunion described in act V, scene ii.28 But the fulfillment of these allusions to the blessing ritual is reserved for the last scene, and there the ritual is performed by Perdita's mother, not by her father.
The first hint of the blessing comes early in the scene when Perdita kneels before what appears to be a statue of her mother and says:

And give me leave,
And do not say 'tis superstition, that
I kneel, and then implore her blessing. Lady,
Dear queen, that ended when I but began,
Give me that hand of yours to kiss.

(V.iii.42-46)

The reference to superstition, especially joined as it is here with kneeling before a "statue," may reflect the anxiety felt by some during the seventeenth century as to whether kneeling for a parental blessing might be among the "reliques of Popish . . . superstition" (Ames 94). But surely the primary associations Perdita's words and gestures should evoke are the filial love and reverence of a daughter for her mother as she kneels for a mother's blessing. Besides the kneeling, the idea of kissing a parent's hand would also suggest love and reverence to an audience familiar with the ritual, which often included such a gesture.

Later in the scene, as the statue apparently comes to life and it becomes clear that this is the living Hermione, Paulina tells Perdita, "kneel / And pray your mother's blessing," and then says to the mother: "Turn, good lady, / Our Perdita is found." Hermione's words indicate that she is now giving a parent's blessing: "You gods, look down / And from your sacred vials pour your graces / Upon my daughter's head!" (V.iii. 119-23). The power of this blessing comes partly from the words used: the rhythms, the imagery, the word "grace" with all the meanings it has accumulated through the course of the play—beauty, gracefulness, virtue, favor, graciousness, generosity, forgiveness, and unconditional love. The blessing's power comes also from the gestures used: the kneeling of Perdita, Hermione's lifting of her hands to appeal for heaven's graces (a gesture not specified by the text or by editors, but surely appropriate), and her placing of her hands at the same time on or above her daughter's head to symbolize the bestowal of those graces on her and to affirm the bond newly created between her daughter and herself.

Besides the gestures, the words of the blessing would also have been familiar and resonant to an early audience. Despite the pagan context, Hermione's appeal to the heavens to bestow graces on her daughter closely resembles the words some Renaissance parents used in blessing their children. According to Peter Erondell, a parent might say, "I pray the strong Almighty God to increase his graces in you, and to blesse you," or "I pray God to blesse you all my Children, and to increase his graces in you" (sig. E7v, P5v)—words close to Hermione's "pour your graces / Upon my daughter's head!" The emotions associated with the blessing ritual are heightened in The Winter's Tale by the long separation between mother and daughter that is now ending. But even here Shakespeare is drawing on a concept familiar to his contemporaries. Besides its daily practice with children living at home, the blessing ritual also served to mark a child's reunion with a parent after separation. Hugh Rhodes, writing in the sixteenth century, advised:

When that thy parents come in syght, doe to them reverence:
Aske them blessing if they have
bene long out of presence.

(73)

"Long out of presence" is a weak understatement if we are thinking of the separation of Perdita and Hermione. Yet the very flatness of Rhodes's verses reveals, by contrast, how The Winter's Tale lifts to mythic height what would have been a common experience for many of the play's first viewers.
We can guess at the experience of these first viewers by remembering that this ritual, taking place on stage at a moment of thematic and emotional climax, was one most of them had taken part in daily as children and still performed daily as parents. Such viewers must have seen in this parental blessing a striking combination of the wonderful and the ordinary. The blessing ritual would thus have helped give the scene the effect suggested by the Friar's words in *Much Ado About Nothing*: "Let wonder seem familiar" (V.iv.70).

Despite its familiar features, though, this blessing at the end of *The Winter's Tale* is not entirely ordinary. For one thing, the role of the child is emphasized more strongly here than in many other occurrences in Shakespeare and, undoubtedly, in contemporary life. As a result, in this play the offering of grace, the conveying of divine power, does not go in one direction only, from parent to child. Just as, during the "wide gap of time," Paulina and Leontes reversed the usual sovereign-subject relationship, so the younger generation prove in some ways to be the teachers and healers of their parents. Mamillius "makes old hearts fresh" (II.i.39); young Florizel, Polixenes tells us, "with his varying childness cures in me / Thoughts that would thick my blood" (I.i.170-71). Perdita especially is associated with divine, regenerative power and is even described as a life-giving goddess of the spring (IV.iv.1-3; V.i.131, 151-52). With these allusions to children's restorative power in the background, it is difficult not to see in the ritual blessing of the last scene a reciprocal act: Hermione calls for heavenly grace to descend upon her daughter, yet Perdita conveys grace—love, regenerative power—in return. It is as if Perdita, especially now that Hermione can see and touch her, brings the resurrection of her mother to completion, giving birth to the woman who bore her.30

Another feature of the blessing in *The Winter's Tale* that, at least to a degree, reverses expectations is the fact that it is given by Perdita's mother, not her father. It is not that fathers' blessings were privileged over mothers'; the evidence suggests strongly that they were not. Yet, with both parents alive and especially given Leontes's failure to bless Perdita as an infant, we might expect to see both a mother's and a father's blessing—as indeed we do in *Pericles*.31 The foregrounding of the mother's blessing in *The Winter's Tale* is doubtless in part a matter of dramatic construction: the second of two climactic blessings might seem anticlimactic. Yet it is likely that this foregrounding has thematic significance as well. The presence of a mother's blessing in the last scene probably has something to do with the association of both the ritual and women with grace. Indeed, all three of the plays emphasized here present women as possessing special kinds of creative or transforming power. All three also offer a picture of women's solidarity with each other and of their contrast with "graceless" men. Especially in *The Winter's Tale*, the parental blessing functions as a means one woman has of expressing her solidarity with another. And in the other plays it serves as an instrument women use to instruct and influence men.32

These plays thus join with other historical evidence in calling into question one of Lawrence Stone's central assertions: that parental blessings functioned mainly to reinforce patriarchal power, whether this is taken to mean a parent's power over a child or a man's power over a woman. Though Shakespeare probably emphasizes the role of children and women more than many of his contemporaries would have done, he is nevertheless drawing on common features of the blessing ritual: their performance by both women and men and their use to express love as well as—even much more than—difference in status. Stone's connection of the blessing with "the utter subordination of the child" (*Family* 171) and Coppélia Kahn's description of it as an "extreme" expression of patriarchal power (16) hardly seem accurate reflections of Shakespeare's use—or his contemporaries' experience and understanding—of the custom.

**Notes**

Indeed, a careful review of Shakespeare's plays and of other evidence from the period makes it clear that, for almost everyone, the parental blessing was an unusually positive act. Associated with ancient biblical precedents, it was believed to convey heavenly influence that could regenerate and sanctify. The parental blessing was also an affirmation of the bond linking parent and child and of the generosity and good will that ideally characterized this bond. Because parents are conduits through which heavenly influence is made
available, and because for Shakespeare children too may serve as conveyers of such influence, the blessing links heaven and earth. Specifically, in *The Winter's Tale* the parental blessing serves as an image of what has happened through the whole course of the play, what happens most clearly as the play closes: from their sacred vials, the gods are pouring "grace" in all its senses into the world of human life. . . .

3 For a fuller discussion of the ritual and its place in Shakespeare and in Renaissance family life, see my article "Parental Blessings in Shakespeare's Plays," and Houlbrooke, 31, 41, 145, 168, 188.

4 Such is the report of contemporary observers from France and Italy. See, for instance, Erondell, sig. E7°, E8° ("I mervaile verie much that French-men . . . doe not make [children] aske their parentes blessing"), and the Venetian ambassador's report in *Calendar*, 451 (describing this "admirable custom of [England], well worthy of imitation"). Note also Fynes Moryson's claim that the custom was practiced "in no other kingdom that I know" (quoted in Scott 53) and John Donne's question, "Children kneele to aske blessing of Parents in England, but where else?" (9:59).

5 Fourteenth-century evidence for the custom is found in *The Good Wife*. In some form, it may have been practiced throughout Europe during the Middle Ages (see Weiser 139). For examples of non-European and non-Christian versions of the blessing ritual, see Crawley, 4-6.

6 For other descriptions of the blessing and the words used, see Becon, fol. 519°, 524°; Erondell, sig. E7° E8°, P5°; Stapleton, 12; and Stubbes, sig. C4.

7 See Becon, fol. 524° ("bow[ing] the knee" to ask for a blessing is one way of showing "honorable reverence toward [parents], as parsons representing the majestie of God"); Cleland, 178 ("The bowing of the knee declareth that we submit our selves to him [before whom we bow], & that we wil not remaine equal, but wil humble, and make our selves inferior"); and Shakespeare's Prince Hal in 2 *Henry IV* IV.v.146-48 (kneeling is a "prostrate and exterior bending" that witnesses a 'most inward true and duteous spirit'). It appears that during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries the practice of kneeling before parents was commonly maintained into adulthood. In the early 1500s Sir Thomas More, on seeing his father, "would goe to him, and reverently kneelinge downe in sight of all, aske him blessing" (Ba. 59). In the seventeenth century, the adult Nicholas Ferrar similarly knelt for his mother's blessing (Wordsworth 201). In 1622 the Venetian ambassador reported seeing Londoners kneel in public places, "no matter what their age," to ask a parent's blessing (*Calendar* 451).

8 Even on an issue so crucial as a child's potential marriage partner, the consistent advice of moralists was that, though a parent's advice and consent should be sought, the child's wishes must always be respected. The legal requirement was that, "without Consent [i.e., of the bride and groom] there cannot be any Matrimony" (Swinburne 51). Shakespeare presents the same position in *Romeo and Juliet* (I.ii.16-19), *The Winter's Tale* (IV.iv.404-10), and elsewhere. Of course, both in Shakespeare and in Renaissance life outside the theater, parents sometimes exceeded their proper authority. (See my article "Haste, Consent, and Age at Marriage.")

9 For example, *The Winter's Tale* V.iii.118. Note also the kissing of parents in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* II.iii.26, 28; and the parent's kissing a child while blessing her in *Henry VIII* V.iv.9-11. . . .

26 Besides the insistent association of Hermione with grace (see I.ii.233, 459, II.ii.19, II.iii.29, III.ii.198), note other references to her as a quasi-divine figure: for example, "most sacred lady" (I.ii.76), "spotless / I' th' eyes of heaven" (II.i.131-32), "her sainted spirit" (V.i.57), "There's magic in thy majesty" (V.iii.39).

27 For a discussion of this concept, which goes back to the Middle Ages and beyond, see Tayler, 74.
Besides the fact that the blessing ritual accompanies similar father-daughter reunions in other late plays (Per. V.i.213; Cym. V.v.264-66), the actions and physical contact described in The Winter's Tale suggest at the very least an appropriate setting for a parental blessing (V.ii.13-14: "There was . . . language in their very gesture"; 53-54: "then again worries he his daughter with clipping her").

Compare Paulina's later reference to "unlawful business" (line 96).

The situation echoes a phrase in Pericles: "Thou that beget'st him that did thee beget" (V.i.195). A few lines later Pericles gives a blessing to this daughter who "beget[s] him." These parallels between The Winter's Tale and Pericles suggest that the reciprocally life-giving relationship between parent and child, symbolized by the blessing ritual, is a deliberate, significant element in both plays. Something very similar takes place in Lear: Cordelia asks to be blessed by a father who is kneeling to her; later Lear, on his way to prison, says, "When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down / And ask of thee forgiveness" (IV.vii.56-58, V.iii.10-11). The motif of the life-giving child also occurs in Titus Andronicus I.i.166 (Titus Andronicus calls his daughter "the cordial of mine age") and The Tempest V.i.

See V.i.204-13, 223, V.iii.44-48. See also Henry VIII IV.ii.131-38 and V.iv.9-11. In plays other than The Winter's Tale in which only one parent gives a blessing—for example, the mother in Richard III, King John, All's Well, and Coriolanus; the father in Titus Andronicus, Lear, and Cymbeline—the lack of symmetry may be explained by the absence (usually through death) of the other parent.

Women's solidarity is also expressed in a blessing of sorts the Countess of Rossillion gives Helen (AWW I.iii.253-54). Non-Shakespearean representations of women's solidarity, expressed through a mother's blessing, may be found in the fourteenth-century poem The Good Wife and the seventeenth-century dialogue The French Garden (Erondell sig. E7v, E8v). A number of sources also represent mothers instructing their children, including sons (see Joceline; Leigh; Breton).

Works Cited


Whitforde, Richard. A Werke for Housholderes. 1533
The Winter's Tale (Vol. 36): Jealousy

René Girard (essay date 1987)


[In the following essay, Girard interprets the jealousy of Leontes in terms of "mimetic desire, " suggesting that the motive for Leontes' jealous behavior is based on his belief that he influenced Hermione to love Polixenes in a sort of imitation of his fondness for his friend.]

The most monstrous jealousy in Shakespeare is not that of Othello but of Leontes, the hero of The Winter's Tale. With no villain at his side to poison his mind, the king of Sicilia comes close to destroying his entire family. His victims are completely innocent and selflessly devoted to him. This Othello without an Iago is Shakespeare's last representation of jealousy, his most uncompromising and, in my opinion, his greatest. But posterity has judged otherwise. Othello rather than Leontes has always been the great symbol of jealousy in the theater of Shakespeare.

The traditional critics appreciate the sinister quality that emanates from Leontes after he becomes jealous. They find him excellent as a madly suspicious tyrant, but unconvincing as a portrayal of jealousy. They do not understand why he becomes jealous; they find him "insufficiently motivated."

One line in the very first scene, I believe, is relevant to this objection. When the curtain rises, Camillo of Sicilia and Archimadus of Bohemia are discussing the friendship of their two kings:

CAMILLO. Sicilia cannot show himself over-kind to Bohemia. They were trained together in their childhoods, and there rooted betwixt them then such an affection, which cannot choose but branch now. 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, as over a vast; and embraced, as it were, from the ends of opposed winds. The heavens continue their loves!

ARCHIMADUS. I think there is not in the world either malice or matter to alter it.

(I.i.21-32)

Unlike the thoughtful Camillo who prays for the continuation of the beautiful friendship. Archimadus sees no need for supernatural help. The bond is so strong, he believes, that it should endure forever. As we hear this, we realize, of course, that the friendship is doomed. The prophecy smacks of human pride; a friendship presented as indestructible at the outset of a play must be about to be destroyed. The amazing concord of the friends is an obvious prelude to their still more amazing discord.

Archimadus' prophecy must be false, but not entirely false, however. The terms in which it is couched are too specific to be meaningless.

Malice is what a villain can do to disturb a harmonious relationship, the wiles of an Iago for instance. Matter means all seemingly rational grounds for quarreling that two close friends may have, conflicts of passion,
interest, prestige, power, whatever you will as long as it seems sufficient to legitimate the end of a friendship.

The words *malice* and *matter* cover everything that the traditional critics would regard as appropriate "motivation" for the jealousy of Leontes, everything that would make them happy if they could find some of it in *The Winter's Tale*.

They do not find any. In the entourage of Leontes, there is no one who wants to mislead him and flatter his jealous passion. Camillo's wife, Paulina, displays as much heroic persistence on behalf of truth and justice as Iago on behalf of deception and evil. Many courtiers do not dare contradict the king, but she puts them to shame and, thanks to her, their embarrassed silence also points to the truth. Leontes is painfully aware that no one around him shares his mad belief.

There is a religious oracle in the play and it, too, proclaims the truth. Every fact that Iago manages to distort or keep away from Othello is prominently displayed in front of the deluded husband. The play is devoid of *malice* and it is devoid of *matter* as well. Both Leontes and Polixenes are happily married and Shakespeare gives no indication that Hermione might be sexually attracted to Polixenes or Polixenes to her. Not one equivocal word passes the lips of either character, not one ambiguous glance is exchanged. Both friends are at peace with one another. Their kingdoms have no common borders. Neither one covets the possessions of the other. The play has no political *matter*.

This complete absence of *malice* and *matter* makes *The Winter's Tale* stand out as a unique exception. Shakespeare is obviously aware of the fact. All his plays until then were abundantly supplied with at least one of the two ingredients demanded by the critics. This is especially true whenever jealousy plays a prominent role. The women are invariably innocent, but the jealous hero is not really guilty either; next to him there is a villain who provides him with a convenient excuse for his violence. This is not only true of *Othello* but also of *Much Ado About Nothing*, a comedy in which Don John plays the role of the slanderer, and also of *Cymbeline* in which the part goes to Posthumus' own rival, Iachomo.

Even if the lack of *malice* and *matter* could be regarded as a fault from a dramatic standpoint, it cannot be an ordinary fault if Shakespeare himself planned it deliberately. The line of Archimadus resembles too much the "lack of motivation" bemoaned by the traditional critics not to allude to the same reality. These critics were wrong when they treated the whole matter in a purely negative fashion, as something to be censored rather than understood. And their modern successors will also be wrong as they rush into the void created by the absence of *malice* and *matter* with some "critical theory" of their own choosing, some kind of psychoanalytical scheme for instance. Shakespeare obviously had his own reasons for doing away with the *malice* and *matter* of the earlier plays. I would like to know what these reasons are. I am curious, above all, of Shakespeare's own idea of what his own play means.

*There is not in the world either malice or matter to alter this friendship*. Every word is true and yet the statement as a whole is misleading in regard to the long and happy life that it predicts for the friendship. Since the friendship is quickly altered, it must be altered by something other than malice or matter.

The line of Archimadus discreetly warns us about the very special nature of this play. This is Shakespeare's last meditation on jealousy and he does not want the subject to be spoiled this time. He does not want its full force to be diluted in the traditional fashion. *The Winter's Tale* is the only play which portrays the full horror of a passion that Shakespeare has often represented before, but always with some attenuation.

When a very old and close friendship or a happy marriage is destroyed, we automatically assume that the agent of their destruction must lie outside the relation. Either the friends and spouses listened to some malicious slander about one another, or some unexpected issue arose between them. On something of great importance they must differ importantly.
If the friendship is not destroyed from the outside and yet is destroyed, it must be destroyed from the inside. Archimadus sees quite correctly that the catastrophe cannot come from outside and he concludes incorrectly that it will not come at all. He does not even mention the most disturbing possibility; he simply cannot imagine it. His statement is true as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough and it becomes misleading because of the very truth it contains.

This is what a tragic oracle should be: a statement about the future that sounds misleadingly reassuring because of some truth in it, a pleasant enough reality that seems to exclude a quite unpleasant possibility, the fulfillment of which has been anticipated with some concern: The oracle shows up just in time to alleviate this concern and facilitate the catastrophe by putting the listeners to sleep when they should be on their guard.

In reality there is no incompatibility between the pleasant reality and the unpleasant possibility. The second follows from the first both logically and chronologically. Far from affording the protection that it seems to afford, the absence of malice and matter secretly prepares and facilitates the internal destruction of the friendship.

Archimadus' statement is the tragic oracle at the entrance of The Winter's Tale, a superb example of the genre since it relies on our fundamental misunderstanding of human relations rather than on mere wordplay, as the oracles in Macbeth for instance. If we look for irrelevant excuses and do not want to face up to the tragic possibilities of even the most harmonious human relations, we, too, will fall into the trap. Just like Archimadus himself. To this urbane and optimistic gentleman, a friendship invulnerable to malice and matter has nothing to fear.

The Archimaduses of this world never foresee the serpent in the Garden of Eden. All around them, friendships crumble; allies of long standing go to war; the most stable associations dissolve; lovers separate; spouses divorce, but every time they react as if no such thing had ever happened before. They greet each new catastrophe as an unheard of exception, a miracle in reverse that shall never occur again. Here is an event, they say to one another, that contradicts the natural order of the universe.

The critics with no affinity for the tragic fall into the oracular trap and clamor for the malice and the matter that Shakespeare, this time, will not give them. Malice and matter are the lame excuses and scapegoats that, in the face of shattered loves and friendships, a certain love of mankind requires in order to maintain its faith in the intrinsic goodness of man.

There is another clue to the author's intentions, and it confirms our interpretation of Archimadus' statement. The literary source of The Winter's Tale is Pandolfo by Robert Green. The hero of this novel has conventional motives for being jealous. They are gone from The Winter's Tale. If Shakespeare had not been himself when he wrote the play, or too uninterested in his hero to provide him with credible motives, in all probability they would still be there. I cannot believe that they disappeared accidentally; they had to be discarded on purpose, and the most important task of a critic of the play is to identify that purpose.

Let us overcome the oracular ambiguity of Archimadus and regard his statement as an invitation to rise above malice and matter. Let us reflect on the mystery of a jealousy that dispenses for the first time with the conventional motives to which Shakespeare had always resorted before, even in as great a play as Othello.

In the second scene, we learn how a trusting friend and loving husband can suddenly be metamorphosed into a wild beast. Everybody is on stage. Polixenes announces that, after nine months with Leontes and Hermione, he must return without delay to his family and the affairs of Bohemia; an additional motive is the burden that his presence might be to Leontes.
Leontes insists that Polixenes could never stay long enough to tire him and he begs his friend to wait some more, even if only a week. Several critics have questioned his sincerity. Can a man that close to an almost insane fit of jealousy seriously attempt to prevent the departure of his presumed rival? These critics assume that the suspicion of Leontes must antedate the beginning of the play. If he is serious about wanting Polixenes to stay, he must already be planning to have him murdered.

This is the wrong approach. Shakespeare is not writing a detective story. He first portrays Leontes as a man genuinely distressed at the prospect of losing his friend, and we must assume that this distress is real. With an almost childlike petulance, Leontes begs Polixenes to stay a little longer. He needs to prepare himself for a future without his friend. He cannot find the right words. Hermione stands at his side, silent. No more than two minutes, perhaps, after Polixenes' announcement, Leontes, brusquely, turns to her:

Tongue-tied our queen? speak you.

The only "tongue-tied" character is Leontes himself. He knows how charming and eloquent his wife can be and he wants her to plead his case with Polixenes. He wishes that she had intervened without being asked. He is as dependent on her as he is on his friend. The two most precious people in his life now seem to be going their separate ways, deserting him simultaneously . . . Sensing his disarray, Hermione intervenes and the first thing she does is to answer the implicit reproach of her husband:

I had thought, sir, to have held my peace until
You had drawn oaths from him not to stay. You, sir,
Charge him too coldly.

She then proceeds to do precisely what Leontes has requested; in an always dignified and humorous manner, she "charges" Polixenes warmly and eloquently; Leontes is highly pleased. Twice he repeats "well said, Hermione."

To call Hermione to the rescue was the right move. Victory crowns her efforts; Polixenes will stay a while longer. I detect no resentment in Leontes' congratulations, only admiration and gratitude:

At my request he would not.
Hermione, my dearest, thou never spok'st
To better purpose.

A playful Hermione now asks her husband if he really means his last statement. In the same lighthearted way, he answers that, on one other occasion only, she spoke as well as she just has; it was the day when she said "yes" to his marriage proposal. She then recapitulates the observations of her husband:

. . . I have spoke to th' purpose twice:
The one, for ever earn'd a royal husband;
Th' other, for some while a friend. [Giving her hand to Polixenes]

As he hears these words and sees his wife hold hands with Polixenes, Leontes feels overwhelmed with jealousy:

LEONTES:
[Aside] Too hot, too hot!
To mingle friendship far, is mingling bloods.
I have tremor cordis on me: my heart dances.
But not for joy—not joy.
Occurring as it does in front of him, this display of affection means strictly nothing. Leontes is too intelligent not to be aware of the possibility:

This entertainment
May a free face put on, derive a liberty
From heartiness, from bounty, fertile bosom,
And well become the agent; it may—I grant.

And yet he cannot help regard the innocent gesture of his wife as solid proof of adultery. His perverse interpretation can seem credible only in the hypothesis of a long-standing affair between Hermione and Polixenes, to which he alone would have remained blind. The deluded husband is always the last to know his own disgrace. The lovers must regard him as a man beyond enlightenment, and they have thrown precautions to the wind. They no longer hesitate to display their mutual affection in public, even in his own presence.

But to paddling palms and pinching fingers,
As now they are, and making practie'd smiles,
As in a looking-glass; and then to sigh, as 'twere
The mort o' th' deer—O, that is entertainment
My bosom likes not, nor my brows!

The words of Hermione and her physical contact with Polixenes are the two stones that produce the spark that sets off the explosion. We can see the spark and we can hear the explosion, but where is the dynamite?

Hermione was not first to place her marriage on the same footing as her friendship with Polixenes. Leontes himself used the word "earned" apropos of the two. A little before he had also asked: "Is he won yet?" meaning Polixenes. Hermione then adopted his metaphor; she follows every lead of her husband; she imitates him in everything.

Why should Leontes react as he does to this innocent mimicry? A moment before, he had interpreted Hermione's nonintervention in his debate with Polixenes as a rebuff to himself. He found her too cold and now he finds her too hot. Between too little and too much friendship is there a perfect point that would satisfy Leontes? Obviously not. Leontes puts his wife and his friend in a double bind. If they seem uninterested in each other, he feels betrayed, but as soon as they seem interested, he feels betrayed all the more.

Hermione behaves like a docile instrument in the hands of her husband. Everything she says and does, she says and does because of him. The same is true of Polixenes, who postpones his departure for the sake of Leontes. Her insistence made him understand how important it is, but not to her, to him alone, that his friend should not leave too suddenly.

Does Leontes fail to grasp all this? We take for granted that he must. If he only perceived how eager his wife and his friend are to act in the manner he himself has suggested, he would acknowledge their innocence. What can his misguided jealousy amount to if not to a gross misapprehension of the available information? This is what our common sense assumes. Our common sense is wrong. This jealousy is more intelligent than we realize.

Until the fateful line 108, no doubt, Leontes was unaware of his crucial role in the interaction of Polixenes and Hermione, but awareness has come to him in a flash of insight based on the information that we, the spectators, share with him, interpreted almost in the same way. Leontes realizes that he has been manipulating his wife for the sake of his friend. As long as he did not see this, he entertained no suspicion.
The morbidly sensitive Leontes feels hurt at the thought that his wife might not treat his best friend as her own best friend. He wants the two persons he loves most to feel toward one another the way he feels toward them. He desires a triangle of perfect love.

Until line 108, Leontes was continuing on the course that had been his during the entire visit of Polixenes. He was not suspicious in the slightest. His only problem was that he found Polixenes and Hermione too indifferent to one another, and he was doing his best to change that. As he listens to Hermione and watches her hold hands with Polixenes, all of a sudden he thinks that he has succeeded beyond his wildest dreams.

Hermione has just said that she "earned" a friend in the same way that she "earned" a husband. Leontes recognizes his own feelings as well as his own words: he has always seen the two relations as equally important, almost equivalent, and a terrifying idea takes hold of him. He thinks that his insistence on too much friendship has driven Hermione into the arms of Polixenes. He has incited her to commit adultery. To mingle friendship far, is mingling blood.

Leontes sees himself as an involuntary go-between. He thinks that his own love has exerted a perverse mimetic influence on the pair and that they love one another after his own example, but in the wrong manner.

This interpretation is based on mimetic desire, or rather on Leontes' anticipation of mimetic desire, on his belief in a mimetic contagion that does not really exist but might exist. This reading may seem excessively subtle at first and yet it is Shakespeare's own. The readers do not have to take my word for it. Shakespeare himself made it completely explicit. He placed it in the mouth of the reliable Camillo, the character best informed of what Leontes is up to. This shrewd and honest counsellor diagnoses his master's condition in the manner that I do, and there is no reason to doubt that he is right:

He thinks, nay, with all confidence he swears,
As he had seen't, or been an instrument
To vice you to't, that you have touch'd his queen
Forbiddenly. (414-17; italics mine)

Leontes sees himself as the instrument of his own cuckoldry. In the language of mimetic theory, which owes a lot to Dostoevsky, we might say that Leontes sees himself in the role of The Eternal Husband; but he reacts more violently than this antihero to a discovery that, in his case, is not even true. He thinks that he not only facilitated the love affair of Polixenes and Hermione, but that he first planted the desire in their hearts.

Camillo is present during the entire scene. When Leontes talks to him privately, he takes for granted that a man as intelligent as his advisor must have reached the same conclusion as himself. When he finds that Camillo still believes in the loyalty of Hermione, he becomes indignant and calls him "a bawd." He thinks that Camillo deliberately continues in the role that he, himself, was also playing before his illumination.

Another clue to the feelings of Leontes lies in his parting words to Hermione, when she leaves the stage with Polixenes:

Hermione,
How thou lov'st us, show in our brother's welcome;
Let what is dear in Sicily be cheap.
Next to thyself and my young rover, he's
Apparent to my heart.

(I.ii.173-77)
These lines function both as an invitation to friendship and as an invitation to sexual promiscuity. For the love of me, Leontes says to his wife, show your love to Polixenes, fall in love with him. You, my wife, prove to me that my friend is the most desirable friend by desiring him as much as I do. And you, my friend, prove to me that my wife is the most desirable wife by desiring her as I also do.

Even the most banal words of civility can seem ambiguous in an ambiguous context. If a husband desires, quite innocently, to have his wife extend the proper hospitality to his best friend, he cannot help sounding as if he were encouraging her to commit adultery.

Leontes is satirical; he gives a caricature of his former language, during the entire nine months of Polixenes' visit, a language, he now thinks, that has been obeyed to the letter.

In order to show that he is no longer fooled, Leontes exaggerates what he now perceives as the rash imprudence of his invitation to cordiality. This parody of his former self is a bitter reproach: "When you took me at my word," really means "you turned me, the trusting husband, into an innocent tool of your perversity."

Leontes is merely imagining something that really happens in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Proteus falls in love with Valentine's mistress, Silvia, for obeying too literally the too insistent suggestion of his old friend: For the love of me, Valentine keeps saying, fall in love with the woman I love!

A brief episode in Act Five confirms, I believe, this interpretation of Leontes' jealous desire. Sixteen years have elapsed; the son of Polixenes, Florizel, and Perdita, the long lost daughter of Leontes, not yet identified as such, have left Bohemia together to take refuge with Leontes. They claim that they are officially engaged and that Polixenes himself has sent them to his old friend Leontes. In reality, the king does not want his son to marry the humble shepherdess that Perdita seems to be, and the two lovers are feeling his rage.

In the midst of this first encounter with Leontes, the truth is publicly revealed, and the two young people throw themselves at the feet of their host, begging for his help. In an effort to awaken his sympathy, Florizel reminds him of his own past when he, too, was a young man in love:

Beseech you, sir,
Remember since you ow'd no more to time Than I do now. With thought of such affections,
Step forth as mine advocate. At your request My father will grant precious things as trifles.

The answer of Leontes is astonishing, at least for a repentant sinner and an older man forever buried, he claims, in the remembrance of his supposedly dead wife:

Would he do so, I'd beg your precious mistress, Which he counts as a trifle.

Leontes is thinking of Perdita as a possible spouse not for Florizel but for himself. His great grief, his sense of guilt, his daily visitations of the supposed tomb of Hermione, all seem forgotten. We can understand why the ever-watchful Paulina intervenes forcefully:

Sir, my liege,
Your eye hath too much youth in't. Not a month 'Fore your queen died, she was more worth such gazes Than what you look on now.
LEONTES: I thought of her,
Even in these looks I made.

The reason Leontes behaves as he does is not that he has forgotten his wife, but that he remembers her too vividly. Perdita looks so much like Hermione and Florizel looks so much like Polixenes that the past seems resurrected. From Leontes' standpoint, this is a perfect repetition of that past, not solely because of the physical resemblance between the actors, but also because the new ones display openly, this time, the mutual love that Leontes had wrongly attributed to Polixenes and Hermione.

Another circumstance that makes the scene a perfect repetition of the past is the role of go-between and protector of their love that Florizel and Perdita want Leontes to assume. In Act One, Leontes saw himself as the involuntary go-between of his wife and friend and the engineer of a love affair that did not exist. This time, everything is real. Florizel and Perdita really love each other and they really put Leontes in charge of their love. Every reason Leontes once thought he had to be jealous has come back to haunt him. His heroic efforts to convince himself that his jealous desire was pointless are powerfully challenged by what he sees. Shakespeare does not want to cast discredit on the repentance of Leontes. His purpose is to produce circumstances identical not to the original situation as it truly was but to Leontes' distorted interpretation of it. As a result, the old jealous desire overwhelms him once again, so powerfully that Leontes forgets everything else, at least for a moment.

The same insolent happiness radiates from Florizel and Perdita as from Hermione and Polixenes when they held hands in front of Leontes. This love makes a great show of being in need, in need of Leontes but, in reality, it needs nothing at all, nothing outside of itself. It seems divinely self-sufficient, and that is the reason Leontes, once again, feels the pangs of jealousy. The very perfection of the relationship makes him feel excluded from paradise.

This is exactly how he had felt the other time. He had been pushing Hermione and Polixenes toward each other in order to reinforce his own desire for them, mimetically, through the imitation of its own mimetic replicas reflected back from them as in a mirror. And he had really succeeded. Suddenly, Polixenes and Hermione had seemed superhuman and so suited to one another that they seemed bound to love one another exclusively; it seemed impossible that they might waste any love on anyone else, especially himself. That is the reason he had felt like an outcast. As his old feelings reassert themselves, once again he sees himself abandoned and humiliated, compelled, as a result, to espouse and imitate the beautiful desire that seems to deprive him of everything desirable.

What Paulina sees in the eyes of Leontes cannot be his own vanished youth; it must be borrowed from the two young people. It is not Leontes anymore but his own rendition of Florizel's desire for Perdita, of Perdita's desire for Florizel.

Being once again in a position of power, Leontes can choose his own role. He can be the complacent go-between who favors the illicit loves that he secretly admires or he can take advantage of the situation to satisfy his own desire at the expense of the young couple. At this point, he is tempted less to marry Perdita, perhaps, than to separate these lovers once and for all, to destroy the insolent happiness of which he has no share, as he had destroyed it in the case of Polixenes and Hermione.

If we read the episode until the end, we will find a line that confirms the mimetic nature of Leontes' reawakened jealousy. Leontes once again addresses Florizel:

But your petition
Is yet unanswer'd. I will to your father.
Your honor not o'erthrown by your desires,
I am a friend to them and you. (italics mine)
The last line does not seem particularly interesting at first. It obviously means: "I am your friend in every possible way and especially in those matters that relate to the interest of your desires. You want me to intervene with your father; I will ask him to permit your marriage to Perdita; I will be an honest go-between."

Leontes' brief personal crisis is over and the episode concludes on a positive note. A happy end is in sight for the two lovers. All this is obvious and we hardly give it a thought.

And yet the wording of our line is a little strange. It seems to suggest that: *I am a friend to them* (meaning *your desires*) does not necessarily imply: *I am your friend*. If the alternative is not a real one, the final *and you* is pointless; it merely repeats what Leontes has already said. We are left wondering why Shakespeare should have ended the whole episode on a rather flat and uselessly redundant note.

How can we make the alternative real, so that the *and you* will not be redundant? We must explore the possibility that a friendship of the desires might not be synonymous with the friendship of the men whose desires they are. This is not as far-fetched as it seems at first. If desires are friends we may assume that they will feel like friends; they will share identical views about whatever seems important to them.

Nothing can be more important to a desire than the object that it pursues as *desire*, in its own energetic and single-minded fashion. If there are two desires with a single mind, it is probable, it is almost inevitable that they will pursue one and the same object "with the soul of desire," the *same* object for both men at once. If our two desires pursue this object single-mindedly, the same Perdita for instance, will not each desire insist on the exclusive possession of it, will they not stubbornly refuse to share it with even the friendliest desire?

They certainly will. We can see, therefore, that the friendship of men and the friendship of their desires are not at all one and the same thing. The friendship of the men means harmony and peace and the friendship of their desires means jealousy and war.

Without the addition of the final *and you*, nothing prevents the first part of the line, *I am a friend to your desires*, from harboring the dark possibilities of mimetic rivalry, of a new tragedy, in other words. The two friendships become equivalent only retrospectively, after the *and you* has been added.

To be a friend to Florizel or to be a friend to his desires . . . that is the question Leontes has been debating, and it is not an idle question. The beginning of our line still reflects a hesitation that is resolved only with the final *and you*, uttered perhaps with a sigh of regret. Only then does Leontes finally triumph over his last temptation.

If we read the line carefully, we will see that it alludes to a major Shakespearean problem, which is the problem of *The Winter's Tale* at least as much as jealousy is, the problem of the archetypal brothers or friends. Why do they invariably become the worst of enemies?

The ambiguousness of a friendship that makes the desires of the friends too much the same, and therefore turns them into rivals, is what our line suggests. This is made unquestionable, I feel, by Leontes' first reaction to the request by Florizel. He was immediately tempted to seek Perdita as a wife not for the young man but for himself.

The two possible meanings of *I am a friend to your desires* are clearly present in our text and the phrase must allude to both; its ambivalence cannot be fortuitous.

This line also reflects the temporality of Leontes' experience. The disquieting interpretation of the first six words is only half-glimpsed and it is quickly suppressed by the reassuring certainty of *and you*. As soon as Leontes has surmounted his temptation, we almost doubt that it ever was there. We almost doubt that once again he was tempted to rebel against the thankless role of the empty-handed go-between. He had never
played that role before, I repeat, but now he is really asked to play it, and in circumstances so reminiscent of his old illusion that we can well understand why, at least for a minute, he would fall again under its horrible spell.

The use of such words as "friend," "friendship" for the mimetic affinity between desires is particularly appropriate in view of the insidious nature of mimetic rivalry, of its tendency to creep up on friends and brothers when their intentions seem most pure, when they have no other conscious purpose than to lend a helping hand. Many men think they are still friends to other men when, in fact, they are friends to their desires exclusively. There is a world of difference between the two, but the shift is so easy that the difference, most of the time, remains unseen. A man can "honestly" believe that he is acting in the interests of a friend when his allegiance has already shifted to the latter's desires and the friendship is already betrayed. The extreme pertinence of the word "friend" makes the wordplay almost invisible as wordplay.

This ambiguous use of "friend" does not occur in The Winter's Tale only, and a comparison with other plays, notably A Midsummer Night's Dream, confirms the deliberateness of the ambivalence.

When they lyrically rehash the traditional reasons why "true love" always runs into trouble, Lysander and Hermia enumerate all sorts of mythical obstacles, such as oppressive fathers and omnipotent tyrants, but they fail to mention the only relevant source of disturbance which is themselves. They keep "crossing" each other's desires because they keep imitating these same desires. We only have to observe the lovers' behavior in order to perceive the imitation that their ideology of "true love" will not acknowledge, and we only have to pay attention to their words to understand that, unwittingly, they keep defining their own mimetic desire:

LYSANDER:
Or else it [desire] stood upon the choice of friends

HERMIA:
O hell! To choose love with another's eyes!

The first emotion of Leontes when he meets Florizel and Perdita is sympathy for the young couple, but that sympathy immediately extends to their desires. As his need for sympathetic participation increases, he feels compelled to espouse these desires, to make them his own, through a process of imitation so encompassing that it includes even the youth in the eyes of the old man, the youth of Florizel and Perdita, no doubt, reflected in the eyes of their imitator.

The line we just read makes the presence and the effects of mimetic desire completely transparent to those willing to acknowledge this constant source of conflictual ambivalence in Shakespeare but, to those not so willing, this same desire remains completely invisible. The technique of the passages we have just read, the discretion in the handling of the crucial themes is most appropriate to the subject matter, of course, but it also amounts to a strategy of selective revelation.

The diabolical ambivalence of a friend to your desires can be regarded as a case of overreading since it turns out to mean exactly the same thing in the end as a friend of yours. A spectator interested only in light entertainment never suspects anything of the whole complex of themes I call mimetic desire. After everything is over, the surface of the text appears perfectly smooth and not a trace remains of what has just disappeared.

If we want to know the truth, Shakespeare will help us and he will hide nothing. If we do not want to know, if we want to be kept in the dark regarding the operation of our desires, which is the case with most men, we will see absolutely nothing. At the end of our episode, everything we just discovered has vanished and the banal meaning seems so limpid and obvious that not a trace can be found of the possibilities we only half-glimpsed.
If we belong to the group of those who want to see nothing, we will feel perfectly comfortable; the disquieting possibility that unsuspected depths remain to be explored and that we might have missed something will never enter our mind.

The jealousy of Leontes proves baseless in The Winter's Tale, but it would make a good deal of sense in the context of many earlier plays of Shakespeare.

Everywhere in Shakespeare a certain type of character keeps recurring: a man—more rarely a woman—has a spouse, or a friend of the opposite sex as well as a friend, or a brother of the same sex. Instead of a friend, it can be an esteemed associate, or a revered superior; it can even be a total stranger, the Iachomo of Cymbeline.

For one reason or another, the man brings the woman into his relationship with the male friend (in the Sonnets), or he brings his male friend into his relationship with the woman (in a number of plays). His official reason may be that he needs a helping hand in his courtship of the woman; he does not have enough selfconfidence to approach her single-handedly. In other instances, he has too much selfconfidence; he is in a "boastful" mood; he yearns for the envious looks of another man for the purpose of bolstering his own desire. Would he need this kind of reinforcement if he were as sure of himself as he seems to be?

The two types are less far apart than they seem. They are the two phases of the same personality, one that tends to oscillate between too much and too little selfconfidence, the mimetic personality par excellence.

Whatever his motives, our man works assiduously at effecting a rapprochement of the two friends. He wants to foster the same close relations between them as he already entertains with each separately. He does not seem to realize that his behavior may push the two friends into each other's arms. This often turns out to be the case in Shakespeare.

I already briefly mentioned a first example of this theme, that of Valentine and Proteus in The Two Gentlemen of Verona. I will now give a few more, beginning with the one closest to Leontes in chronological order, the Posthumus of Cymbeline. This hero boasts about the beauty and virtue of his young wife, Imogen, in front of a Roman dandy named Iachomo, instilling into him an intense desire to try his luck with this wonderful woman. Posthumus wagers that Iachomo will fail and then, quixotically, facilitates his rival's enterprise by giving him a letter of introduction to Imogen. When Iachomo returns with some spurious evidence that Imogen has succumbed to his courtship, Posthumus' loss of confidence in her is as rash, unbalanced, and unfair to this virtuous wife as the macho bragging of the previous phase.

Troilus is another illustration of the type. Not unlike Posthumus, he is prone to bragging, but he is quite insecure underneath. When he praises the superior worldliness and charm of the Greek warriors, he does not realize the impact of his words on Cressida. His mimetic envy of "the merry Greeks" suggests to the woman he has unwittingly humiliated not only that a Greek lover might be enjoyable, but that it could help her regain the upper hand with her Trojan lover. Troilus displayed the most callous indifference toward Cressida after spending only one single night in her bed.

A little later, one of the Greeks, Diomed, is taking charge of Cressida and the incorrigible Troilus loudly praises the young woman in front of him. First Troilus stupidly channeled Cressida's mimetic desire in the direction of the Greeks, and then, apparently eager to complete the job so neatly begun with his mistress, he channels Diomed's desire in her direction; he arouses the Greek warrior's vigorous sense of mimetic emulation with the Trojans. Diomed, needless to say, becomes the second lover of Cressida.

Even more than Pandarus, Troilus is Cressida's "bawd," but unlike Pandarus, he is not even aware of contributing to the process of her mimetic corruption. He has no remembrance of having been spiritually unfaithful to her before she becomes physically unfaithful to him. Since he gets hooked a second time before
he has had an opportunity to succumb to a temptation similar to hers, he is sincerely convinced, as have been numerous generations of critics who have vigorously applauded him for his steadfast virtue, that he occupies the high moral ground in the whole affair. He still passes for "the only positive hero" in an otherwise distressingly cynical play.

Troilus must be regarded just as responsible as Pandarus for the prostitution of Cressida, if not more so. Were Troilus and Cressida a French play, it might be entitled L'école des putains; in this School for Whores, all the teachers are former lovers or would-be lovers of their students.

The Silvius of As You Like It is a variation on the same archetype: he carries the love letter of his cruel mistress to another man, Ganymede (in reality a woman, Rosalind), in the absurd hope that his abject submissiveness will improve his chances with the author of the letters, Phebe, who is bound to despise this spineless man. His submissiveness repels Phebe not because she differs from him to a significant extent, but because she does not. Most of these Shakespearean lovers in the comedies resemble one another enormously. They are as "masochistic" with their persecutors as they are "sadistic" with their victims, and Phebe will prove as servile as Silvius, as soon as someone shows up, Rosalind, who treats her as harshly as she does Silvius.

Another good example is Orsino, the duke of Twelfth Night, who finds the young Cesario (Viola) so charming that he dispatches him (or her) posthaste to the cruel Olivia, loaded with his own messages of love. Piqued by Viola's indifference to her, Olivia, naturally, falls in love with the ambassador.

The theme of the man who invites cuckoldry by praising his mistress or wife in public, exhibiting her as a fashion designer would his best model, dispatching possible lovers to her, acting as her go-between with other men, or otherwise making it difficult for her to remain faithful, recurs too frequently and prominently in the theater of Shakespeare to be dismissed as an inconsequential trick, an external device, alien to the sublime aspects of the noble bard, unrelated to the themes truly worthy of our critical attention.

Unless we perceive the process of these mimetically inflammable men who become "infected" (the word has a quasi-technical sense in this theater) with the desire of a boastful husband or lover, we have no grasp of dramatic interaction in the comedies. When we see that the phenomenon has its exact counterpart in the realm of power—with the Ulysses of Troilus and Cressida—we realize how widespread it is. The truth is that indirect desire, second-hand desire, desire borrowed from a friend, mimetic desire, constitutes the strongest kind of desire in the Shakespearean corpus, and the only kind that really serves the purpose of the playwright because it provides him with an inexhaustible source of conflicts.

Our survey of the erotic landscape leaves no doubt regarding the nature of Leontes' suspicion and its legitimacy in the context of the early plays. Except for his own play and, to a more limited extent, some of the plays that come immediately before it, all triangular conjunctions of a cast similar to that of The Winter's Tale quickly produce the mimetic offspring, either in the man friend, or in the woman friend, or in both, that would make Leontes' jealousy well founded if he were the hero in one of these plays. On statistical grounds, this jealousy makes sense.

There is much self-defeating eroticism in Shakespeare and it bears an undeniable resemblance to the behavior of Leontes before he becomes jealous. The supposed mystery of Leontes' jealousy stems from our inability to recognize the unity of a Shakespearean archetype behind the diversity of the examples I have mentioned.

If characters such as Valentine, or Collatine, the husband of Lucrece, or Hermia, or Troilus, had come around to the jealous perspective of Leontes early enough, they would have saved themselves a great deal of trouble. Instead of regarding them as madmen, we would congratulate them for their shrewdness.
Why is Leontes so well informed about mimetic contagion, and why does he fear its effects so much? He had to observe it somewhere. The objects of his observation could not be Hermione or Polixenes, who are immune to it. Hermione in particular is admirably unaware of all the evils imagined by Leontes. The only mimetic contagion that her husband has observed is her innocent exhibition of friendship for Polixenes and he was the one who requested it. It was possible to misinterpret this friendship, of course, but, in order to do so, Leontes had to refer it not to its real source, which is the sincere affection of his wife for him, but to the perverted source in his own mimetic desire.

The cause of Leontes' jealousy is his own heart. He condemns his victims in function of what he finds in himself. That is why his mistake is so stubborn and remains unaffected by the external evidence.

Leontes implicitly acknowledges his own mimetic obsession since he sees himself as a source of virulent contamination. Observing in himself the self-defeating impulse that invites the perverse kind of imitation, he anticipates its effects in others and erroneously believes that Hermione must have come under its influence. She slavishly follows his suggestions, to be sure, but only because of her eagerness to please him.

The only desire Leontes can know firsthand is his own; his belief in a love affair between Hermione and Polixenes is an extrapolation of this self-understanding. Modern psychologists would call this a "projection." If the attribution of mimetic desire to others is essentially projective, should it not be dismissed as the fabrication of sick mind not solely in the case of Leontes but also systematically?

This, I believe, is one of the questions that lies behind the creation of Leontes. In the early works, and even more in the so-called "cynical" works of the middle period, such as Troilus and Cressida, the system of mimetic contamination operates so infallibly that it seems a law of nature. The Winter's Tale can be read as an implicit but radical critique of the "epistemology of desire" that underlies all these plays.

I see some radical self-criticism in The Winter's Tale, but one that is perfectly compatible with a sound interpretation of the mimetic theory and therefore does not overturn it. How is this possible?

If our knowledge of mimetic desire in others comes from mimetic desire in ourselves, it is indeed a projection. In the case of Leontes, this projection is exactly what the modern theory of projection leads us to expect, an illusion. I do not believe, however, that the play invalidates the mimetic theory. It does not even invalidate the possibility of a correct insight that would be based solely on the projection of mimetic desire itself.

This apparently impossible paradox will disappear if we take the mimetic nature of mimetic desire more fully into account. If desire is as "infectious" as Shakespeare normally represents it, it will reproduce itself in routine fashion. An individual made suspicious by his own propensity to mimetic desire will expect to encounter around himself what his pessimistic view of human nature leads him to expect, the perfect replicas of his own desire, and, as a rule, he will indeed encounter them. If they were not there in the first place, his own desire would generate them.

More often than not, the expectation of mimetic contamination by mimetic desire will be self-fulfilling; it will produce its own truth. Mimetic desire is the original self-fulfilling prophecy and it is the real force behind self-fulfilling prophecies of all kinds in countless areas of human endeavor.

If, in the case of Leontes, his projection of desire encounters nothing but the void, the reason lies with Hermione's immunity to mimetic contagion. With different characters, the same projection might have turned out differently. The modern idea of projection as necessarily deceptive is not applicable to mimetic desire any more than its counterpart, the rationalistic and psychoanalytical fallacy of a completely objective knowledge of desire, entirely divorced from the desire it seeks to know.
Considerations of this type seem too abstract, theoretical, and undramatic to figure in a play, and yet they are developed at some length in The Winter's Tale; desperate jealousy is a desperate search for the truth and it is understandable, after all, that a Leontes would bring up the subject at the moment of his greatest disarray, in a fashion that is faintly reminiscent of the Marcel Proust of La prisonnière.

The text I have in mind is Leontes famous soliloquy on affection, or desire. It does not make much sense either from a traditional or from a psychoanalytical viewpoint, but it will make sense to us as a reflection on how far the intuition of mimetic desire can be trusted, coming as it does from mimetic desire itself:

LEONTES:
Affection! thy intention stabs at the centre.
Thou dost make possible things not so held,
Communicat'st with dreams (how can this be?)
With what's unreal thou co-active art,
And fellow'st nothing. Then, 'tis very credent
Thou mayst co-join with something, and thou dost
(And that beyond commission), and I find it
(And that to the infection of my brains
And hard'ning of my brows).

(I. ii. 138-46)

Leontes first insists on the most misleading aspects of desire, on its overall unreality. Desire may think that it grasps something outside of itself when, in fact, it does not and clutches only at fantsoms.

Two different modalities of linkage with the outside world seem to be involved. The first appears to be intellectual: Leontes obviously alludes to a kind of knowledge specific to desire; it can fail miserably, but it can also produce results. It fails when desire "fellow'st nothing" and, as a result, cannot compare itself to anything real. Desire may remain alone but it is not its nature that it always should. It may fasten on something that truly exists and, in that case, it may really apprehend and comprehend that something.

The second linkage seems to belong to desire itself, to its own affective dimension. Desire becomes really coactive this time and it co-joins with the desire that it has fellowed, when it does fellow something which can only be its own mimetic replica. Either a desire will be sterile in all respects and will produce no knowledge because it produces no duplicate of itself, or it will be fertile in all respects and will produce real knowledge because it has already produced the object of that knowledge. Desire understands its children just as it understands itself, for the simple reason that children resemble their parents.

The last lines of our text confirm this reading. If the communication and co-creation of desires that Leontes is talking about has really occurred between him, on the one hand, and Polixenes and Hermione, on the other, then it is "beyond commission." The two other partners of the triangle must already desire one another in the same way that Leontes desires them, and his jealous insight is unfortunately a real one. He has been irreparably cuckolded and the hard'ning of his brows coincides with the infection of his brain, with his ever-growing consumption and absorption of mimetic contamination.

Everything falls into place if we only assume that desire itself is the source of what we know about desire and, as a result, the knowledge of other people's desires is not impossible but carries no absolute certainty.

As Jean-Pierre Dupuy has observed, the only thing that mimetic theory makes predictable is the unpredictability of the mimetic contamination, from which the fallibility can be deduced of any anticipation that relies too much on its happening automatically, confusing it with a causal effect.
I have tried to distinguish between the affective and intellectual aspects that seem to be present in our text, but it cannot really be done: the distinction is contrary to the spirit of the text. Judging from the number and diversity of the words that express it, the main idea is the notion of desire as communication, as something that may or may not co-join with something else. All these essential words and, above all, the magnificent definition of desire as a co-active art, apply to both aspects at once. Taken together they account to a definition of mimetic desire that would not be complete if it did not include a definition of how we know about this desire in others as well as in ourselves. The knowledge is part of the mimetic process itself and therefore it can be true, if the mimetic contamination is reciprocal; and it can be false, if the original mimetic desire remains childless.

The idea that our own desire is the chief source of all our insights into desire itself is evident to Shakespeare but not to us, and it is largely responsible for the alleged unintelligibility of this text. We are accustomed to a complete separation between desire and its knowledge. This is a most stubborn intellectual presupposition and it coincides with the massive rationalistic blindness to the importance of mimetic contamination in human affairs. This blindness must be rooted in the platonic repression of conflictual mimesis and in the distinction of the sensible and the intelligible. It has persisted during the entire history of Western philosophy and is stronger than ever today.

Far from breaking new ground in this respect, Freud reinforces this fundamental prejudice. In the light of Shakespeare, the postulate of an "unconscious" that would be totally separated from our "consciousness" appear not as a rebellion but as a caricatural exaggeration of the old rationalism. The true knowledge of desire, if there is one, is always supposed to come from an uncontaminated source, which seeks to eliminate the role of introspection and projection in order to believe in its own "scientificity."

The text seems written hastily, but its chaotic appearance may be intended to reflect Leontes' chaotic state of mind and his permanent problem with language. And this time, the problem might well be Shakespeare's own, at least up to a point. The writer is trying to find the right words for a subject matter that does not yet exist . . .

The obscurity of this text disappears if we renounce the prejudice of an irreducible separation between the subjective or, as Lacan would say, the imaginary projections of desire on the one hand and, on the other, the truth of desire, a truth that should reach us through those non-human and therefore immaculate channels invented by our modern mythologists.

We can regard the speech on Affection as a valid expression of what Shakespeare himself believed at the time of The Winter's Tale. Our only knowledge of mimetic desire is mimetic and its application to individual human beings is uncertain. Leontes himself illustrates this uncertainty. His theory is right but his application is wrong. Leontes sees a dissemination of mimetic desire that has not occurred, but his overall theory, incomplete and misleading as it may be, is not devoid of validity. It is ironic, of course, that a man as perceptive as he about desire in general could be so completely deluded in his evaluation of the people closest to him, but such is the fate of many a theorist!

Laurence Wright (essay date 1989)


[In the essay below, Wright argues that the controversy surrounding the beginning of Leontes' jealousy overshadows Shakespeare's own dramatic emphasis of the collapse of Leontes' rational nature.]

In most accounts of The Winter's Tale, the question of when the tragi-comic disruption starts has generally been taken as synonymous with 'When does Leontes become jealous?'. The assumption may blur an
interpretative crux of some importance and one which is actually signalled in the text.

Leontes's jealousy, which initiates The Winter's Tale's tragi-comic cycle, has proved a perennial problem for the critics mainly on account of its suddenness. Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch reached the notorious conclusion that 'Shakespeare had time, or could have found time, to make Leontes's jealousy far more credible than it is. I maintain that he bungled it.'¹ Dover Wilson was largely instrumental in promulgating the opposite view that Leontes should appear jealous from the outset.² That these positions are not in fact irreconcilable has been demonstrated by Roger J. Trienens, arguing that 'suddenness' is thoroughly appropriate to Shakespeare's dramatic purpose, but that vestigial clues are deliberately left to hint at the genesis of the jealousy along the lines recounted in Greene's Pandosto.³ Modern productions tend to favour this composite approach, having Leontes smouldering away from his first entry; a menacing inflection to I.ii.87, 'At my request he would not'; and the raw passion becoming explicit for the audience at I.ii.108 ('Too hot, too hot!').⁴

However, this controversy over the inception and genesis of Leontes's jealousy, though intriguing in itself, has tended to obscure Shakespeare's own dramatic emphasis, which is not on how and when the jealousy comes into being but on the moment of its triumph—the moment when Leontes's rational nature collapses. This is the crisis during which the disruptive force is unleashed. There is nothing in Pandosto to suggest the dramatic pointing Shakespeare gives to the episode, and to understand it we must look to psychological models which make no appearance in Greene.

The crucial speech is Lii.137-46, given in F as follows:

    Most dear'st, my Collop: Can thy Dam, may't be
    Affection? thy Intention stabs the Center.
    Thou do'st make possible things not so held,
    Communicat'st with Dreames (how can this be?)
    With what's vnreall: thou coactiuie art,
    And fellow'st nothing. Then 'tis very credent,
    Thou may'st co-ioyne with something, and thou do'st,
    (And that beyond Commission) and I find it,
    (And that to the infection of my Braines,
    And hardning of my Browes.)⁵

This apostrophe to Affection has always been regarded as a difficult speech. A fairly orthodox paraphrase is given by J. H. P. Pafford in his Arden Appendix of 1963:

    Can your mother (be faithless)? Is it possible? Lustful passions: your intensity penetrates to the very heart and soul of man. You make possible things normally held to be impossible just as dreams do [. . . ]. How can this be? Lust causes one to associate in the mind with persons who are purely imaginary, who do not exist at all, therefore it is very credible that the most unthinkable lustful association can take place between real people: and lust, you have brought it about in this case, going beyond what is lawful—and I am the sufferer to such an extent that I am losing my senses and grow cuckold's horns.⁶

Pafford reads the speech as an impassioned outcry concerning mankind's general susceptibility to lustful passions', the case with which such passions turn sexual phantasy into actual infidelity, and the hurtful certainty that this is what has happened between Hermione and Polixenes. One objection to such an interpretation is that to some extent it denies the context, the presence and dramatic value of the young Mamillius. In line 136, Leontes is trying desperately to discern the innocency of the mother in the welkin eye of the son. The boy's looks are the concrete eugenic evidence of Hermione's past faithfulness, evidence which not even Leontes can gainsay. While it is possible (in the study, if not on stage) that Mamillius simply
precipitates Leontes's festering suspicions with regard to the parentage of Hermione's unborn child, it is much more likely that the boy's manifestly innocent presence would substantiate the idea of his wife's fidelity and therefore cast doubt on the validity of Leontes's own suspicions. This seems to be the clear dramatic import of the child's presence.

Pafford's reading requires that Leontes abruptly deny the dramatic logic of the boy's presence and launch into a speech which asserts the capacity of 'lustful passions' to overwhelm Hermione's virtuous nature in respect of the second pregnancy. While this seems psychologically feasible, given Leontes's distraught state, it is not dramatically justified by the text. Surely the deft build-up from line 119 ('Mamillius/Art thou my boy?') to Leontes's tender but tortured recognition that the child is incontrovertibly his son cannot be thrown away so lightly? The dramatic logic is far stronger if it be allowed that the physical, visual 'argument' of Mamillius's presence on the stage causes Leontes to doubt, quite radically, the validity of his own underlying suspicions concerning Hermione.

Such a reading becomes possible once 'Affection' is no longer taken to mean simply 'lustful passions'.

Hallet Smith, building on the work of H. C. Goddard and others, greatly clarified the sense of Leontes's speech when he proposed that 'Affection' might be the vernacular equivalent of the Latin affectio, as used by Cicero, and defined in Cooper's *Thesaurus Linguae Romanae et Britannicae* (1582 ed.) as follows:


Hallet Smith observes:

> Munroe and all the other editors think 'Affection' means love or lust, the feeling Hermione has for Polixenes (supposedly). I maintain that 'Affection' here means *Affectio*, that is, a sudden mental seizure, and that the passage describes the feeling of Leontes, his own suspicion or jealousy, and not his wife's supposed feeling at all.

Hallet Smith's view has since been elaborated to the point where John Erskine Hankins, drawing on the vocabulary of Aquinas, Ficino and others, sets the entire speech in the context of specific psychological terminology. Hankins thinks 'Intention' refers to a secondary image formed by the phantasy or imagination on the basis of a primary image supplied to the common sense by the external senses. Emphasising OED 11 rather than OED 8, this modifies, but does not controvert, the more usual reading of 'intensity' or 'intentness'. Similarly 'Communicat'st', another formal psychological term, carries its original meaning of 'impart, share, hold in common' (as in OED 5). Used here, the term would imply that the Affection, working through its Intention, might have the power to delude Leontes in the same fashion that dreams can 'make possible things not so held'. While the plain meaning of the words is not disturbed, Hankins also supplies psychological contexts for (modernising the spelling) 'co-active', 'co-join', and less problematically, 'infection', thereby sharpening our sense of the intellectual and social sophistication of the Sicilian court, and heightening the contest between intellect and passion in Leontes himself. Following Goddard and Hallet Smith, Hankins regards this elaborate vein of overwrought psychological commentary as Leontes's effort at self-diagnosis, the convention of the dramatic soliloquy expressing the struggle of the rational man to examine and comprehend his own state of being.

Such a reading gains support from instances of contemporary psychological discussion where this special sense of 'affection' appears in contexts which help elucidate Leontes's important speech. Timothy Bright's *A Treatise of Melancholie* (1586) gives a trenchant account of such unnatural perturbations. He writes that 'if the braine be altered, and the object not rightly apprehended then is it deliered otherwise then it standeth in nature, and so the hart moued to a disorderly passion'. In terms of *The Winter's Tale*, the 'object not rightly
apprehended' would be Hermione's innocent social flirtation with Polixenes. Furthermore, Leontes's interjection at I.ii.108 (Too hot, Too hot!) becomes decidedly ambiguous. Is the 'heat', which Leontes thinks he detects in his wife's behaviour, really in his own metabolism? Bright details the effects of excessive heat in the human system as follows:

Now particularly the spirite of the humour being subtiler, thinner, and hotter than is meete, maketh the apprehension quicker then it should be, and the discretion more hasty, then is meete for the vpright deliуery to the hart, what to embrace or to refuse: this causeth pronenes to anger, when we are offended without cause, commonly called teastiness, and frowardnes. If the humour also with this spirite possesse the brayne, then are these passions of longer continuance: humour being of a more solid nature then the spirite, and so not easily dispersed, which causeth fittes of such passõs to be of longer continuance: and thus the hart may be abused from the brayne . . .

This account certainly seems to underwrite aspects of Leontes's behaviour. Bright stresses that the perturbation affects principally two organs, brain and heart, and that the affection is communicated from brain to heart (where the word carries the psychological sense implied in I.ii 140: 'Communicat'st with Dreames . . . '):

Of all partes of the body, in ech perturbation, two are chiefly affected: first the brayne, that both apprehendeth the offensive or pleasanta object, & iudgeth of the same in like sort, and communicateth it with the harte, which is the second part affected: these being troubled carie with them all the rest of the partes into a simpathy, they of all the rest being in respecte of affection of most importance.

Robert Burton's version of the phenomenon (based partly on Bright) is rather more sedate, and lays greater emphasis on the power of imagination to exacerbate the mental turmoil. The following passage is particularly interesting because it implies the formation of an exaggerated or misleading secondary image based on a primary image 'residing in the former [foremost] part of the brain', and also includes the notions both of 'intentness' or 'intensity' and of 'communication':

To our imagination commeth by the outward sense or memory, some object to be knowne (residing in the former part of the Braine) which he mis-conceauing or amplifying, presently commun-icates to the Heart, the Seat of all affections. . . If the Imagination be very apprehensive, intent, and violent, it sends great store of spirits to or from the Heart, and makes a deeper impression, and greater tumult, . . .

Such a conception calls to mind Leontes's cry at I.ii.110:

I have tremor cordis on me: my heart dances,
But not for joy—not joy.

If these examples do accurately suggest an appropriate psychological background for the upheaval dramatised in Leontes's speech, this may have important implications for our sense of the dramatic genre and structure of the play and specifically for the question of when the disruption actually starts. A figure striving (and failing) to maintain faith and integrity while seized by an insidious attack of jealousy is, at least in potential, an inhabitant of a tragic universe such as those of Othello and Macbeth. However, Leontes is overcome, not by the machinations of an Iago or the supernatural seductions of witchcraft, but by a psychological aberration which overwhelms his rationality and has no evident moral significance at all—except, of course, in its consequences. This moral arbitrariness points in two (congruent) directions: towards the self-conscious artifice of the theatrical experience, and towards the larger, more disturbing, notion of life as a tragi-comic
artifice presided over by whimsical playwright gods who orchestrate human affairs for their own delectation, even at the cost of much human pain and confusion. As Barbara Mowat has noted, 'the undermining of the "tragic world" of Sicilia with comic distortions and exaggerations gives us a world uninformed by tragic universality, one which produces an effect approaching the grotesque ...'.

It obviously will not do to read Leontes's predicament as a tame reworking of Othello's, especially when the arbitrary violence of the attack on Leontes' rationality is subtly dramatised in the apostrophe to 'Affection'. A man struggling rationally with an onslaught of jealousy remains a potentially tragic figure. But once the rational faculty is swamped in this way—a moment which is indicated in line 142—the play moves decisively into the painful, yet tender and illuminating world of tragicomedy.

Until this point (line 42) Leontes has been engaged in a turbulent but admirably rigorous effort of self-analysis. He has before him the hypothesis that his jealousy may be entirely unfounded, the effect of an 'Affection'. The Affection is brought on by an image (an 'Intention' or, later, a 'Dreame') which seems to attest unequivocally Hermione's adultery with Polixenes. This Intention 'stabs the Center': it goes to the heart of the frantic doubts and speculations which have been obsessing Leontes. In so doing it necessarily stabs the emotional, passionate 'Center' for, as Burton has it, the heart is 'the Seat of all affections'.

The violence here is complex. Natural relief at attaining intellectual certainty (comparable to the elation of 'hitting the white', 'the Center', in archery) is savagely counterpointed by the emotional agony of supposing Hermione guilty. The violence also suggests the perceptual disfunction which precipitates this kind of perturbation. Not only does the Affection present itself with overwhelming intensity but it gains direct access to Leontes's inner being. In normal circumstances the submissions of the phantasy and the imagination would be modified by the judgement. Here man's rational nature is simply by-passed, so the violent impact of the Intention indirectly conveys the violence done to Leontes' identity as a rational being.

As the conventional comparison with dreams shows, Leontes knows that such an Affection can make things which judgement, memory and experience affirm to be impossible seem possible: 'things' such as the absurd notion that Hermione should be unfaithful, above all with his trusted friend Polixenes. But at the very point where he seems about to diagnose the delusory nature of his jealousy, the Affection overwhelms Leontes's intellect:

With what's unreal: thou coactiue art,
And fellow'st nothing. Then 'tis very credent [142]
Thou may'st co-ioyne with something, and thou dost,

The caesura in line 142 marks the moment of crisis. 'Then' purports to be a logical connective, but there is no logical passage from the conventional wisdom surrounding the untrustworthiness of the Affection, to the possibility that the Intention may indeed be properly grounded in reality. Before the break Leontes's judgement appears to be winning the struggle: he is acknowledging that his overwrought state may be largely the product of an imagination untempered by reality. Thereafter his rationality is suborned by the psychologically imperative Affection. The very intensity of his passion convinces Leontes of its basis in reality. No longer attempting to weigh the Intention against the testimony of his judgement, Leontes reasons from the premise of the Intention towards his experience of the world with disastrous consequences: if Affections usually co-operate with illusions, they may also, a fortiori, co-join with reality. Significantly, his state of mind now becomes public knowledge for the first time. Such is the violence of Leontes's mental turmoil that it can no longer be concealed (I.ii.146-50) and hereafter the Court of Sicilia is subject to the tyranny of unreason. As Hermione later puts it (III.ii.81): 'My life stands in the level of your dreams'.

We have, then, to distinguish between the inception of Leontes's jealousy and the start of the tragi-comic disruption—a distinction which has obvious implications for the shape and pace of the play in performance. Whatever conclusion is reached as to how and when the jealousy initially comes into being, the tragi-comic disruption commences at the moment when Leontes's intellect succumbs to a perceptual aberration, a moment...
which is clearly implied in the text.

The cruel suddenness of this capitulation is in keeping with the extreme self-conscious theatricality of the play as a whole. C. O. Gardner has noted the importance of the word 'strike' in establishing that almost brutal disregard for naturalistic propriety which weighs so heavily in our experience of the play.24 'Strike' occurs at each of three crises in the story of Leontes. When jealousy overwhelms him, he says of Hermione's supposed infidelity:

Physic for't there's none;  
It is a bawdy planet, that will strike  
Where 'tis predominant;—

(I.ii.200-2)

Then immediately after his son's death he cries out:

Apollo's angry, and the heavens themselves  
Do strike at my injustice.

(III.ii.146-7)

Finally, at the miraculous moment of Hermione's 'resurrection' we have:

Music, awake her, strike!

(V.iii.98)

This is the *coup de théâtre* which is to 'Strike all that look upon with marvel' (Viii.100). It is therefore appropriate that this theatrical cycle, in which disaster and miracle 'strike' with terrifying precipitateness and splendour, should be inaugurated by Leontes' speech on Affection, dominated as it is by the brutal verb 'stab': 'Affection? thy Intention stabs the Center'. This is the cruel theatrical blow by means of which the playwright-gods of tragi-comedy take hold both of the Sicilian court, and the audience in the theatre.

Notes


4 J. L. Styan has recently summarised some of the production history and many of the practical problems surrounding Leontes's entry: 'Some moments in Shakespeare we may never fully understand, no matter how many versions of them we see. The shape and form to be taken by Leontes's jealousy at the beginning of *The Winter's Tale* is one of these dramatic enigmas. Presumably not wanting to repeat the long, slow growth of the green-eyed sickness he had demonstrated in *Othello* ten years before, Shakespeare now chose to show jealousy descending on the King of Sicilia like a bolt from hell. The effect is so quick that it is an embarrassment to any actor who must play the part and appear to be the least realistic. Following the suggestion of John Dover Wilson, John Gielgud in 1951 decided to make Leontes jealous from the start, got up a head of steam offstage and stormed on to the astonishment of all. Not having seen the character before,
the audience wondered about the cause of his bad temper: had he stubbed his toe as he came in? In 1969, newly inheriting all the apparatus of the Stratford Memorial Theatre, Trevor Nunn decided to play a strobe light on the Leontes of Barrie Ingham perhaps to suggest the telescoping of time; he succeeded only in suggesting that the King was having a fit. In 1981, Ronald Eyre's production for the RSC permitted Patrick Stewart, who had recently been playing a psychiatrist on television, to apply his new learning to Shakespeare and play Leontes as a schizophrenic; he did a brilliant job of making the disjointed lines seem to fit the dual personality. The only trouble was that no one in the audience could feel a jot of sympathy with a madman. Which half of the dual personality do we identify with? J. L. Styan, 'Understanding Shakespeare in Performance', *Shakespeare in Southern Africa*, 1 (1987), 21.


9 *Ibid.*, p. 163 (footnote 6). Other noteworthy usages occur in MV IV.iii.35-62, and *Ant.* I.v.12ff. However, both suggest a wilful indulgence of 'affection', whereas Leontes's predicament lacks entirely this element of deliberate choice.


12 Hallett Smith (*op. cit.*, p. 164) draws attention to the comparison with *Mac.* I.iv.137-42: Present Feares

Are lesse then horrible Imaginings:
My Thought, whose Murther yet is but fantasticali,
Shakes so my single state of Man,
That Function is smother'd in surmise,
And nothing is, but what is not.

Smith comments: 'the device of having the tempted man ironically express the way to his own salvation though he does not recognise it or follow it is used in both plays'. A crucial difference is that (as argued below) Leontes' soliloquy actually renders the collapse of the rational faculty, whereas Macbeth, though plagued by "horrible Imaginings", remains coldly rational throughout.


17 'There is an interesting comparison to be made between Leontes's agonised musings at I.ii.115/6 ('But to be paddling palms, and pinching fingers./As now they are . . . ') and Iago's tempting of Roderigo at II.i.251-259:
Iago. . . . Didst thou not see her paddle with the palm of his hand?

Rod. Yes, but that was but courtesy.

Iago. Lechery, by this hand: an index and prologue to the history of lust and foul thoughts: they met so near with their lips, that their breaths embrac'd together. When these mutualities so marshall the way, hard at hand comes the main exercise, the incorporate conclusion.

Leontes has no need of an external tempter; the jealous fictions are internalised and proliferating unaided. That the common lexical set should recur from Roderigo's facile love story rather than Othello's grand passion perhaps suggests something of Leontes's lack of true tragic stature.

18 Reason is conventionally the faculty pitted against affection in unnatural peturbations of the kind attributed to Leontes. For instance, Erasmus recounts the views of Diogenes as follows: ' . . . he is reported to have used this saying also, that to matche against fortune, he sette alwayes the confidence or stoutnesse of courage: against the law, he sette nature: against affeccions, mocio~us, or wilfull pangues of the minde, reason. . . . For by these three thynges is purchased and maintaine the tranquillitee of menne.' Erasmus, Apophthegmes, trans. Nicolas Udall (1542), 92 verso.


20 This 'Intention' is not necessarily rooted in the particular flirtation implied at I.ii.108: 'Too hot, Too hot!' (though to an audience it may well appear so). I.iii.115-17 and 284-96 suggest that Leontes's jealousy has undergone at least some period of gestation, as in Pandosto. Perhaps the necessary distinction is that between a private gestation and a public manifestation: The Winter's Tale dramatises a sudden, uncontrollable eruption (in public) of a festering private jealousy.

21 Burton, op. cit.

22 The reference to archery is noted by R. G. White (see New Variorum, ed. Furness, p. 28). Many commentators have picked up a correspondence between microcosm and macrocosm in the word 'Center'. The likelihood is borne out by Leontes's speech at I.ii.200:

        Physic for't there's none;
        It is a bawdy planet. . . .

23 "The understanding . . . had to sift the evidence of the senses already organised by the common sense, to summon up the right material from memory, and on its own account to lay up the greatest possible store of knowledge and wisdom. It was for the will to make the just decision on the evidence presented to it by the understanding.' E. M. W. Tillyard, The Elizabethan World Picture, 1943 (Harmondsworth, 1963), p. 91.


Martha Ronk (essay date 1990)


[In the following essay, Ronk compares Leontes to Othello, and demonstrates that the function of elapsed time in The Winter's Tale allows a psychological shift in Leontes which does not occur in Othello.]
In the middle of *The Winter's Tale* the character Time announces that Leontes disappears for sixteen years, only a piece of an evening in stage time, but symbolically crucial for positing the opportunity for change, for turning tragedy to romance, destructive obsession to grace. As in so many other Shakespeare plays, obliteration—here not just metaphorical but of an actual figure on stage—argues for possibility. Leontes takes on years of penance, following Paulina's prescribed routine, and finally, although she says otherwise here, moves the gods to forgive him:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Therefore betake thee} \\
\text{To nothing but despair. A thousand knees,} \\
\text{Ten thousand years together, naked, fasting,} \\
\text{Upon a barren mountain, and still winter} \\
\text{In storm perpetual, could not move the gods} \\
\text{To look that way thou wert.}
\end{align*}
\]

(Ill, ii, 207-212)

Having created jealousy out of nothing (cf. his repetition of this word at I, ii, 292-296), Leontes must now strip himself back and become "nothing but despair," his voice completely silenced. Like Paulina who vows to say nothing (Ill, iii, 229-230), he too says nothing at all. This is important not only because of the value of silence in other Shakespearean contexts—a particular type of knowledge associated with the non-verbal—but also because it signals a retreat from the conscious to some unconscious realm prior to language. But this period in which the major character of the play is absent is one of the most fertile in a play itself filled with images of procreation, pregnancy, and fertility, for it allows Leontes to reimagine the characters and scenes of the tragic opening of the play, giving us in Part II the comic pastoral and the miraculous rebirth of Hermione. Like Hamlet who disappears off-stage and is threatened by death before he can imagine the necessary end of his play, Leontes moves off-stage into the house of death, penance, and a kind of psychological winter (this aspect of the play's title) in order to rework himself and his dreams.

What I want to demonstrate here, using Othello as a kind of foil, is that although the two heroes are alike in uncanny ways, the structural maneuver at the center of *The Winter's Tale* not only allows a generic shift from tragedy to romance, but also provides a psychological basis for Leontes' change. Critics have already noted the similarities in Othello and Leontes: both are irrationally jealous of innocent wives; both are unable to accept mature sexuality and the loss of male intimacy; both tend to see the world and its creatures as entirely idealized or debased; once affected, both characters view the world in a paranoid and distorted way—everything becomes suggestive of copulation and cuckoldry; both appear destined for tragedy and death. What happens to each character in relation to a similar situation is, however, quite different, and it is this difference, especially Leontes' crucial time off-stage—a time not available to Othello—that I wish to examine here.

Why might Shakespeare have designed the play in what appears so awkward a fashion, and how can we come to "know" what happens in places we cannot see; what relationship does Time, both as character and as passing years, have to do with penance; what is there about the nature of penance that prevents it from being seen? What is the relationship between what we see on-stage and what we imagine as occurring off-stage; and what is the nature of the relationship between penance and Bohemia?

Shakespeare might have presented Leontes in some conventional pose as the penitent described by Paulina: kneeling, weeping, flagellating himself, praying—but does not. What is gained then as a result is that Leontes is defined as different from an emblematic figure of Penance; whatever changes are occurring to Leontes are not those which would be visible to the eye, an important fact in a play that has already demonstrated the fallibility of the eye as trustworthy witness; rather the essential changes are within and involve the
restructuring of Leontes' psyche and way of being. Although as audience we remain keenly aware of this missing figure, aware of absence and what it means as well, we do not see him, nor could we see the changes which Luther, for example, details as necessary for attaining grace. The sorts of bodily punishments which Leontes vows to undergo would mean nothing without the unseen operation of faith in a man's heart, an operation which his physical absence implies:

Just as faith alone gives us the spirit and the desire for doing works that are plainly good, so unbelief is the sole cause of sin: it exalts the flesh, and gives the desire to do works that are plainly wrong, as happened in the case of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Genesis 3:6

Another important aspect of penance, beyond its invisibility, is that it requires time; although Leontes has destroyed his family and world by a momentary madness, he must spend years atoning for his crime, indeed a lifetime, and it is therefore appropriate that Time should announce his whereabouts and efforts. Moreover, Leontes must manage his penance in silence. Shakespeare removes him from the stage: no action and no words can demonstrate true penance, especially since his actions and words have been in error and quite at odds with what he should have known about the loyalty of his wife and of his friend. Like Lear, who also should have known of Cordelia's love and loyalty through years of demonstrated affection, Leontes ought also to know, although he does not. He accuses and rants and rails, even against the words of the oracle, and now he is appropriately silent.

Also, as we know from overhearing Claudius' prayers for forgiveness, a speech or gesture can seem convincing (and in this instance does to Hamlet) although one's heart is not in it; thus Shakespeare chooses another theatrical convention to represent Leontes' genuine penance. As Greek theater represented crucial dramatic events such as suicide and death as occurring off-stage, so here Leontes loses one sort of life in exchange for another, off-stage. The most significant and mysterious actions cannot be seen; moreover, because we do not see Leontes we are not tempted to judge his efforts as imperfect or inauthentic.

Thus the central character disappears and, although the relationship between on-stage and off-stage events over the course of theatrical history is too large a topic for this paper, in this case, as in others, we learn obliquely about Leontes from the images that appear on-stage. Like Oliver in As You Like It, Leontes is converted off-stage and while we witness other miraculous changes in a timeless pastoral world containing significant gestures of love, generosity, faith: the Duke, for example offers food to Orlando and Adam, and Perdita offers abundant flowers with her love. Only by withdrawing into silence and into a visual discourse prior to speech can Leontes hope to effect change; Shakespeare removes Leontes and in his place presents Bohemia, a visual representation of regeneration, possibility and growth, an Eden found for the one, as Luther mentions, lost.

In his famous discussion of archetypes, Northrop Frye argues that comic romances provide their characters with a green world, a pastoral world of healing, imagination, and rearrangements so that they may return to court rejuvenated and strong. In The Winter's Tale the mythical sea-coasted Bohemia serves as this green world, and "has analogies, not only to the fertile world of ritual, but to the dream world that we create out of our own desire." Interestingly, however, in this play we see a green world that does not include the central character; it is his world, but he is missing from it. He is not present as a participant or as a spectator on a balcony—certainly a possible staging—though Bohemia is surely his in some important way beyond the appearance of his stand-in daughter.

But the notion of a green world is not quite enough to explain how regeneration operates in this particular play, because unlike the more innocent characters of the early comedies, Leontes is not a part of this world; a decidedly fallen and tragic figure, Leontes is outside Bohemia even as it is potentially his. Secondly, the changes that occur in other green worlds happen far more quickly; here sixteen years pass between Leontes' vow of penance and the presentation of a world that contains within it the next (innocent) generation. As
chorus Time refers to the metaphor of dreaming that dominates the play and asks that the audience accept the passing of years, "as you had slept between"; and thus in the play's own terms, it is as if Leontes' work of penance is coincident with dreamwork, as if Leontes has slept out the sixteen years in order to dream anew. Phenomenologically, what happens on stage is like something taking place in his unconscious; it is dreamlike and illusory, but also profoundly true, literal, and recognizable.

Moreover, the green world is not, as in earlier comedies, a stage to be passed through in order to learn enough to return to the real world, but a Romantic and mythic stage to be re-attained as if innocence could be re-imagined. Like the Romantic heroines in the film comedies of remarriage, Leontes has lost his sexual innocence—the point is emphasized—but as Stanley Cavell says in *Pursuits of Happiness*, "if we are to continue to provide ourselves with the pleasure of romantic comedies, with this imagination of happiness, we are going to require narratives that do not depend on the physics of virginity but rather upon the metaphysics of innocence."

The second half of the play, parallel in so many obvious ways to the first half, reads like wish-fulfillment, Leontes' reworking of unconscious material in order to produce the right dream. Although both of Leontes' dreams are embodiments of similar obsessions, they differ radically. Leontes' original encounter with his own repressed unconscious material results in rage and death. At first his "dream"—that which he imagines is a vision of betrayal—is regressive and destructive, as Leontes sees Hermione's actions not as existing in their own right, out in the world and separate from his own state of mind, but as enactments of his own paranoia. As Hermione says, "You speak a language that I understand not / My life stands in the level of your dreams / Which I'll lay down" (III, ii, 78-79). Leontes' second and overwhelming dream comes, however, as a result of his conscious choice of penance; and in withdrawing to an inner life he creates the wish he expresses when he first glimpses his error: "Apollo, pardon / My great profaneness 'gainst thine oracle. / I'll reconcile me to Polixenes / New woo my queen, recall the good Camillo (III, ii, 150ff.). At this moment in the play, however, Leontes' wish is unearned, for it is the sixteen years when he believes his wife dead and when he is dead to stage life which provide the necessary rearrangements and shifts of material that enable romance to assert itself. There are several ways in which the processes of penance and dreaming overlap here, and several reasons why I see a close relationship between Leontes' penance off-stage and the dreaming which visualizes Bohemia. Both are intense internal activities in which the psyche is freed as a result of the body's removal from daily life by sleep, mortification of the flesh, entombment in darkness and solitude. Both concern what one is behind the facades and theatricalities of life—and also what one was originally, in early childhood or in being born, having one's origins in sin. Penance can be effected by meditation of visual images as Louis L. Martz argues in *The Poetry of Meditation*, and certainly dreams are powerfully visual (preceding the fall into language). Both are generated by a strong desire or wish (in Leontes' case for oneness with the feminine, his family, and the divine), and both demand belief of some sort, at the very least a belief in the reality of the experience itself. In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud describes dreams as wishes visualized:

> Here we have the most general and the most striking psychological characteristic of the process of dreaming: a thought, and as a rule a thought of something that is wished, is objectified in the dream, is represented as a scene, or as it seems to us, is experienced.

Moreover, penance obviously requires a belief in the divine and in powers beyond one's own control; although a person can kneel and pray, it is not solely in his or her power to experience penance without some intervening grace. In Luther's words:

> Faith ... is something that God effects in us ... Faith puts the old Adam to death and makes us quite different men in heart, in mind, and in all our powers ... what a living, creative, active powerful thing it is.
Likewise in dreaming, something unconscious and beyond one's control produces the images encountered. Leontes' dream of Bohemia bears witness to his alteration; for without a change in his psyche he could not have had such a dream. Having lost his faith in his life previously, a loss signaled by his loss of a wife and son, his dream of Bohemia signals a new creative faith. Since what is at stake in this play is also how to interpret what one sees—Leontes having so badly misinterpreted his wife's hospitality towards Polixenes—the particular presentation of Bohemia lets the audience know that Leontes has suffered towards good ends, that he knows finally how to read his dreams.

In this context it is also useful to think of Victor Turner's description of liminal states as states of transition; such a place as Paulina's chapel would be a "betwixt and between" stage of institutionalized transition. Yet since it is a transitional threshold, between one place and another, it cannot be seen any more than the passage of time can be seen. Such liminal states are, according to Turner, characterized by transition, anonymity, absence of status and its accordant rites and obligations, sexual continence, humility, sacredness, silence, reference to mystical powers, acceptance of pain, and obedience. Leontes partakes of all these, giving up all his public functions in order to unmake himself, as if he had to strip himself (to become nothing) in order to remake himself as a new man. Leontes must lose his ego in order to be capable of the sort of renewal as a result of which Hermione's life indeed stands at the level of his dreams. That is, the profound change which Paulina effects makes possible the awakening of Hermione at the end; she does stand before him as a living statue, but for him—at least to begin with—she seems a dream of his own making. Miraculously, he gets exactly what he has wished for, both a new wife (life) and an emblem of the old: Hermione both unchanged and wrinkled by age.

What I would also argue is that, although the play does not specifically locate Leontes for the time he is offstage, it is appropriate to imagine him in a chapel which, if not identical to, is one which at least participates in or blurs with the chapel located in Paulina's house. Although Leontes indicates as he arrives to see the statue in Act V that he has not visited the place before, he also has several other contradictory experiences in this scene: his wife is dead and lives; his daughter is not lost but found; sixteen years have passed and none; stone is flesh. Moreover, he has been in a long and extreme state of mourning—a mourning that has stimulated the desire to restore what is lost—and if not entirely rapt and confused, certainly "so far gone" as to be absent from the stage. Does he really know, one might ask, where he has been? Since his efforts in one "place" create the miracle in the other, they are bound to collapse into one another for an audience which sees but one chapel although two are mentioned. Moreover, the residing spirit in each chapel is Paulina who effects the change in Leontes which makes possible the change in Hermione. Paulina herself is a liminal figure (representative of St. Paul) who is maternal, paternal, forgiving, judgmental, old enough for wisdom and a husband and children, and young enough to join the others in (re)marriage at the end of the play. Like other Shakespearean figures such as Falstaff, Rosalind, and Portia, who aid in transforming male character, Paulina functions to embrace opposite aspects of gender and generation, not as dangerously collapsed, but as signalling a Tiresian-like wisdom. More importantly, perhaps, she witnesses (to the extent that it is possible) Leontes' penance; in Luther's schema, one Christian confessing to another effects the peace of mercy.

The "place" where Leontes is located then is representative of the unconscious mind, as Leontes is remembering, withdrawn into himself, out of all action. Thus, as the withdrawal is symbolic of Leontes' withdrawal into himself, we come to understand what occurs to him by what occurs on-stage, each aspect of his internal struggle dramatized by what we do see. In his book, Shakespeare and the Artist, W.M. Merchant argues that Shakespeare's staging is always symbolic, following the medieval principles of simultaneity and symbolic presentation. Since the arts of music, architecture, painting and verse were not separated from one another, he argues, a witty interchange of ideoms and methods was used to transfer significance from one medium to another: "drama adopted the essential qualities of the well-tried simultaneous setting in its most allusive and flexible form and it achieved ease of multiple reference by employing conceit, most obviously in the verse, but equally richly in the music employed and in the relationship of the architectural setting to the
A witty movement of the plot." An important way then of understanding Leontes' motivation and behavior, both early and at this moment in the play, is to examine what does appear in language, metaphors, staging, the embodiment of what cannot be seen and heard by what can be, by looking at his "dream" to understand his mind as Freud suggests: "The interpretation of dreams is the royal road to a knowledge of the unconscious activities of the mind." 

**A. The Consequences of Jealousy: Leontes and Othello**

Before examining Leontes' final dream and the ways in which Leontes' escape from the stage allows for the dream of romance and allows the audience to follow his psychological shifts, I want to return to the starting points of *The Winter's Tale* and *Othello* to describe the similarities between the two characters in order to understand more completely the radical differences of the endings and the radical introduction in *The Winter's Tale* of the gap of time. Critics have often noted that both Leontes and Othello suffer from the same sort of projective paranoid jealousy as a defense against homosexual attraction; both are described as losing themselves to the irrational forces of the unconscious. As Murray Schwartz argues in his essay on Leontes, such men suffer a paranoia derived from homosexual desire (thus the formula: I do not love him, she does), and from a deeply ambivalent relationship towards both the maternal and paternal, the sexual and sacred: "In *The Winter's Tale*, jealousy and the sacred and dialectical terms; each implies the other, as separation implies union or winter spring." Schwartz further describes paranoia as a psychic imprisonment, the sort which traps Othello throughout, but the opposite of the bodily imprisonment which Leontes undergoes as he works to free his psyche:

Paranoia is a form of psychic imprisonment in which the loss of ego boundaries makes the external world *nothing but* a confluence of symbols, selected according to subjective and ambivalent wishes and fears. For the paranoid, others become what D.W. Winnicott has called "subjective objects," embodiments of psychic realities that exist only in relation to the subject. Others lose their otherness. In this sense, paranoia can be seen as a radical denial of separation, a perversion of the mutuality of the boyhood myth which shares with it a crucial element. In his delusions Leontes identifies with both Hermione and Polixenes and tries desperately to exclude himself from the fantasies he projects on them.

What occurs in each play as a result of initial paranoia is, however, quite different. What happens to Othello is that his unconscious material becomes, in Freud's words, fixed, even as he is spatially trapped on the stage, not allowed to leave its confines for long enough. In speaking of patients with obsessional neuroses, Freud says that they are "fixed to a particular point in their past that they do not know how to release themselves from, and are consequently alienated from both present and future." Othello's experiences with the horrors of his unconscious is thus given no chance for revision. The consummation of his marriage, occurring off-stage and at some indeterminate time, triggers the release of unconscious material which Othello is never allowed time to rework. He is goaded by Iago, rushed by war and sword fights, pressed by his wife. He is kept in a state of permanent madness until he sees no way out of his nightmare but to still the flesh and blood which arouses him.

What most especially fixes Othello and holds him fixated on sexual consummation and its attendant confusion and horror is the overwhelming presence of the absent handkerchief, emblematic of his wedding sheets. The discrepancy between the ideal he has constructed of Desdemona and the real experience of marriage including both blood and passion, is more than he can bear. Moreover, Iago knows how to mirror his anxiety and to establish a male bond more powerful, familiar, and reassuring than the marriage bond; Othello is never permitted to dream again, but is instead kept by Iago ever crazed, ever in a state of frustrated excitation, his sleep and sexual performance interrupted, until finally he enacts such anxiety in a fit, and moves to rid himself of it by murder and suicide. Othello comes undone not only physically, but also, as others have noted, verbally as he loses his ability to proceed in a linear, narrative way, a horror for one who relies so heavily...
upon storytelling to construct his character. The mad Othello catches, repeats, makes "lie" (falsehood) into the "lie" of sexual hysteria, and "zounds" (God's wounds) into the fulsome female wound central to his madness. The divine Desdemona is no longer a pure deity to him, but a woman wounded:

Lie with her? Lie on her?—We say lie on her when they belie her.—Lie with her! Zounds, that's fulsome.—Handkerchief—confessions—handkerchief! (IV, i, 36ff.)

Leontes' fit of jealousy is quite similar. Like Othello's, his jealousy has its origin in a mistaken sense of his wife's behavior and it also surges up seemingly out of nowhere, in part in reaction to an ideal vision, for Leontes of his childhood past as described by Polixenes. It was a past without wives, as he says, without adult sexuality and without children:

We were as twinned lambs, that did frisk i'th'sun, And bleat the one at th'other; what we changed Was innocence for innocence; we knew not The doctrine of ill-doing, nor dreamed That any did; had we pursued that life, And our weak spirits ne'er been higher reared With higher blood, we should have answered heaven Boldly, "not guilty;" the imposition cleared, Hereditary ours. (I, i, 67ff.)

Out of this "dream" of childhood innocence, Leontes extracts the crazed "dream" of betrayal discussed by Schwartz and others as Leontes converts his sexual tie to Polixenes into a perverse relationship between Polixenes and Hermione. One might also argue that as "twins" the two are competing for maternal love (emblemized by the pregnant Hermione) and that Leontes is hence catapulted into an infantile paranoid state in which ego boundaries are completely dissolved and other people become figures without external reality. Gazing at the two together, Leontes' aside reveals the crazed state of his mind: "Too hot, too hot! / To mingle friendship far is mingling bloods. / I have tremor cordis on me; my heart dances, / But not for joy, not joy." (I, ii, 109-111) In this diffuse state—"muddy," "unsettled" the mingling of friendship which Leontes has projected onto his wife and friend creates all manner of mingling: of sexes, of characters, of generations. Leontes sees himself as merging with Polixenes who has usurped his role; with Mamillius who is like him in his boyishness (his desire to be "boy eternal"), as like him as one egg is to another; and with Hermione as he identifies with the female, envisioning both of them with their "gates" forced open. Although he begins by identifying with the cuckolds, and seeing all neighbors as adulterers (as all neighbors blend into a disembodied "smile"), his imagery of ponds and gates becomes both female and ambiguously referential. Moreover, "Sir Smile" is a free floating image that draws attention not only to the neighbor's oily falsity, but to both a slit and an erection (by shape), and to male (Sir)/female (orifice) confusion:

And his pond fished by his next door neighbor, by
Sir Smile, his neighbor; nay, there's comfort in't,
Whiles other men have gates, and those gates opened,
As mine, against their will.

(I, ii, 194-7)

Most obviously, Leontes conflates his wife and his friend, blending their bodies into what for him is a terrifying image of male and female parts overlapping until there is no distinction between cheek and cheek, lip and lip, nose and nose, breath and breath (and as he moves into animal imagery, between "neb" and mouth). He defies Camillo's assertion of their innocence by anatomizing, by reducing each whole being to a small part:

Is whispering nothing?
Is leaning cheek to cheek? Is meeting noses?
Kissing with inside lip? Stopping the career
Once boundaries between people are broken in Leontes' mad dream, the boundaries between life and death are also broken and Perdita is sent to die and Mamillius does die. In the case of Hermione the boundaries are blurred if not actually broken, since her death remains a seeming truth throughout most of the play. Each loss thus prepares him for the necessary loss of himself to himself and to the audience, and teaches him his tragic error. First, in losing touch with the world around him and specifically with the female in it, he loses both the nurturing and protective female (the pregnant Hermione) and the female as a potential force for courtesy, gracefulness, and grace (Perdita). Although he describes Antigonus as dreading his wife, it seems rather as if Leontes has projected such fear onto him. It is Leontes who seems to dread all that is female, for when Paulina lays his child before him, he speaks in an hysterical fashion that merges female as whore and female as infant. He wants both "out":

    Out!
    A mankind witch! Hence with her, out o'door!
    A most intelligencing bawd! (III, iii, 65-67)

But it is his other child whom he loses forever. As Richard Wheeler remarks, the loss of Mamillius in the actual world confirms its independent existence and wakes Leontes from his deluded "dream." Leontes cannot have his boyhood, mirrored in Mamillius, again. Certainly he can never return to the boyhood Polixenes describes in Act I in which the two were without guilt, sin, or women. They were, as he says, "unfledged," without the plumage symbolic of adult sexuality, and untried. Thus in killing Mamillius, Leontes kills not only his son, but his own boyhood, and the living proof of his adult sexuality. In denying (as he denies the truth of the oracle) the truth of the psychosexual stages he has already passed through, in wanting to be, "boy eternal," Leontes must return to an unconscious state and begin again to construct himself.

Leontes also loses Antigonus, a loss which can be understood symbolically both as Antigonus represents both the larger world which is devastated by the king's madness, and as he represents an aspect of Leontes' own sick psyche. His name splits into parts (anti-gonad) indicating yet again male fear of sexuality. His speeches about his wife and daughters are also ugly in the extreme and match Leontes' imagination in their cruelty and male paranoia. Although his daughters are only five, nine, and eleven years old, he offers them up as sacrifices if Hermione proves false. He will keep them "girls eternal" and will castrate himself. Although he appears to be exaggerating only for the rhetorical effect of asserting Hermione's innocence, his language nonetheless reveals his similar obsession with betrayal and fear:

    By mine honor,
    I'll geld 'em all; fourteen they shall not see
    To bring false generations. They are co-heirs,
    And I had rather glib myself than they
    Should not produce fair issue.

(II, i, 146-50)

Murray Schwartz comments that in this passage Antigonus confuses his own potency with masculine honor and duplicates the disease he repudiates: "He becomes, therefore, the surrogate for his master and the carrier of Paulina's curse (II, ii, 76-79), the vehicle for Shakespeare's displaced exorcism of Leontes' jealousy." Sent to the seacoast with Leontes' child, Antigonus hears the name "Perdita." Having lost faith in Hermione's innocence, and believing falsely that she is dead, he dreams that Hermione appears before him, telling him to
name the lost baby Perdita, but, of course, it is he himself, not the baby, who is lost, whom nature destroys.

Many readers have noted the parallels between the first and second parts of the play; for example, in both parts a king has an irrational outburst, someone longs to return home by sea, a woman represents fertility, a pastoral scene is described or appears, gods reveal the truth. Critics have also noted that the romances are in many ways revisions of the tragedies; The Winter's Tale is of particular interest as it demonstrates the revision mid-way in a single play, and as it offers Leontes an experience denied Othello or Macbeth or Lear. Unlike these equally maddened figures, Leontes is allowed to settle and be still. Unlike Lear's frail, deluded dream of being imprisoned with Cordelia, Leontes' dream also growing out of imprisonment and total immersion in the self, proves robust and fruitful. In spite of the powerful conclusion, however, the vision of death is never quite expunged; perhaps indeed it contributes to Leontes' (and our) awe at the preciousness and cost of life returned as those that remain appear on stage together.

B. Recasting

The process which culminates in Leontes' time offstage and his new dream begins with his becoming nothing, and we know this as early as the courtroom scene in which Leontes is so certain of his accusations that he defies Apollo. According to Cleomenes' description of his own experience, one that Leontes is soon to replicate, the oracle manifests itself first as overpowering thunder and only then as clear words setting forth Hermione's innocence:

But of all, the burst
And the ear-deaf ning voice o'th' oracle,
Kin to Jove's thunder, so surprised my sense,
That I was nothing.

(III, i, 8-11)

It is this very experience of "nothing" which Leontes must come to know as Lear does on the heath; he must come to know that his suspicions were as he himself named them, "nothing," and that he created them out of nothing, and must therefore experience complete loss and nothingness. David Willbern in his wonderfully suggestive article on "Shakespeare's Nothing," gives a description of Leontes' destructive abilities; his essay does not explore, but does suggest that the awareness of nothing can be creative as well:

Psychoanalytic theories of the origins and acquisition of language, of perception, or reality testing, of the capacity to symbolize or to interact creatively with an environment, all start from the primary fact of absence, separation, loss. The loss of an immediate, felt relationship: to bring things symbolically to mind when they are not really present, or to make them present through some communicative act (like a cry). Awareness of absence thus results in imagined or reenacted presence: a recollecting or remembering of what was lost (my emphasis). 

The scene in which Antigonus is pursued by a bear and in which the clown describes the tearing of Antigonus to bits (anatomized even as Leontes has anatomized Hermione and Polixenes) has frequently been described as grotesquely comic, a scene in which genres and tones are audaciously mixed. At the threshold of sea and land, sea and sky, as the ship bores the moon with her main mast, this coast presents those at the thresholds of life and death: Perdita, Antigonus, and the seamen. Yet in the midst of the clown's jumbled stories of destruction come the suggestions of miracle, the discovery of the baby and the idea of charity. It is tempting to read the clown's description as a description of the (re)birth of Perdita. Since Leontes cannot look upon the original birth, convinced that his wife is a whore and the child a bastard, we get it, like so much else in Part II of the play, a second time; and the clown's words seem in this context to describe not only the drowning but
also intercourse, the yeasty rising of a pregnant belly, and finally crowning, birth, and the mother's cries of pain: "O, the most piteous cry of the poor souls! Sometimes to see 'em, and not to see 'em; now the ship boring the moon with her main mast, and anon swallowed with yeast and froth, as you'd thrust a cork into a hogshead" (III, iii, 89-93). Although the shepherd cannot save the men on board (to do so, as the clown says, would mean being able to walk on water), the two can value and care for the baby—which they do even before they discover that the baby's value is also measured in gold. This wrenching seacoast scene is analogous to Leontes' unconscious, off-stage wrestling with his own past as discordant elements are tossed up together. Many critics have noted the composite and unsettling nature of the seacoast scene, how like a dream it seems. In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud writes:

The possibility of creating composite structures stands foremost among the characteristics which so often lend dreams a fantastic appearance, for it introduces into the concept of dreams elements which could never have been objects of actual perception.31

In this scene from *The Winter's Tale*, the common element comparable to the common element Freud describes as the organizing principle of a dream is the element of thresholds. Importantly, it is the scene that occurs immediately after Leontes announces that tears shall be his recreation: "Come, and lead me / To these sorrows" (III, ii, 240-41). Although Leontes cannot know it at this point, buried in his words is the hope of re-creation. The *OED* defines "recreation" as a restoration of vigor and health, and as a new creation, the re-creation necessary to make the old Adam into the new; "As in the creation he could have made all at once, but he would take days for it: so in our recreation by grace, Bp. Hall, 1611." Clearly this is the direction Leontes has been working towards during his time off-stage. The logic of romance almost requires an experience of death (often in association with water leading to new life). Out of his watery tears (presented on stage in images of the sea) comes the miraculous possibility of change, dependent, of course, on the image of Jesus which stands behind the shepherd and the reference to walking on water. Likewise, Hermione's initial tears of sorrow, the spouts of Antigonus' dream, become in her final speech, waters from the gods; both Leontes and Hermione are made anew, recreated out of something dead:

You gods look down
And from your sacred vials pour your graces
Upon my daughter's head.

(V, iii, 122-24)

The recreation allowed Leontes in *The Winter's Tale* is not allowed Othello. Like other critics of the play, I read Othello as one who in marrying loses his sense of separate identity as a self-defined soldier and storyteller, one whose past and character do not prepare him for marriage and specifically for sexuality in marriage.32 Oddly, Othello announces his own lack of appetite as he tells the Venetian senators of his modesty; one must wonder why he makes his private affairs so public and what he is defending against, what worries have slipped out in so inappropriate a setting when he says, "the young affects / in me defunct." How different this is from Desdemona's straightforward request to accompany her husband to Cyprus: "that I love the Moor to live with him."33 Although Othello woos Desdemona with story, addresses her in fine language, and wishes to perceive her as alabaster, pure, and chaste, he is drawn not only by Iago, but by his own private vision of her "topped" into a morass of overwhelming feelings and confusions that he cannot sustain. It is Othello who has had the vision which Iago describes as the most horrible and which, were there not a murder, the audience too would be forced to witness in Act V; Iago cries:

Would you, the supervisor, grossly gape on?
Behold her topped?

(III, iii, 393-93)
The consequent state of chaos, jealousy and sexual fantasy into which Othello plunges, literally undoes him as he falls to the ground in a trance. Once in this state, Othello, like Leontes, perceives an amorphous world of his own making in which "chaos is come again," and in which his vision of Desdemona merges with a picture of a whore. This double vision of her and his inability to imagine a woman of both delicacy and appetite is revealed throughout in language similar to Leontes' of anatomizing and splitting: "O curse of marriage, / That we can call these delicate creatures ours / And not their appetites" (III, iii, 268-69). It is also important to note here, as other critics have done, that dissolutions affect Othello's sentences as well as his perception and that it is not until the murder of Desdemona is complete that he again stands cloaked in fine phrases, a story of his own making, speeches appropriate to his image of himself as hero. The various ways in which Othello's language fails him or in which he merges with image are both odd and telling. For example, he conflates not Desdemona and Diana, goddess of the moon and chastity, but himself and the virgin Dian: "I think my wife be honest, and think she is not . . . / I'll have some proof. My name, that was as fresh / as Dian's visage, is now begrimed and black / As mine own face" (III, iii, 383-85). It is, as he reveals, the fact that he is black that disturbs him; and I would add that the character Othello is disturbing to the audience precisely because he does not totally break a slanderous stereotype: a black man, he is both sexually obsessed and threatening to the white world, a murderer.

In his farewell speech, Othello also creates an odd substitution which is revealing of how he sees himself. He begins the speech by asserting that he could have stood his situation, even if Desdemona had been tasted by the entire camp of soldiers, if only he had not known. Yet when he comes to list what he must say goodbye to, he moves from the logic of "Farewell the tranquil mind," to a list of farewells that is not, as one might expect, of bliss or contentment or Desdemona, but of troops, wars, steeds, banners, all manner of military items. What he has lost in suspecting Desdemona of adultery, it seems, is war; yet this makes psychological if not logical sense only if Othello has been "unmanned" (weakened like a virginal girl), only if what he has lost by his immersion in his sexual union with Desdemona is his sense of himself as potent soldier.

Unlike Leontes, Othello is unable to escape the state he has created. For one, this play has a villain, an embodiment of Othello's imagination presented in an exterior character who keeps Othello in a state of paranoid delusion and anxiety; each echoing "indeed" or "think" from Iago prevents Othello from recasting his perceptions, from recreating his initial vision: "To be once in doubt / Is to be resolved" (III, iii, 179-80). Moreover, it is Iago who interrupts Othello each time in the play that he is in bed with Desdemona; although it is impossible in the play to discover exactly when sexual consummation takes place (it seems to occur and not to occur throughout) it is possible to note that when Othello and Desdemona move toward an offstage bedroom, what we witness on stage as an emblem for what happens off-stage is a riot of shouting male figures, swords, moneybags, in essence a "nightrawl." One might therefore assume that Othello finds it difficult to prevent sexuality from becoming violent, that for him sexual battle and battle merge; or that his image for the manly is so allied to soldiering that in trying to cast off the soldier, he finds himself unmanned as well. And yet, if there were a place which might offer the hope of Othello's revising his initial vision of sexual horror, it might very well be this bed, not as a place of impotence, but as a place of fertility, playfulness, the timelessness of sexual pleasure, dream.

Rather what seems to occur in the play is that Othello's initial horror is fixed in place, reified by Iago whose imagination of women, goats, and monkeys replicates his own, and by the emblem of the handkerchief and the image of the "beast with two backs." That is, in the play Othello's vision of a world without differentiation is given emblematic existence by the emblem-maker, ensign Iago who carries the army's flag and who waves this red and white flag of a handkerchief. The bit of cloth dyed in mummy gotten from the hearts of dead maidens is passed from hand to hand, from mother to Othello to Desdemona, to Emilia to Iago to Cassio to Bianca, and it seems in its passage across generations, genders, and classes to indicate a pervasive—albeit unconscious—obsession with the fearful destructiveness of sexuality. It is as if the dominating vision is a bed, "lust-stained," spotted with "lust's blood" (V, i, 36). Othello's superstitions seem to touch everyone, even Desdemona who wishes she had never seen the handkerchief with magic in its web, but who also asks Emilia
to put the wedding sheets on her bed. Perhaps this request is not exactly superstitious, but it does cause one to wonder what she knows, suspects, or fears, and what exactly she means when she says to Emilia that Othello will return to her at once, "incontinent." This word appears earlier as well when Iago attempts to pacify the eager Roderigo by telling him to "go to bed and sleep." Roderigo replies, "I will incontinently drown myself (I, iii, 300). If Othello has been unable to control his ejaculation and his fears of violence before, Desdemona must suspect she will encounter the same sort of man in her death bed as she did in her marriage bed.

The handkerchief is, moreover, an emblem exactly suggestive of stained marriage sheets, and it is therefore threatening to Othello in any scenario of off-stage action one might try to envision (although it seems to me that it is exactly this effort to envision and the equally forceful avoidance of it that makes the audience anxious even as the central character is anxious). Even in his final speeches Othello speaks in an equivocal and metaphoric way about Desdemona's body, his fear of marring her perfect alabaster skin with blood, his fear of penetration: "When I have plucked the rose, / I cannot give it vital growth again; It needs must wither" (V. ii, 14-16).

The other image, although one not given concrete realization, that dominates the play is the image of the two-backed beast, thrown up by Iago to Brabantio in Act I, Scene i. The image is obviously designed by Iago to incite mischief, and it does. Moreover, reason and evidence to the contrary, it continues to live in memory, so that like the stain on the handkerchief it haunts the play, even if one is uncertain how to place it, how to understand it. The image is a false one. That is, we have no evidence that Desdemona and Othello are in bed together at the outset of the play, and in fact the play presents evidence to the contrary: Othello and Desdemona arrive at the council chamber where Brabantio will accuse them, not together but separately; and it is not until Cyprus that Othello gives a speech in seeming anticipation of their union: "The purchase is made, the fruit's are to ensue, / That profit's yet to come 'tween me and you" (II, ii, 9-10). The image can also be seen as false in its utter fearfulness and in its creation of a composite figure in which male and female, human and beast, front and back are merged into a deformed being with two backs. Yet, of course, it is just such a vision that is appropriate to Othello's crazed imagination, one way of understanding—via Iago—what drives the Moor to slay the woman to whom he is joined, who creates him a "beast" rather than a "perfect soul."

Once caught in this web, Othello is unable to escape, and indeed is kept from a return to the unconscious that might have created a new fate for himself. Rather, he becomes a rigid, almost caricatured version of the noble Moor, speaking his own praise by means of story (cf. V, ii, 334-352); he gets to be what he wants and needs: by killing Desdemona he makes her the rigid, cold, statue-like figure he originally adored, and he makes himself the separate, exotic figure he recognizes and understands.

In The Winter's Tale the wrenching that makes change possible is not easy or pleasant. If one views the seacoast scene as the scene that effects change, one can see that it is painful, discomforting, upsetting, not only for those on stage, but also for Leontes whose psyche is represented by the events as he remains in darkness, and who must acknowledge, as Prospero must, that darkness and all its evils belong to him ("this thing of darkness I acknowledge mine"). In so many of Shakespeare's plays, it seems that the path to revision lies through darkness, and when Freud describes the battle within a patient's unconscious as the patient tries through analysis to effect recovery, or when a Christian describes the battle between the old Adam and the new, they also describe something like the action of romance.

C. The New World

The revised world in Part II contains, as many have noted, parallel elements to Part I. It begins, for example, with Camillo, yet again the faithful helper, wanting to return home even as Polixenes wanted to leave court to return home at the outset of the play; his eventual leaving is the first of two sea voyages in Part II paralleling two voyages in Part I. In Part I Camillo speaks of Mamillius, the child who "makes all hearts fresh" (and who
now must be, as Polixenes says, "afresh lamented") and in Part II he speaks of Prince Florizel. Instead of the robbing of honor Leontes imagines in Part I, Part II offers the robbery of sheets and Autolycus' robbery of the clown's pockets, closely related, but comic. Like Leontes, Autolycus robs himself although he does it by design, for controlled effect; and even his speech in which he confuses virtue and vice in a courtroom scene, echoes in miniature the earlier confusion in Sicilia's court of justice as Leontes makes Hermione's virtue into vice. Autolycus describes himself as having been whipped out of court for his virtues; the clown's correction is comic here, but reminds us nevertheless of Hermione's treatment in Part I: "His vices, you would say; there's no virtue whipped out of court" (V, iii, 91).

In Part II Polixenes calls his son too base to be acknowledged (IV, iv, 422) as Leontes refuses his daughter in Part I: "This brat is none of mine" (I, iii, 91). Yet of course, Polixenes' refusal is brief and completely transformed by the joyful reunions that dominate the ending of the play. Again, Polixenes breaks into an angry fit at the sheepshearing and threatens to scratch Perdita's face with briers. Although this is like Leontes' fury in Part I, it is here deflected, contained, immediately undone by the opening of the fardel, like the opening of a second oracle speaking truth from some hidden time and place in the written voice of Antigonus, his letters wrapped in Hermione's cloak.

Many of the same elements are presented in Part II, but they have been transmogrified into song and dance; art keeps us at some distance from the sharp experience itself and nothing is finally harmful. In fact, one might argue that Part II, including the revival of Hermione in which art and nature are conjoined, is a demonstration of the necessity of art for the success of romance. Thus the servant can describe Autolycus' songs as filled with that which horrified Leontes and no one is afraid: "He has the prettiest love songs for maids, so with bawdry, which is strange; with such delicate burdens of dildos and fading; 'Jump her, and thump her'" (IV, iv, 194 ff.). Autolycus picks pockets and sings of "pins and poking sticks of steel; / What maids lack from head to heel" and the world does not come undone. The dance of the satyrs, emblematic of lust, who have "danced before the King," might be seen as a version of King Leontes' own animal rage of projected desire; yet here such raw energy is confined to a ritual for celebration.

The second half of the play is also, like the first part, dominated by the imagery of dreams, but here of course the dreams come true, and as the shepherd says, Perdita will bring Doricles "that which he not dreams of." The second half also refers to important issues of faith, echoing Leontes' loss of faith and parodying his inability to believe in something so obvious as his wife's virtue and his own paternity by presenting Autolycus' song about the woman turned fish "for she would not exchange flesh with one that loved her." "The ballad" Autolycus asserts, "is very pitiful, and as true". (IV, iv, 281 ff.). The ballad also gives a low comic version in its description of woman turned fish of the miraculous high comic change of statue into woman. And both transformations are dependent not only on faith but on the presence of witnesses. According to Autolycus, "Five justices' hands at it, and witnesses more than my pack will hold," and in the chapel many are the "lookers-on," including those the audience, who witness Hermione dead become Hermione living.

The entire pastoral is a wonderful emblem of the "betwixt and between" state of the play that reigns until the final unveiling scene; the sheepshearing occurs between two seasons, "Not yet on summer's death, or on the birth / Of trembling winter," and it offers mixed flowers, mixed costumes, a mixture of classes and stations, a mixture of the high and the low in style and language. As a revised projection from Leontes' own psyche, the pastoral is crucially different from the initial pastoral scene in which Leontes and Polixenes romped as twinned lambs, longing to be "boy eternal." This time the eternal aspect of this world is not in fixity, but in process, a process that goes on forever. Florizel praises Perdita by wishing that she would ever speak, sing, buy and sell, give alms, dance:

When you do dance, I wish you
A wave o'th'sea, that you might ever do
Nothing but that—move still so,
And own no other function.

(IV, iv, 140-43)

Most importantly, this time the pastoral world is populated with a boy and a girl instead of two boys, a match which makes union and generation possible as it was not before.

If there is a single character in the midst of this pastoral who represents flexibility, changeability, potential and mirth, it is Autolycus. According to the servant, his songs transform the most mundane of objects into something divine: "why, she sings 'em over, as they were gods or goddesses; you would think a smock were a she-angel." Moreover, there is a way in which Autolycus replaces the absent Leontes and signals his change; while the major character is off-stage, this onstage figure represents and enacts the other. As Freud asserts, every dream treats of oneself, one's ego often hidden behind a strange person. Both Autolycus and Leontes see themselves as victims, Autolycus' false pleas as victim literalizing Leontes' false pleas as cuckold, the difference between them being that Autolycus knows he is playing both the parts, whereas Leontes has to learn that he is. Like Leontes Autolycus is turned in on himself, even his name is self-referential, and like Leontes he can pull from his bag all manner of tricks and dreams—some destructive and some recreative, though all in a comic jumble. He is, moreover, that aspect of Leontes which remains "boy eternal." True only to himself, childishly selfish, he is the play's version of his puppet show character, the Prodigal Son, who unlike Leontes never grows up, never marries, but who will try, as he says in his last speech, to become the "tall fellow" the clown describes him as being. Here the clown declares his faith in one he knows to be false, because, one can only assume, of affection and his own essentially good nature, and this simple declaration takes us forward to the end and to Leontes' own declaration of faith and love.

Autolycus also provides the parody of torture in his story of how the clown will be tortured; although Autolycus' account of what never takes place is not verbally similar to what happens at some off-stage place to Leontes, as he talks we know that Leontes has also been suffering penance and sorrow. Yet again, Part II of The Winter's Tale has removed a painful human experience to a story and has thus presented and also protected us from it, has turned a "tragic" moment to a comic one: "He has a son," says Autolycus to the clownish son, "who shall be flayed alive." Although the death of a son has occurred in Part I, we are now about to enter the changed world not only of Leontes' psyche, but of the conscious world of the court as the character Leontes appears on stage, rather a miracle in and of itself.

Finally, Autolycus represents the impulse towards and the enactment of change that Leontes has worked long years in isolation to achieve; Autolycus himself is never still, flitting from place to place, changing costume, service, tone, and position. He moves, for example, from the seeming perpetrator of action in urging the clown and shepherd onto the boat bound for Sicilia to the receptive audience who hears from the first gentleman what occurred when the shepherd opened the fardel. Like Leontes he exerts effort, but must await the ultimate fulfilling. His overflowing bag represents the possibilities of the mind, the possibilities which Leontes' immersion in the unconscious bring forth.

In the final act of the play Leontes is taken to the chapel to see a statue of his wife. The paranoid fixity that completely dominates Othello and keeps his mind rigid, his jealousy aroused and frozen in position, has in The Winter's Tale produced several deaths and has turned a warm, living, witty, sexual woman into a statue; even as Othello, unable to endure his wife's sexual nature, turns her by means of imagery and murder into a statue-like figure as well:

Yet I'll not shed her blood,
Not scar that whiter skin of hers than snow,
And smooth as monumental alabaster.
Yet she must die.

(V, ii, 3-6)

Yet *The Winter's Tale* will move from marble to flesh as we begin to know through the story of Perdita, the child whose flesh bears the imprint of both mother and father. When Perdita hears of her mother's death, she weeps and sighs, and, as the third gentleman reports, "Who was most marble there changed color." As Hermione comes alive, she does so in parts; when Leontes went about to slay her, he did so by anatomizing her. Here in the chapel, first she appears, then she seems to breathe, her veins to bear blood, then she moves, and her hand and Leontes' hand meet, and finally she descends to embrace him in a silence analogous to their sixteen years of mutual silence. Each of the senses is awakened one by one. The parts become whole again. Unlike Othello who wants to cut off the air that gives Desdemona life, who fears her breath as countering the justice of his deed, Leontes longs for it, seems to breathe life into Hermione by wanting breath from her:

Still, methinks,
There is an air comes from her. What fine chisel
Could ever yet cut breath? Let no man mock me,
For I will kiss her.

(V, iii, 75ff.)

This is a miracle of many sorts, of the seasons, of faith, of birth, of life itself. It is the celebration of process over fixity, and as Leontes admires what is before him, his words echo those of Florizel gazing at and admiring Perdita, singing, dancing, doing whatever she does (IV, iv, 135.): "What you can make her do, / I am content to look on." (V, iii, 92-93). But it is also a miracle of wish-fulfillment out of which Leontes is shown to produce not just a dream of destruction, but also a dream of memory and rejoining—the entire family brought together as he says, after a wide gap of time, "since first / We were disserved." Although Leontes is off-stage for a long period of the play, we in the audience are keenly aware of his absence. He is the central character, the missing figure we remember. His being is kept vivid, as I have argued by parallel figures and speeches on stage during this second half, and by the presence of his daughter, an exact copy of the father: "although the print be little, the whole matter / And copy of the father," a mirroring that can be underscored in a production by careful casting, costumes, gesture, rhythms of speech. The plotting also keeps us in obvious suspense waiting for Leontes' reappearance . . . and aware of his absence. As Florizel and Perdita play at king and queen of the festival we await the royal couple. When Polixenes "discovers himself to Florizel, we anticipate the other king's reappearance. When Florizel argues that his union with Perdita cannot fail "but by / The violation of my faith" (IV, iv, 480-81), we think of the person who is demonstrating, albeit off-stage, his own faith, as it turns out, not only in his sins but also in (re)union. As the play moves with the powerful logic of romance, a quest through ritual death towards a final scene of recognition and life, we remember Leontes and what he is doing as the absent participant. In playing his part in off-stage darkness, he moves to reunite with his old role and his queen; according to Frye:

Translated into dream terms, the quest-romance is the search of the libido or desiring self for a fulfillment that will deliver it from the anxieties of reality but will still contain that reality .. . Translated into ritual terms, the quest-romance is the victory of fertility over the waste land. Fertility means food and drink, bread and wine, body and blood, the union of the male and female.

Leontes' dream can thus be seen as behind the ending of the play. In taking on a mock-death by his absence, moving to the innermost stage of being, Leontes produces on-stage that which uses elements of the past (Part I of the play) to produce the future. Dreams, says Freud, are derived from the past in every sense:
Nevertheless the ancient belief that dreams foretell the future is not wholly devoid of the truth. By picturing our wishes as fulfilled, dreams are after all leading us into the future. But this future, which the dreamer pictures as the present, has been moulded by his indestructible wish into a perfect likeness of the past.45

Leontes as the hero of romance grafts life onto that which would otherwise be stone. Perdita lives. The earth lives after winter. Hermione lives in a perfect likeness of the past. As his unconscious dreams are realized both in the stage action while he is absent and in the chapel scenes where he is present, he becomes both the creator and the witness—since he is dependent on divine and psychological elements beyond his total control—of that which is more wonderous and powerful than even he could have dreamed possible.

Notes


2 David J. Gordon, Literary Art and the Unconscious (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976), p. xxii: "If, as seems reasonable, we identify consciousness and verbal language, then we must postulate some sort of mental activity or preverbal language anterior to consciousness, and we must think of creation as taking place, to some extent, at the Threshold of Consciousness."


4 Especially here, but throughout, I am grateful for the probing questions and critical insights of Professor Robert Byer.


9 Freud, Interpretation of Dreams, p. 583.

10 Louis L. Mantz, The Poetry of Meditation (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954): "It is this habit of feeling theological issues as a part of a concrete, dramatic scene that the meditative writers . . . stress as all important for the beginning of a meditation."

11 Freud, Interpretation of Dreams, p. 572.

12 Luther, p. 24.


17 Ibid., 262.


21 Schwartz, p. 251.

22 Schwartz, p. 262. Schwartz is here using the theories of D.W. Winnicott.


29 Schwartz, p. 260. I am a bit hesitant to equate characters with aspects of the psyche, and indeed in emphasizing the psychological aspects of the play in total exclusion of the religious, for it does seem to me that the play can also be read, as Frye for one reads it, as a Christian play in which Leontes' penance leads to grace. See Northrop Frye, "Recognition in The Winter's Tale, " Essays in Shakespearian Criticism, ed. Calderwood and Toliver (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1970). See also Robert Hunter, Shakespeare and The Comedy of Forgiveness (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965); and of the sonnets, Martha Lifson, "The Rhetoric of Consolation," Assays (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 1982).


31 Freud, Interpretation of Dreams, p. 359.


34 Schwartz, p. 225.

35 Majorie Garber, Coming of Age in Shakespeare, p. 137. I wrote this during Professor Garber's NEH faculty seminar at Harvard, 1984, and am indebted to her insights and crucial comments on this work.

36 Another powerful image of "no difference" in the play is the image of men eating men, the cannibals whom Othello mentions in his original stories: "And of the Cannibals that each other eat / The Anthropod, and men whose heads / Grew beneath their shoulders" (I, iii, 142-44). I would urge that these powerful images of frightening merger dominate Othello's and hence our imagination during the course of the play.


38 Peter Lindenbaum, "Time, Sexual Love, and the Uses of Pastoral in The Winter's Tale," MLQ, 33 (1972), 323, argues that it is actually June, and that this speech simply explains why Perdita doesn't have certain flowers available to give.


40 Lee S. Cox, "The Role of Autolycus in The Winter's Tale," SEL, IX (1969), 283-301, discusses the significance of swearing and saying the play and focuses on this exchange between the clown and Autolycus, and makes similar points to mine.

41 In the movement from Act IV to Act V, it is amusing to note that the word "bear" occurs, reminding us of the real bear on the seacoast and again providing the transitional object cluing the shift; proposing to bribe his way out of torture, the clown says, "though authority be a stubborn bear, yet he is oft lead by the nose with gold" (IV, iv, 809-10). Such a detail underscores the care by which the play has been structured; even transitional movements are made parallel.

Recent critics on the family in Shakespeare remain centrally indebted to C.L. Barber's work; see "The Family in Shakespeare's Development: Tragedy and Sacredness," Representing Shakespeare.


Freud, Interpretation of Dreams, p. 660.

The Winter's Tale (Vol. 36): Structure

Alastair Fowler (essay date 1978)


[In the following essay, Fowler discusses the allegorical relations in The Winter's Tale, maintaining that the pastoral scenes symbolically reveal Leontes ' transition from sin to repentance.]

The Winter's Tale and Measure for Measure fall each into distinct sections written in different fictive modes. In Measure for Measure, the early, potentially tragic scenes of naturalism have been contrasted with the subsequent allegorical black comedy, which is supposed to show a 'falling off'. In The Winter's Tale, the contrast between the first three acts (again largely naturalistic) and the pastoral-comical continuation is too sharp, and the writing too good, to seem anything but intentional. Still, the marvels and unconvincing deaths have been regretted. And Rosalie Colie, doing what she could for a 'conspicuously ill-made' play, has presented it as an extreme generic experiment: an essay in genera mixta that has perhaps not quite come off. Its tragic and comic portions are 'not articulated' but merely juxtaposed; so that genre is 'forced' (pp. 267-8), with contrary generic tendencies allowed to confront one another. The Winter's Tale becomes in fine a play about the problems of tragi-comedy. Now, Shakespeare was probably aware of these problems (as any literary man would be, at a time when they were the subject of prolonged controversy). But he did a good deal to articulate the disparate members. The genres may confront one another through the grotesque indecorum of the clown's nuntius speech; but other passages and brief touches—the name Sicilia, early allusions to shepherds, anticipations of the image of the storm—show an approach less abrupt. As Colie herself noticed, the oracle in Act III, Scene ii is a characteristic motif of pastoral romance. But it is also a tragic motif: it serves in fact as a generically ambiguous feature, allowing a shading of tragedy into romance. Moreover, the play's thematic continuity is also far stronger than most current criticism supposes. Only, the continuous strands are symbolic and mythological in character. Modern audiences being less at home with the non-naturalistic connections, they have not been much explored. But in the Renaissance the deepest treatments of passions and of ideas were quite likely to take a romance or symbolic form. This is not to say that Shakespeare expresses his meaning through personification allegory like that of Old Fortunatus. But the symbols of The Winter's Tale depend on allegorical relations and even on scraps of narrative allegory. And we shall not understand the play until we glimpse something of these allegorical lines. Their continued metaphors dominate the last three acts, and have profound implications for their staging.

The Winter's Tale is about a man's jealousy and rage; his gradual contrition; and his eventual repentance. We call the man Leontes; although properly Leontes symbolizes only part of the experience, as Polixenes symbolizes another. Both commit the sins of jealousy and of selfrighteousness. But they do so in complementary ways: Leontes' jealousy of a wife is expressed tyrannously, against the opinion of his court; Polixenes' jealousy of a son takes a more disguised, perhaps more socially acceptable, form. Jealousy bulks large in Shakespeare's work, as in the mind of his time. But in this play it seems to figure mainly as a representative sin to be repented. The focus is less on the experience of jealousy itself (although this is evoked, in the first two acts, with the plausible verisimilitude of Shakespeare's art at its best) than on its consequences. The difficulty of repentance, we may say, is the play's subject.
Leontes' jealousy soon leads to estrangement from Hermione and to her loss. As Shakespeare's choice of her name suggests, this has a symbolic force. The name is not from Pandosto, or from Plutarch. Hermione was anciently the daughter of Menelaus and Helen. But by one of those heuristic confusions which make Renaissance mythology subtly yet profoundly different from its pagan counterpart, she was identified by Stephanus and others with Harmonia, daughter of Jupiter and Electra (or of Mars and Venus). The two names became alternative forms; so that Milton could make Hermione, not Harmonia, the wife of Cadmus. At their marriage, he tells us, 'all the choirs of heaven sang in concert'. This universal celebration was appropriate because Renaissance interpreters took Hermione-Harmonia to refer to the Pythagorean harmony of the moral or cosmic order. The way in which Hermione was thought of in the early seventeenth century is probably well exemplified by George Sandys's Commentary on Ovid Metamorphoses IV:

Cadmus, after so many difficulties, advanced to a flourishing kingdom (Honour is to be courted with sweat and blood, and not with perfumes and garlands) now seemeth happy in his exile: having besides Harmione to wife; whose nuptials were honoured by the presence of the Gods, and their bountiful endowments. So beloved of them is the harmony of exterior and interior beauty espoused to Virtue. She is said to be the daughter of Mars and Venus; in that music not only recreates the mind with a sweet oblivion of former misfortunes, but also inflames it with courage . . .

If Hermione signifies the soul's harmony, her loss would aptly symbolize Leontes' sinful state of psychological discord. The cosmic significance, the order of nature, is implied in the original righteousness whose loss the individual sin recapitulates. To find so large a meaning in Hermione's absence seems not unreasonable, in view of the play's many universalizing speeches with religious overtones:

They looked as they had heard of a world ransomed, or one destroyed . . .

(V.ii. 14-15)

if all the world could have seen't, the woe had been universal.

(Vii.90-1)

To regard such speeches merely as burlesque of court hyperbole is to underestimate the closeness of construction. A series of such overtones—not all from First and Second Gentlemen—culminates with the statue's movement, when it is music that brings Hermione's recovery; 'Music awake her; strike' (V.ii.98). These words of Paulina's, which are far more than a conventional adjunct of the transformation scene, imply the operation of magical or moral music, the ordering principle that in Shakespeare regularly opposes the destructive storm. Moral harmony has been recovered.

The juncture at which Leontes loses Hermione is when he first realizes something of his guilt. Previously, throughout the trial, he has been self-righteous. Only when he hears the oracle ('Hermione is chaste . . . Leontes a jealous tyrant') and having denied it finds it immediately confirmed by Mamillius' death, does he recognize his fault: 'Apollo's angry, and the heavens themselves / Do strike at my injustice' (III.ii.146-7). Meanwhile Hermione is 'dying', as the next speech, Paulina's, tells us: 'This news is mortal to the queen: look down / And see what death is doing'. Subsequently we learn that she fainted before hearing all of the oracle. This sequence of events is intelligible enough as fable: the good news of the oracle's first words has been too much for Hermione. (So, when Bellaria hears the oracle in Pandosto she is 'surcharged . . . with extreme joy'.) The sequence is also highly meaningful, however, in allegorical terms; alluding to a Pauline doctrine that profoundly influenced thinking about sin and repentance, and that was reflected in other literary works of the period. St Paul's fullest statement is at Rom. 7.7-13:
I knew not what sin meant, but by the law. ... I once lived without law. But when the commandment came, sin revived and I was dead. And the very same commandment which was ordained unto life, was found to be unto me an occasion of death.

This Pauline idea of a sinner's virtual death at the coming of the divine commandment may well underlie Hermione's 'death' at the report of the 'ear-deafening voice o' the oracle'. It is, after all, a divine commandment judging Leontes guilty. True, it is Hermione who 'dies' and not Leontes himself. But we should recall how closely Shakespeare identifies Hermione with Leontes' honour—'The sacred honour of himself, his queen's'—and even with his innocent soul. There is more than one sense in which Leontes may say to Hermione 'Your actions are my dreams'.

Before the oracle, the topic of innocence is developed both in relation to Hermione and Leontes. In Act II, Scene i, for example, Antigonus and others defend Hermione's spotless innocence at some length. But innocence is also attributed to Leontes, and not only by himself:

POL. We were as twinned lambs that did frisk i' th' sun,  
And bleat the one at th' other: what we changed  
Was innocence for innocence: we knew not  
The doctrine of ill-doing, nor dreamed  
That any did. Had we pursued that life,  
And our weak spirits ne'er been higher reared  
With stronger blood, we should have answered heaven  
Boldly 'not guilty', the imposition cleared  
Hereditary ours.  

(I.ii.67-75)

Polixenes playfully attributes temptation to womankind: Temptations have since then been born to's: for / In those unfledged days was my wife a girl' (I.ii.77-8). And behind this amiable flirtation, we might catch a hint of nostalgia for male friendship, a dubious innocence of 'twinned lambs', a simple concord before the disturbance of heterosexuality. Moreover, it is a mistaken application of Hermione's reply ('If you first sinned with us . . . that you slipped not / With any but with us'), to Polixenes alone rather than to the generality of husbands including himself, that in all probability occasions Leontes' jealousy; so that his sinful action may begin with illusory innocence. Moreover, possessive love of his friend seems to occasion pique in Leontes when it is Hermione who persuades Polixenes to stay in Sicilia. And Paulina's remark about 'Fancies too weak for boys, too green and idle / For girls of nine' (III.ii.181-2) also implies immaturity. But little can be made of such motivation, since Shakespeare focuses on consequences, not aetiology. Leontes' madness is an 'infection', like 'the imposition . . . Hereditary ours'—original sin—of which the dramatist clearly takes a more serious view than Polixenes.

Two distinct allegories about Leontes' sin might be disengaged: (I) an allegory about harmony, with Hermione representing a state of mind lost and recovered; and (2) an allegory about guilt's virtual death, with Hermione as the soul that dies. These meanings are not logically compatible. But then, The Winter's Tale is not simple allegory. Its symbolism can imply both aspects of sin (if no more) without contradiction.

Besides the apparent death of Hermione, Leontes' sin and judgment are accompanied by a series of unreversed mortalities: the dwindling death of Mamillius, the sudden death of Antigonus, the drowning of the mariners who carried Perdita to Bohemia. Northrop Frye treats the deaths as sacrificial. But they are more intelligible if we regard them as objectifying particular aspects of sin. Thus, news of Mamillius' death marks the beginning of Leontes' remorse. Apollo's revelations seem at first to leave Leontes unaffected ('There is no truth at all i' th' Oracle'); but knowledge of Mamillius' death instantly brings guilt ('Apollo's angry'). Leontes
realizes, that is to say, the loss of innocence. The circumstances of the death confirm this interpretation. Mamillius died, according to Leontes,

Conceiving the dishonour of his mother!
He straight declined, dropped, took it deeply,
Fastened and fixed the shame on 't in himself,
Threw off his spirit, his appetite, his sleep,
And downright languished.

(II.iii.13-17)

And according to a servant Mamillius died 'with mere conceit [thought] and fear' of the verdict on Hermione (III.ii.144-5). While these explanations are not impossible, the death is more eloquent as a symbolic statement: innocence dwindles with growing consciousness of sin. Mamillius' touching innocence, particularly in his scene with the ladies (II.i), is his main trait. But he also incorporates Leontes' dynastic hopes of natural perpetuity. As his heir, an 'unspeakable comfort', he 'physics' the nation with 'the hopes of him' (I.i.34 ff.). More than once, he is called a 'hopeful' prince (III.ii.41; cf.II.iii.85). But when Leontes loses the best of his natural life (the first-born), his hope of immortality is gone. He is himself under judgment of death.

The loss of an entire ship's company in the storm of III.iii seems more cut-and-dried allegory. Yet this disaster has been called 'morally and dramatically unnecessary': unsporing, so to say, on Shakespeare's part. We are assured that 'in performance their deaths hardly evoke pity or terror'. Certainly the clown's narration encourages neither: he cuts with breathless gusto from sea tragedy to land tragedy, making the heaped disasters tragi-comic by mere excess. But Shakespeare subsequently glosses the catastrophe at V.ii, where Third Gentleman remarks that 'all the instruments which aided to expose the child were even then lost when it was found' (V.ii.70-2). In short, the mariners are 'instruments', or instrumental causes, of Leontes' sinful rejection of grace. More specifically, the finding of grace for contrition requires destruction of sin's instrumental causes; so that if Perdita has not been found the mariners need not have died. Hence Shakespeare's repeated close connection of 'things dying' with 'things new-born' (III.iii. 113): they are related aspects of repentance. And the vividly described storm that kills the mariners is allegorically identical with the 'storm perpetual' of Leontes' penance, which according to Paulina will be insufficient to move the gods. Even this episode, however, is not simply allegorical: shipwreck was too familiar an emblem of moral failure not to have something of this sense, in a scene immediately after judgment on Leontes.

Antigonus, who is simultaneously eliminated, must also be categorized as an instrumental cause, albeit reluctant, of Perdita's rejection. Indeed, his very name ('against offspring') implies a less than favourable destiny, in a play where innocence and grace are identified with the new life of Leontes' children. However, Antigonus' character is sufficiently developed, and the means of his death bizarre enough, for him to merit separate treatment. His pursuit by the bear, whose dinner he later provides, is indeed an interpretative crux. Opportunistic use of a tame bear, conveniently available at the Southwark bear-pit (Quiller-Couch); transition from tragedy to comedy through a frisson of horror succeeded by laughter at a disguised clown (Coghil); abandonment of the usual dramatic persuasion to belief, and shift to 'an entirely different mode, that of romance' (Colie): prolonged debate has not produced a solution worthy of the dramatist. An initial frisson of horror, well achieved in the 1969 R.S.C. production, may be the right effect for the bear. It surely draws, like the 'ever-angry bears' of The Tempest I.ii.289, on a common emblem of rage. As such, it is yet another 'cause' of Leontes' sin: the formal (i.e. his sin takes the form of jealous rage). It too must therefore be eliminated. Thus, the bear does not merely happen by, but is being hunted—'This is the chase' (III.iii.57). To arrange for the bear to kill Antigonus en passant is economical plotting, and not at all the unnecessary complication Quiller-Couch thought it. But the arrangement is also ironic; since Antigonus earlier expressed a naïve trust in nature's kindness, when he accepted Leontes' commission:
Some powerful spirit instruct the kites and ravens
To be thy nurses! Wolves and bears, they say,
Casting their savageness aside, have done
Like offices of pity.

(II.iii.185-8)

The bear, sometimes a symbol of the dangerous aspect of *prima materia,* could figure as an emblem of nature, considered in opposition to man's constructive efforts. It is thus related to themes of nature and art that some have seen as the play's main concern.

The prayer of Antigonus may be a pious allusion to the story of Elisha and the ravens. But it is also more distinctly an allusion by Shakespeare himself, with a very different implication, to a later verse in 2 Kgs.2. Verse 24 relates how at Elisha's curse 'there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them'. Following St Jerome (in Ps. 108) and St Isidore (*Glossa ordinaria*), commentators interpreted this passage as referring to God's expectation of repentance by the Jews, after the death of Christ, for 42 years. Only then, when conversion was not forthcoming, did he send the Roman Vespasian and Titus to destroy Jerusalem. The bear, then, specifically symbolizes God's judgment on reluctance to repent.

Antigonus' pietism and his (rather *ex parte*) application of the Bible should not mislead us into thinking him a martyr, or an example of true faith. On the contrary, Shakespeare repeatedly contrasts him with Paulina and Camillo in this regard. Kindly but ineffectual, Antigonus has a conventional inclination to obey his sovereign right or wrong. Of course Shakespeare exploits the comic possibilities of a weak husband impotent to silence his wife, and involves the audience on Antigonus' side ('Hang all the husbands / That cannot ...') . But this should not conceal Antigonus' fault in trying to silence Paulina. Moreover, he is prepared to buy the tyrant off with promises. In a sense he is even accessory to Leontes' crimes. The way in which he echoes Leontes' errors (though in a harmless form) comes out in his ludicrous but revealing response to the idea of Hermione's guilt. If she is 'honour-flawed', his own daughters will suffer for it, he promises, in lines that substantiate his sinister name:

    By mine honour
    I'll geld 'em all; fourteen they shall not see
    To bring false generations: they are co-heirs,
    And I had rather glib myself, than they
    Should not produce fair issue.

(II.i. 146-50)

It is a coarse, comic horsey transposition of the same obsession with honour and 'fair issue' that Leontes—and Polixenes—display. Later, Antigonus acts 'against generation'—and against faith in Hermione's innocence—when a vision convinces him of her guilt, and he accepts its directive to expose the baby 'upon the earth/ Of its right father' Polixenes (III.iii.45-6). This scene sifts the quality of the audience's faith too: they have every reason, almost, for saying with Antigonus 'A do believe/Hermione hath suffered death', and to that extent interpreting the vision similarly. Only the simply devout, perhaps, are untroubled, content to have seen providence in the dream's selection of Bohemia.

Eventually Antigonus is succeeded as Paulina's spouse by a very different 'honourable husband'. Camillo resembles Antigonus in being kind. And he is repeatedly connected with the idea of honour. But his honesty strikes us as altogether deeper and more severe. It is also more uncompromising. Camillo's 'policy' contrasts sharply with Antigonus' compliant propitiation of Leontes. *He* would have known how to break a promise to do evil.
Just as the play's deaths adumbrate allegorical suggestions, so does the intrigue—for that is what it amounts to—of Paulina. As in Measure for Measure, the final reconciliation is elaborately stage-managed so as to bring the characters who are in the dark to a very particular spiritual state. Paulina conceals Hermione for sixteen years, and then reveals her in the form of a statue whose coming to life precipitates the denouement, in the play's climactic, and arguably its strongest, scene.

Hermione's concealment and vivification make a strikingly discontinuous fable. The audience is never precisely told why Hermione should allow Leontes to mourn her death, year after year, for sixteen years. Of course any rapid switch to easy reconciliation would have been unthinkable—

When you shall come to clearer knowledge . . .
You scarce can right me throughly, then, to say
You did mistake.

(I.II.97-100)

But to make this a motive for sentencing Leontes to sixteen years' grief and penance would be to make Hermione a monster. And to say that a major part of any cure for her must consist of the knowledge that Leontes had been purified. . . . Forgiveness must be won: it cannot be given where there is any suspicion of unworthiness is theologically unsound (no man is worthy) and in any case inconsistent with Hermione's character. Such a grudging censorious calculation of worthiness is not in her free nature. (Leontes speaks of her at I.ii. 102-5 as having been stiff in courtship; but that is probably only Shakespeare's conventional sign of her virtue.) Nor does it seem like Hermione to stand as a statue withholding every sign of emotion, during Leontes' exclamations. The enlivening of the statue is presented as a miracle requiring faith (V.iii.95); so that we should perhaps not expect a full explanation. There may even be a sense in which Hermione has been dead and brought to life again. After all, for many of the audience the evidence that she died has been firm and uncontroversed. Indeed, Paulina almost affirms it on oath at III.ii.203: 'I say she's dead: I'll swear 't. If word nor oath/Prevail not, go and see'. Few notice that she does not actually swear. And it is hard to think of anything in the subtext that can have emptied such speeches of their weight. Hermione never appears during the interval between her faint and the transformation—after which Leontes remains baffled: 'A saw her,/As I thought, dead'. In fact, the discontinuity is so marked, the undramatic irony so extreme, that the audience are 'as . . . mocked with art'.

The possibility that Shakespeare was indifferent to continuity has not deterred those bent on finding psychological causes. Coleridge remarked that it seems a mere indolence of the great bard not to have provided in the oracular response . . . some ground for Hermione's seeming death and fifteen [sic] years' voluntary concealment. This might have been easily effected by some obscure sentence of the oracle, as for example:—'Nor shall he ever recover an heir, if he have a wife before that recovery.' Quiller-Couch followed Coleridge, and others such as Gervinus, over-ingenious in their naturalism, went a step further and imagined the change in the oracle actually effected. So now it is often supposed that Hermione's motive really is a wish not to offend Apollo, or not to spoil Leontes' chance of an heir. We need to remind ourselves of the oracle as Shakespeare gives it: merely that 'the king shall live without an heir, if that which is lost be not found' (III.ii.134-6). Nothing about Leontes and Hermione cohabiting. As for Hermione's 'explanation', all that she says is:
thou shalt hear that I,
Knowing by Paulina that the Oracle
Gave hope thou wast in being, have preserved
Myself to see the issue.\textsuperscript{25}

This by no means explains why she did not reveal herself earlier (even if Leontes and she had to avoid conceiving an heir).

The apparently cruel intrigue might be more amenable to explanation in generic terms. \textit{The Winter's Tale} has many romance features (as its name leads us to expect);\textsuperscript{26} and romances after all are full of extreme, irrational actions, unmotivated or inadequately motivated. Behaviour in them may seem to us almost psychopathological; as when, to cite a familiar instance, the Count of Ponthieu's daughter, having been raped, tries to murder her quite innocent husband, who has been defending her. Such actions were beyond the reach of rational understanding, but not necessarily of fiction and of wisdom. From this point of view Hermione's long seclusion might indicate the depth of her humiliation and the strength of her hatred of Leontes for 'publishing' her dishonour. But even in Elizabethan romance people should be in character, unless some powerful reason overrides the fable.

However, the last three acts of \textit{The Winter's Tale} are allegorical romance, or a blend of pastoral romance and morality. In such a form, continuity sometimes depends entirely on the \textit{significano} or allegory. And in morality terms, the story is exclusively one of Leontes' repentance. There can be no question of Paulina's and Hermione's waiting for him to seem worthy—There is none worthy./Respecting her that's gone' (V.i.34)—for the delay is not theirs but Leontes'. It is he who cannot recover his inner harmony until he has repented fully. It is he who is spiritually 'dead'. Thus Hermione withdraws without any motive, involuntarily. Indeed, as Leontes' internal harmony, she simply does not exist, until the final scene. Her non-existence or virtual death, during the 'wide gap' of time (IV.i.7), obviates motive. The duration of the gap says nothing about Hermione: it has the effect, rather, of amplifying the difficulty of repentance.

Shakespeare treats Leontes' repentance with unusual fulness; unfolding it by slow stages of attrition, contrition and repentance.\textsuperscript{27} Throughout, the sinner is directed by Paulina, who operates as a presiding genius of justification by faith. Her ascendancy—at first violent, but soon repentantly softened—begins with Leontes' first admission of guilt, at the news of Mamillius' death. Leontes' response might be thought repentant: so Pafford says 'he immediately repents' (p.lxviii); while Hunter has it that Leontes 'immediately experiences contrition'. If his first response is mere 'attrition', or horror of judgment ('the heavens . . . Do strike'), surely his later public confession and promise to make amends (III.ii. 153-72: 'I'll reconcile me to Polixenes, / New woo my queen . . . ') amount to 'contrition', or full sorrow? Yet when Paulina returns from sequestering the queen, she continues the stage of attrition; wearing Leontes down with reminders of judgment and counsels of despair:

\begin{quote}
Do not repent these things, for they are heavier Than all thy woes can stir: therefore betake thee To nothing but despair.
\end{quote}

(III.ii.208-10)

Has Leontes been too glib in his remorse? Certainly Shakespeare makes much of Paulina's memorial function; giving it comic development when she repeatedly breaks her promise not to remind Leontes of his losses: TU not remember you of my own lord/(Who is lost too)' (III.ii.230-1). After sixteen years she is still tactlessly reminding him—as at V.i.15 ('she you killed')—when events trap her in having to steer him away from a second marriage. But then, after sixteen years his reconciliation with Polixenes remains theoretical: the visit that he 'justly owes' (I.i.6-7) has never been made. Besides, it may be wrong to think of Paulina as keeping Hermione from Leontes. She encouraged him from the beginning to visit, even to kiss, the 'dead' Hermione:
'go and see: if you can bring/Tincture, or lustre in her lip, her eye' (III.ii.204-5). Perhaps it is precisely Leontes' slowness to accept the invitation, and to rouse his soul, that delays reunion. Even in the transformation scene, he shows such hesitancy that Paulina must chide him (V.iii.107). It is as if he repented only intellectually or formally in Act III. The ordering and moving of the emotions, however, require repeated symbolic statements and enactments that progressively involve Leontes and the audience more and more, until the strange ritual of the transformation brings release. This long and painful process accords with the gravity of Shakespeare's treatment of repentance in other late plays, and contrasts with the instant conversions in such contemporary tragicomedies as *Philaster*.

The final stage of Leontes' repentance coincides with the animation of Hermione: an episode in the tradition of epiphanic unveiling of statues in sixteenth-century *tableaux vivants* (itself related to the religious veneration of statues). An old form for an old tale; although it would scarcely be possible to find an earlier statue that *moved*. The preceding comment scene, rightly prized by Coghill, gives a lead in to the symbolism of the transformation scene itself. Third Gentleman says that when Perdita heard Hermione's death

    bravely confessed and lamented by the king . . . she did .. I would fain say, bleed tears, for I
    am sure my heart wept blood. Who was most marble, there changed colour; some swooned,
    all sorrowed: if all the world could have seen't, the woe had been universal. (V.ii.87-91)

In this shared movement of feeling, even in those 'most marble', the softening of stone is the softening of hard stony hearts. We are led to expect similar emotion in connection with the statue. When he sees it, Leontes applies Third Gentleman's metaphor to his own stoniness: 'A am ashamed: does not the stone rebuke me/ For being more stone than it?' (V.iii.37-8). the Biblical allusion is to the same text that underlies *Paradise Lost* XI.3-5:

    Prevenient grace descending had removed
    The stony from their hearts, and made new flesh
    Regenerate grow instead, that sighs now breathed . . .

For Leontes, then, the movable statue signifies a potentiality of repentant emotion (*movere*). Since the death of Antigonus—who could not weep, in spite of Hermione's injunction, in his vision, that he should do so (III.iii.32 and 51)—the heart has been ready to soften. But it never does, until Leontes visits Paulina's house. The significance of the occasion is emphasized by the use of religious words, which only have to be taken literally to disclose the allegorical meaning. Paulina describes the visit, in the language of the court, as 'a surplus of grace' (V.iii.7). Later, when the animation is to be attempted, she calls for spiritual response from Leontes: 'It is required/You do awake your faith' (V.iii.94-5). By now the softened Hermione is weeping, as her first speech shows:

    You gods, look down,
    And from your sacred vials pour your graces
    Upon my daughter's head!

—and the audience should know, by the movement of their own feelings, that Leontes' contrition is complete. He has at last responded to the grace of repentence, and is reconciled.

Leontes' all-important condescending visit to Paulina's house, we should notice, has little to do with his volition. Its occasion is Perdita's wish to learn through Giulio Romano's art what her mother was like. It depends, therefore, on her return. Leontes' recovery of Perdita precedes the softening of his heart and the animation of Hermione, just as the rejection of Perdita preceded the hardening of his heart and Hermione's death. The oracle is explained: what Leontes has found is grace, prevenient grace, grace to repent. Both Perdita and Hermione are repeatedly associated with grace. But their allegorical aspects are distinct. Perdita is
Hermione's daughter, as the descendant or successor of original righteousness is grace to repent—'Dear queen' says Perdita, 'that ended when I but began' (V.iii.45). However, the soul reanimated by repentance cannot recover its original innocence—'You scarce can right me throughly'. The twice-born Hermione is not 'tender/As infancy and grace' (V.iii.27) but an experienced, wrinkled form.

The transformation scene has been faulted for its contrivance, staginess and inadequacy of dramatic means. But Coghill has rightly defended its fine stagecraft; especially the exquisite delay in discovering the statue's nature—which continues in a hesitation just before her first movement. For Coghill, the naming of Giulio Romano as the sculptor is to borrow authenticity from the 'real' cultural world: to 'confer a special statueishness'. And Rosalie Colie reminds us of Giulio's contemporary reputation for 'miraculous illusionism'. Shakespeare's own art shows its capacity for illusionism in Paulina's references to the fresh paint of the statue. This wet paint is cosmetic art in the actor's real world, Giulio's art in the second-order fictive world of Hermione's charade, but real tears in her own. (It is characteristic of Shakespeare to turn possible shortcomings of an actor to good account—imperfect stillness of the statue passes as a vraisemblable sign of Hermione's emotion.) But the paragone of arts, or of nature and art, is abandoned at a crucial point. Hermione's wrinkles are less a tour de force of realism (Giulio's and Shakespeare's own) than an acknowledgment of the limits of art, the claims of reality. As Rosalie Colie finely puts it, the pathos of the wrinkles makes all questions about mimesis seem trivial; and 'by calling attention to the vraisemblable wrinkles, the playwright underscores his invraisemblable, and turns us back to rethink the convention of the "marvelous" in pastoral drama, the taming of a miracle to literary device' (p. 281). At the same time, the wrinkles are also an occasion of comedy: Leontes' noticing them obliges Paulina to think on her feet:

So much the more our carver's excellence,
Which lets go by some sixteen years and makes her
As she lived now.

(V.iii.30-2)

We are not to dwell too lugubriously on the reflection that the most excellent art shows most of nature's faults. Shakespeare has already taken us beyond the paragone of nature and art to the idea of 'art/That nature makes' (IV.iv.91-2). But to understand the function of art in the transformation, we must go beyond even Polixenes' sophisticated naturalism, to a deeper view of art's place in a fallen world. This view was quite orthodox in Shakespeare's time. And it can be illustrated from a work he certainly knew, Thomas Wilson's Art of Rhetoric. After the Fall, writes Wilson,

whereas man through reason might have used order: man through folly fell into error. And thus for lack of skill, and for want of grace evil so prevailed, that the devil was most esteemed. . . . Even now when man was thus past all hope of amendment, God still tendering his own workmanship, stirring up his faithful and elect, to persuade with reason all men to society . . . being somewhat drawn, and delighted with the pleasantness of reason, and the sweetness of utterance.

Wilson represents 'art and eloquence' as drawing men back to the original order of human nature. Since the dramatist's art similarly worked to repair nature, the artificial character of the transformation scene is perhaps thematic in an unsuspected way. Hermione turned statue may be soul restored by art. To move, after all, is the perfection of the sculptor's Pygmalion art. The transformation would in that case be no 'outrageous device' (Colie) but moving drama—a scene meant to move the audience themselves. A common Elizabethan defence of the stage was to instance criminals and tyrants (such as Alexander of Pherae) brought to sudden repentance by a tragedy. From Leontes' point of view, moreover, the dramatist's art symbolizes that of repentance, whose paragone is with wrinkles—sufferings never to be made up for without grace beyond the natural.
shortcomings of art, even the possibility of excessive artificiality, are not forgotten. Too much art could be seen as impeding Hermione's movement; just as Leontes, encouraged by Paulina, takes his penitence to what Cleomenes considers are excessive lengths.34

Leontes' sixteen-year repentance takes place off stage; being narrated in Time's prologue speech, Act IV, Scene i. This used also to be regarded as a clumsy 'device' (Quiller-Couch), a mere programme note, 'not central at all' (Bethell). But as Pericles shows, Shakespeare could leap over wide gaps of time without apology, when he wished. And Inga-Stina Ewbank has argued that Time presents himself more significantly, as a 'principle and power'.35 This power goes beyond the revealing of truth—the aspect of time treated, nominally, in Shakespeare's main source Pandosto (subitled The Triumph of Time. . . Temporis filia Veritas).36 From Leontes' point of view, Time's revealing movement has so far been destructive, though just. But, as William Blisset has taught us to see, The Winter's Tale has the structure of a diptych, with the devouring Time of the first panel exactly matched by the redeeming Time of the second; with the turning point at the centre, Act III, Scene iii, where the devouring beast and storm symbolize 'a time of tyranny and the tyranny of time'.37 And now, beyond the worst, beyond tragedy, Time says:

Your patience this allowing,
I turn my glass, and give my scene such growing
As you had slept between:

(IV.i.15-17)

We have to learn patience as well as Leontes.38 As we do, we begin to see a different movement: construction and growth and change: 'things new born' replacing 'things dying' (III.iii.112-13). Time prepares us to understand this by his presenter's speech. For example, he three times mentions 'growth' as modified by art. It is as if the natural course of events, 'growth untried', could be replaced by, or grafted in with, a new order.

Indeed, Time (and not only the dramatist) claims just such a power 'To o'erthrow law, and in one self-born hour/To plant and o'erwhelm custom' (IV.i.8-9). It would be paltry to take these lines merely as Shakespeare's defiance of the unities. They refer to Time as a means of change: change that can replace the order of law—the customary, the habitual, the rigid, the hereditary world of the reprobate Old Man—with a new order of grace. Time's 'tale' might seem old-fashioned, or 'stale', to the taste of Shakespeare's contemporaries ('the glistering of this present') in that the device of a presenter was becoming obsolete. But in the course of the play 'the old tale' comes to represent an object of belief, not unlike the 'old old story' of revivalists.39 Thus the truth that Time eventually fathers is a vindication of faith. Indeed, in a sense Time brings forth the faithful soul itself by a process of conversio: 'truth' often meant 'troth' or faithfulness.

The subtle simplesse of Time's presenter's speech finds matching form in sixteen couplets corresponding to the sixteen years of 'swift passage'. We can choose to patronize this as another clumsy device, an outmoded manner of decorum. But if we can be patient with number symbolism, it has much to tell about the play's structure. Of course probability dictates that Time's gap should be more or less sixteen years: Perdita must grow to marriageable age. But the specific choice is particularly apt for several reasons. Precisely sixteen was given by Plato as the optimal lower marriage age. Moreover, in certain schemes of the Ages of Man it would bring Perdita to a stage of transition between pueritia and adolescentia.40 (In the same Varronian tradition, Leontes would also reach a transition. After the 'wide gap' he is 44 or 45, and changing from junior to senior.)41 These references to the Ages of Man do more than glance at one of Time's measures. Transition between Ages, or phases of life, is a way of changing nature—'growth'. The Ages were a subject of profound meditations, such as that of Plutarch on the Varronian scheme: 'dead is the man of yesterday, for he is passed into the man of today'.42
But the number sixteen had also a more abstract fitness to the wide gap. As a square number, and especially as the square on the tetrad, it symbolized virtue and justice. Particularly, it meant the ordering of the psyche ('Proportioned equally by seven and nine') through composition of its mortal feminine part (seven) and its immortal masculine part (nine), to produce the harmony of the double octave. Thus the measure of Leontes' sixteen-year repentance represents the moral Harmonia that he recovers. Leontes himself speaks of his repentance in a similar mathematical metaphor when he says to Paulina 'O, that ever I/Had squared me to thy counsel!'  

Other measures of Time are represented by more developed forms, in both the imagery and the action of the pastoral scenes; suggesting many intermingled processes of nature and art, or nature and grace. Thus Perdita makes 'four-and-twenty nosegays for the shearers' (IV.iii.41). And the herdsmen's dance at the sheep-shearing feast is a dance of months or signs, almost in the symbolic manner of ballets de cour or masque dances. Indeed, it probably borrows the antimasque of satyrs from Jonson's Masque of Oberon. Its mixture of nature and art could hardly therefore be more thorough: rustics disguised by art as natural satyrs perform an art-dance far from 'country art'. Shakespeare makes his added meaning obvious enough for the popular stage by repeating the numbers, under the excuse of a servant's comic prolixity: 'three carters, three shepherds, three neat-herds, three swine-herds' (IV.iv.325-6). Polixenes' amused recapitulation, 'four threes of herdsmen' makes sure that we catch the reference to months disposed in their seasons or signs in their humour-governing triplicities. Time is now ordered in its parts and ceremonially composed, where earlier it was torn apart, as between the ship's destruction and the sparagmos of Antigonus.  

If some of the pastoral measures represent natural change, others associated with Perdita express the action of grace. Perdita describes herself here as like a player in a 'Whitsun pastoral' (IV.i.133)—the feast of Pentecost, the descent of the Holy Spirit. And most critics, including those least sympathetic to allegory, agree that she embodies 'grace'; even if they take the latter as a secular analogy of grace in the Christian sense, or merely as 'gracefulness'. Florizel's praise marvellously evokes her gracefulness, 'so singular in each particular' (IV.iv.144). But this seems to me the outward form of a distinct spiritual role that she consistently enacts throughout the overall allegory. So when Time tells us that Perdita has 'grown in grace' (IV.i.24) he implies that grace comes through a process of natural change. From this point of view Perdita's moral and spiritual value finds a highly significant reflection in her presentation of flowers at the sheepshearing feast. This ceremony too has its measures: Perdita names just sixteen species.  

Shakespeare further develops Perdita's meaning in terms of poetic theology. As several mythologizing critics have shown, he connects her with Proserpina, particularly in the imagery of the flower presentation. Indeed, he makes Perdita apostrophize the goddess: 'O Proserpina,/For the flowers now that, frighted, thou let'st fall/From Dis's waggon!' (IV.iv.116-18). The loss and qualified return of Proserpina was a seasonal myth; but also (because of the identity of Demeter and Proserpina as different phases of growth) a theological one—a myth of death and resurrection. However, another mythological persona of Perdita's, that seems not to have been previously discussed, is in some ways a more developed role.  

Just as Hermione plays a stony-hearted statue of herself, so Perdita plays a definite part at the sheep-shearing feast: 'Flora/Peering in April's front' (IV.iv.1-2). In the Ovidian myth, which received Neoplatonic interpretations, Flora was a metamorphosis of the nymph Chloris ('Green') after her rape by Zephyrus, the quickening spirit of spring. After her subsequent marriage, flowers from her garden dower, gifts of the queen of flowers, are culled by the three Horae, associated with the Graces. Perdita enacts part of this myth of the natural cycle when she presents flowers of the three ancient seasons (Horae) to her guests. From a naturalistic standpoint, this many-seasoned passage has been baffling. But in its own terms there is no uncertainty of season. The whole year is in effect covered by three groups of flowers: the 'flowers of winter' (IV.iv.79) given to Polixenes and Camillo; the 'flowers of middle summer' (IV.iv.108) given to men of middle age; and the 'flowers o' th' spring' (IV.iv.113) desiderated for Florizel, Mopsa, and the girls, who still wear upon their 'virgin branches'—branches of honour, as it were—their 'maidenheads growing'. Schemes of the
Four Ages of Man related each age to a season, in just this way. Shakespeare alludes to the idea unambiguously in his identification of spring with Florizel's youth (pueritia or adolescenza), summer with virilitas and winter with senecta; although he leaves the sequence incomplete, so that it could refer to three- or five-age schemes also. Spring flowers are inaccessible (IV.iv.113: 'A would I had some flowers o' th' spring, that might/Become your time of day') for the practical reason that spring is past at sheepshearing time. But there is a more touching reason, which explains some of Perdita's melancholy at the feast. She associates flowers with girls throughout—

primroses,
That die unmarried, ere they can behold
Bright Phoebus in his strength (a malady
Most incident to maids);

—just as she herself is referred to as 'blossom' (III.iii.46). And at sixteen, Perdita is growing away from girlhood to adolescenza (16-30): her girlish time of day is past, and her state must change. Of course, co-presence of all the seasons would not be impossible in some earthly paradises. But in The Winter's Tale (unlike many pastorals) Flora's spring is conspicuously missed, and spring flowers regretted. The sense is not merely that of a vegetation myth of cyclic repair. Perdita's ritual of presentations symbolizes not only the process of natural growth, but growth associated with the Gratiae, with grace: 'Grace and remembrance be to you both'. And it is no accident that the gracious Perdita should be assisted by a shepherdess called Dorcas, after the woman 'full of good works' in Acts 9.36-9.

The other components of the pastoral scenes similarly develop themes of repair and change in the natural order and beyond it. This is obviously true of Perdita's and Polixenes' debate (IV.iv. 85-103) about the gillyflower, Puttenham's example of the power of art to 'mend nature—change it rather'. Perdita's phrase 'nature's bastards' has rightly been referred to Wisd. 4.3-6, 'the multiplying brood of the ungodly shall not thrive, nor take deep rooting from bastard slips'. But the whole debate must also be seen in the context of St Paul's far more familiar development of this passage, in Rom. II, as an allegory of election by grace and incorporation in Christ through repentance—'God is able to graff them in again'. An abstract debate for country chat, it inextricably mingles art with nature, and nature with grace, in its paradoxes and nuances.

Contrary to the professed sides, as has often been pointed out, Polixenes is emotionally opposed to mixture of court and country, the grafted Perdita inclined to practise it. What matters in such things is not the side we profess. In any case, Polixenes' supposed profundity, in perceiving that horticultural art is a natural creation ('an art that nature makes'), is in reality a splendid commonplace. And although Perdita seems put down, her immovable loyalty to simple original nature reaches a deeper spiritual level, where grace, not art, must amend. At the same time she represents in her own person an unsearchably complex grafting, in that she is intelligently innocent and simply or 'naturally' good. By nature royal, by nurture rustic, by festal art semi-divine, and by betrothral royal again, what is she when by disguise she becomes an African princess? By contrast, Polixenes' behaviour represents a more confused, less satisfactory mixture. His disguise has an ulterior motive. And he seems to confuse Nature's bastards with those of human irregularity: valuing honour so excessively as to put it in effect above righteousness. His deficiency appears repeatedly: subtly in his suspicion that Florizel may not be 'gracious' (IV.ii.28), grossly in his tyrant's threat to torture Perdita. In fact, his scenes with Perdita and Florizel restate the theme of jealous rage, varied now by extension across the generation gap. (The analogy between Polixenes and Leontes is elaborate; extending to Camillo's similar ameliorations, and to such details as importunate jealous hospitality.) It comes as a shock when gracefulness is attributed to Polixenes by the generously repentant Leontes (V.i.170). Although he feels her attractiveness himself, Polixenes is an opponent of the simple, pure 'gracious' love that makes Perdita a blessing to her community.
Even the popular Autolycus, unexpectedly, is related to the same thematic complex. His suggestions are mythological—‘My father named me Autolycus; who, being as I am, littered under Mercury, was likewise a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles’ (IV.iii.24-6). Anciently, Autolycus was not merely an astrological ‘child of Mercury’ but Mercury’s son. Shakespeare's Autolycus conforms to the mercurial archetype in his ingenious thefts, his eloquence and his music (he sings five of the six songs solo, and leads in a sixth). Centuries before Mann's Felix Krull he is a representative of the cultural process; a parasitic improviser; a snapper-up, taking material from simple nature and exploiting the rustics with sophisticated and amoral arts—not least the tragi-comic art of the rogue-pastoral ballad. Yet exploitation of nature is only a part of Autolycus’ meaning. He is also a mercurial genius presiding over the many disguises of the last two acts. To say nothing of Autolycus’ own Biblical disguise in search of a good Samaritan, Polixenes and Camillo disguise to spy; Perdita dresses up first as Flora, then in Autolycus' hat, an attribute of Mercury that comes to her via Florizel, and finally as a Libyan princess; and Florizel becomes a shepherd, and then, by changing clothes with Autolycus, a ruined courtier. (Moreover, the metamorphoses of the Clown and the old Shepherd to gentlemen is strictly supervised by Autolycus.) Mercury was also a god of deeper changes; so that the disguises (as often in Renaissance literature) externalize character transformation. Perdita herself says: 'sure this robe of mine/Does change my disposition' (IV.iv. 134-5). In part Autolycus contributes the spontaneous creativity of ordinary mundane social roles. But disguise has also a negative aspect, of deception; so that Florizel must set aside the Autolycus persona, and the instability of the Age of Mercury, before the action can reach its happy resolution. Finally, in the concluding scene, the most profound transformation of all, the shedding of Hermione's disguise of stone, is achieved without Autolycus' arts.

The pastoral scenes, then, develop in metaphorical terms the 'hidden growth' that changes the character of Leontes. Far from being a mere interlude, they present symbols of the repair of nature; of the civilizing effect of art; of the gentling effect of time; of the interplay between nature and grace (as in Perdita's pageant of Flora); and of integration (as in the measurement of time, an emblem of temperance). Perdita's grace is not conceived as something super-added to nature, but as totally implicit; perfect mixture. Hence the placement of the Bohemian idyll: its natural phase allows time for grace to permeate and transform, edifying and growing a new nature. It is in the depths of ordinary goodness that the soul's life is to be recovered, it seems. Yet Bohemia is no 'merely' natural realm, but a mercurial place of mixture, where character transformation—under such common symbols as disguises and changing Ages—seems to happen all the time. And it is only after the Bohemian act that Cleomenes the oracle's messenger pronounces Leontes penitent: 'Sir, you have done enough' (V.i.l).

Notes

1 Rosalie L. Colie, Shakespeare's Living Art (Princeton University Press, 1974), 266.

2Ibid. 270 (for documentation see J. H. P. Pafford's note in the New Arden edn (Methuen and Harvard University Press, 1963), which I have used for Winter's Tale quotations and references). Earlier pastoral features include the place name Sicilia; similes from shepherding such as I.ii.1 ff. (‘the shepherd's note’) and I.ii.67 ff. (‘twinned lambs’). Romance features include the bear, exposure of Perdita and the shipwreck (III.iii).

3 Hermione was also a town with a famous cult of Ceres and Proserpina. On the statue of special importance in Ceres’ cult, see Vicenzo Cartari, Imagini dellì Dei de gl’ Antichi (Venice, 1647), 121, 125.

4Paradise Lost, IX.503-6, 'not those that in Illyria changed/Hermione and Cadmus'. On the confusion of Hermione and Harmonia, see D. T. Starnes and E. W. Talbert, Classical Myth and Legend in Renaissance Dictionaries (University of North Carolina, 1955), 243.

5Prolusion 2; Yale Prose Milton, 1.238. See, e.g., Diodorus Siculus, V.49; Ovid Met., III. 132; Apollodorus, Bibliotheca, III.iv.2; Natale Conti, Mythologiae, IX. 14.


8 III.ii.148-9 (no s.d. in Folio); cf. V.iii.126-7, where Hermione explains that she only learnt the rest of the oracle from Paulina.

9 See further my 'The Image of Mortality: *The Faerie Queene*, II.i-ii', *HLQ* 24 (1961), 91-110. S. L. Bethell, *The Winter's Tale*: A Study (Staple's, 1947), 74, suggests that the Pauline doctrine of baptism may be involved, without going into detail.

10 III.i.9. See Bethell 83-4 on Shakespeare's amplification of the oracle's sanctity.

11 II.iii.84; cf. III.ii.43, 45, 51.

12 III.ii.82; cf. 81, where Hermione says 'My life stands in the level of your dreams', meaning 'within the range of your aggressive delusions', but perhaps with a punning implication. See Nevill Coghill, 'Six Points of Stage-craft' in *Shakespeare 'The Winter's Tale': A Casebook*, ed. K. Muir (Macmillan, 1968), 212.


14 'Recognition in *The Winter's Tale*', 112.

15 Pafford lix, note 4.


17 See Pierio Valeriano, *Hieroglyphica* (Lyons, 1595), 106. Cf. Peele *Old Wives' Tale*, 196-202, 'he with his chanting spells/Did turn me straight unto an ugly bear . . . And all the day I sit, as now you see,/And speak in riddles, all inspired with rage./Seeming an old and miserable man:/And yet I am in April of my age'; Nashe, *The Unfortunate Traveller*, in *Works*, ed. McKerrow and Wilson, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958), 240, 'a bear (which is the most cruelest of all beasts)'. The comedy of the scene is no argument (*pace* Pafford 72 note) against its having allegorical contents; particularly in view of the didactic theory that favoured incongruous fables. On the use of bizarre images, see E. H. Gombrich, *Symbolic Images* (Phaidon, 1972), 12395: 'Icones symbolicae'. R. G. Hunter, *Shakespeare and the Comedy of Forgiveness* (New York and London: Columbia, 1965), 192, 196 notices the iconographical appropriateness of the bear, but sees no allegory.


19 III.ii.165-70 'He (most humane/And filled with honour) . . . himself commended./No richer than his honour'; cf. I.ii.310,407,410,442; II.ii.188; IV.iv.511; V.i.193.

20 Hunter 195 shows that according to the moral theology of Shakespeare's time Antigonus would not be thought bound by an evil oath.

21 Pafford lxix.
Many passages confirm the impression: e.g. III.iii.1646 (Antigonus' vision of Hermione's ghost, which leads him to say 'A do believe/Hermione hath suffered death') and V.iii.115-17: 'That she is living/Were it but told you, should be hooted at/Like an old tale'; III.ii.201; III.iii.42; V.i.80; V.iii.140.


G. G. Gervinus, Shakespeare Commentaries, tr. F. E. Bunnett (1883), 811; Bethell 87, 102.

v.iii.125-8; This is treated by Pafford as a loose end, since Hermione was present herself to hear the oracle; but see n. 8 above on the timing of Hermione's faint. The speech is probably allegorical: Hermione knew by Paulina's theological instruction that there was hope of grace (i.e., of Perdita's recovery).

Frye 107 takes 'winter's tale' to refer to the dark first part of the play. But winter's tale seems to have been used either as a generic term for a fairy-tale or romance; or else in the sense 'fantastic, idle tale'. So examples in OED s.v. Winter 5: 'A mere winter-story without any ground or reason'; 'Old wives' fables and winter tales'; 'Such winter tales as it were too great a miscpense of time and words to refute them'.

OED s.v. Attrition cites Tucker: 'Three stages in the passage from vice to virtue: attrition, contrition, and repentance'. Hooker defines attrition as 'horror of sin through fear of punishment, without any loving sense, or taste of God's mercy'. Its sorrow for sin was incomplete; so that Bradford (1555) made it 'one of the differences between contrition and attrition', that in the former there was 'just and full' sorrow (Works, Parker Soc, p. 46). Shakespeare's use of semi-technical theological terms is noticeable: see e.g. III.ii.223 'affliction'; III.ii.240-1 'recreation', 'exercise'; V.iii.145 'justified'.

George R. Kernodle, From Art to Theatre (Univ. of Chicago, 1944), 62; Inga-Stina Ewbank, 'The Triumph of Time', in Muir, 115, n. 15 (suggesting that Shakespeare may have started a fashion for moving statues in masques). There is a speaking statue in Peele's Old Wives' Tale.

Ezek.11-19: 'And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh'. Hab. 2.10-11, the text usually cited, is also apt: 'Thou hast . . . sinned against thy soul. For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it.'
History: Essays Presented to Ernst Cassirer, ed. R. Klibansky and H. J. Paton (1936), 197-222.

37 W. Blisset, This Wide Gap of Time: The Winter's Tale', ELR 1(1971), 52-69, esp. 56-9, 63.


39 V.ii.28; V.ii.62; V.iii.115 17. Cf. Pafford liii.

40De legibus 6; see Pietro Bongo, Numerorum mysteria (Bergamo, 1591), 412. Valeriano (358), partly following Varro and Censorinus, gives the five ages as: I infantia (0 to 5), II pueritia (to 15 or 16), III adolescentes (to 30), IV iuniores (to 45), V seniores (from 46). Samuel C. Chew, The Pilgrimage of Life (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat, 1973), discusses the five age scheme at 160-2, 218-19, giving examples from Palingenius, Raleigh and John Davies of Hereford.

41 For the calculation of Leontes' age, see F. W. Bateson, below, p. 70. The repeated appearance of the number 23, to which Mr Bateson draws attention, may be an intentional number symbolism. Bongo (442) comments that 'by this number can be signified the completing and perfecting of human salvation, which is brought about especially by true faith and good works. Perfect faith is denoted by the triad, which mystically implies faith in the Holy Trinity; while the perfection of works consists in observation of God's commandments, which is expressed through the number 20, in accordance with the double dyad, in that the decalogue is handed down through the Old Testament, and declared more fully in the New.'

42De E apud Delph. 292 D-E. On the general significance of the Ages of Man schemes, see Raymond Klibansky et al., Saturn and Melancholy (Nelson, 1964), a study of the Four Ages, and the only adequate treatment of any of the schemes.

43 Spenser, F. Q. II.ix.22.


45 V.i.51-2; see Spenser and the Numbers of Time, 280, 287 n. Antigonus too intends to 'be squared' (regulated) by his vision's instructions (III.iii.41). But in the case of the Old Man, allegorically Leontes' sinful part, this will mean elimination.

46 Number symbolism was a conventional feature of pastoral: see Helen Cooper, The Goat and the Eclogue', PQ 53 (1974), 372 and cf. my Triumphal Forms (Cambridge Univ., 1970), 139.


48 Such as Pafford (lxxviii).

49 IV.iv.74-127: rosemary, rue, carnation, gillyflower, lavender, mint, savory, marjoram, marigold, daffodil, violet, primrose, oxlip, crown imperial, lily, iris.


51 Conti V.14; X; Sandys 193. Cf. Hunter 198.
52 Fasti V. 195 ff. See Edgar Wind, Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance (Faber, 1968), 115-17 esp. 117: ‘the progression Zephyr-Chloris-Flora spells out the familiar dialectic of love. . . ’ Flora's desire to count the flower colours in her garden (‘saepe ego digestos volui numerare colores/nec potui’) was a constant challenge to numerological imitation. On the connection of the primroses at IV.iv. 122-5 with chlorosis, see Pafford 172.

53 As it is to Pafford (lxix, note). But he rightly rejects the popular error that the pastoral scenes take place in spring. On this point IV.iv.79, 107 and 113 are decisive. See Ewbank 108.

54 Klibansky 293-4.

55 ‘Remembrance’ perhaps in a specific sense: ‘Rosemary and rue signified respectively remembrance (friendship) and grace (repentance). Rue is known as ‘herb grace’ (Pafford). Cf. Robert Greene Upstart Courtier (1871), 4: ‘some of them smiled and said “rue was called herb grace” which though they scorned in their youth, they might wear in their age, and it was never too late to say miserere’.

56 The Art of English Poesy, ed. Gladys D. Willcock and Alice Walker (Cambridge Univ., 1936), 303-4; cf. Frye 114. The gillyflower had two other relevant associations: it was a term for a loose woman (OED s.v. Gillyflower 2b, late examples only); and it was an emblem of gentleness (e.g. A Handful of Pleasant Delights (1584), ed. H.E. Rollins (New York: Dover, 1965), 5: ‘Gillyflowers is for gentleness./which in me shall remain:/Hoping that no sedition shall./Depart our hearts in twain.’)


58 Polixenes' grandiloquence, from the very start, is noted in M. M. Mahood, The Winter's Tale’ in Muir 214. On Polixenes as a Baconian improver, see Colie 275.

59 Cf. ibid. 253 ç. and 254; Bethell 93, 94; Nuttall 479 (on Perdita's civilized innocence).

60 IV.ii.1-3; 10-20; cf. Lii.I ff.

61 Cf. Mahood 228.


64 See Norman Holland, 'Disguise, Comic and Cosmic' in The First Modern Comedies (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 1959), 45-63. On Marsilio Ficino's theory of Mercury's part in conversio, see Wind 123; on Mercury's relation to Flora, ibid. 126 n. Ficino's In vita coelitus comparanda III.5 discusses the neutral Mercury's moderating role in character formation. On Mercury as a god of mixture, see Ficino, In Platonis Timaeum, chs. XIX-XX.

65 In the five-age as in the commoner (Ptolemaic) seven-age scheme, Mercury presided over the second age, pueritia (6-16 and 5-14 respectively): see Ptolemy, Tetrabiblos, IV.10 and consult Chew 163-9, Klibansky 149, n. 74, Franz Boll, 'Die Lebensalter', Neue Jahrbücher für das klassische Altertum 16 (1913), 89-154.
On Mercury's changeable influence, see Valeriano 358, on the five ages: assigning *pueritia* to Mercury, he continues: 'undeillud eius aetatis Studium rerum plurimarum, et mutabilitas, et inconstantia, ut modo hoc, modo illud appetant . . .'.

Charles W. Hieatt (essay date 1978)


*In the essay below, Hieatt examines "the adherence of mortals to a standard of ideal behaviour" as the shaping principle which forms a coherent basis of the play's structural segments.*

I

That *The Winter's Tale* presents an experimental, twopart structure has been generally agreed since the time of Thomas Price, a late Victorian critic who described the play as 'a genuine diptych', the first part of which is 'a tragedy and the second a comedy'. On the other hand, opinion of the success of this structure has changed radically, the once maligned gap in time between Acts III and IV now being regarded as less a flaw than an index of Shakespeare's over-all design. Whereas Price found that 'in passing from part to part, the mind loses grasp of the artistic unity', Nevil Coghill sees the end of Act III as 'a kind of dramaturgical hinge, a moment of planned structural antithesis'. And while Northrop Frye also calls the play a diptych, he finds coherence in an arrangement 'of parallel and contrasting actions, one dealing with age, winter, and the jealousy of Leontes, the other with youth, summer, and the love of Florizel'. Thus, in the modern view, Shakespeare achieves unity through a significant balance of elements on either side of Time's central chorus: events such as Perdita's two ocean voyages and the attempts to stay the departures of Polixenes and Camillo in Acts I and IV would appear to establish a certain architectural symmetry, while others would seem to join the two parts in the cross-referential manner of the Elizabethan double plot. As Dr Tillyard pointed out, 'Florizel and Perdita re-enact the marriage of Leontes and Hermione, but with better success.' Moreover, as Frye has observed, these contrasting illustrations of imperfect and perfect love develop complementary views of the same theme.

Florizel's love for Perdita, which transcends his duty to his father and his social responsibilities as a prince, is a state of mind above reason. He is advised, he says, by his 'fancy':

If my reason
Will thereto be obedient, I have reason;
If not, my senses, better pleased with madness,
Do bid it welcome.

Leontes' jealousy is a fantasy below reason, and hence a parody of Florizel's state.

It is clear that the play presents contrasting illustrations of the effects of sinful as opposed to virtuous fantasy, and the behaviour of Leontes in the first three acts supports Frye's claim of a mutual theme of reason overcome by passion. While partly agreeing with this modern approach, however, I am convinced that both the theory of a bilateral structure and the current idea of the unifying function of parallel action are erroneous. Recently, Philip Weinstein has questioned the merit of Florizel's behaviour, finding his idealism inadequate to the occasion, his irrational love to some extent an echo of Leontes's jealousy; Weinstein observes that the motifs of symbolic regeneration are not resolved at the end of the Pastoral Scene and claims that 'to the degree that such motifs remain unresolved, the scene will mirror, not redeem, life as we have seen it in that fatal country Sicilia'. So disparaging a view of Florizel is unfounded. It is true that irrational passion twice leads to Perdita's exile, but this does not mean that the young lovers, like Leontes, are morally at fault; indeed, a comic
conclusion to the play depends upon Florizel's behaving as he does, and, from the audience's point of view, a resolution to the young lovers' difficulties is all but promised at the end of the Pastoral Scene when Camillo directs them to Sicily. But Weinstein's point that the Pastoral Scene reproduces an earlier pattern is none the less a valuable one. Regardless of its significance, the action in Bohemia does mirror that in Sicily, and the similarity between the first three and the fourth Acts suggests that a two-part view of the play accounts for only a portion of a larger, more complicated scheme. As for the alleged unifying function of parallel action, the linear development of The Winter's Tale denies that its structural segments are linked primarily by cross-reference. Events are arranged chronologically throughout and, unlike those of the double plot, bear not only a comparative but a sequential, cause-and-effect relationship. Thus, despite their disjunctive nature, the structural segments will cohere on the basis of an over-all shaping principle, while their parallel action will have the secondary function of underscoring and redefining this principle in terms of theme.

II

To deny the modern theory of unity in The Winter's Tale is to re-confront the old complaints of fragmentation and an inappropriate mixture of tragedy and comedy. In seeking an over-all shaping principle, one might therefore look to the implications of the play's comic reversal, which occurs in Act III when a providential intelligence wrests control from Leontes and shows itself responsive to human desire. The forces of moral order in Shakespearian tragedy remain in the background and allow a kind of roughshod and unpoetic justice to take its course, but the death of Mamillius immediately following the oracle's announcement that 'the king shall live without an heir' confirms the presence of a supernal being who had foreseen the wilfulness of Leontes and planned to punish him accordingly. Furthermore, if Apollo can punish he can also forgive, and the possibility that 'that which is lost' may be 'found' suggests to an experienced audience the promise of a brighter future. Subsequently, Perdita's escape and imminent return at the end of Act IV anticipate the accuracy of this suggestion, and evidence of divine ordination seems even greater on Hermione's resurrection near the end of Act v. Her unexpected awakening momentarily implies that the tale is a comic myth, a story in which the Divine is both controller and hero, with the unlikelihood of tragedy turned to comedy explained as being a result of providential power and mercy.

Inherent, then, is a strong sense of allegory, and a pattern of sin, penance, and forgiveness has led a number of critics to describe the play in terms of Christian doctrine. Weinstein, on the other hand, sees 'great creating nature' as the agent of a controlling power that remains undefined, while still others have seen Nature herself as a force whose cyclical benediction renews life through the springtime love of Florizel and Perdita. But to emphasize an other than human element in this way is to disregard the essentially mundane forces that govern the play's outcome. Mamillius's death may well represent divine punishment, and Hermione's resurrection need not be an actual return from the dead to symbolize miraculous intervention. In the end, however, Shakespeare reveals that her death and resurrection were illusory, though he might easily, and perhaps more credibly, have presented them as real. By the same token, the reconciling power of love in the Pastoral Scene is not joined with nature, as C. L. Barber illustrates is the case in Shakespeare's middle comedies, in a 'compelling rhythm that orders men's affairs'.

Seasonal imagery, festivity, and mistaken identity are all evident, but these things do not signify confusion or lack of self-control on the part of the young lovers, who, like all of the principal characters, have a share in effecting a comic ending. What allows the play to proceed beyond Act III is not so much Apollo's intervention as that of Paulina, whose shrewish courage in Act n introduces a note of humour, and whose intimidation of Leontes first suggests that he is something less, and more, than the irreconcilable tragic hero. The possibility of development from 'tragedy' to comedy is gained by Leontes's partial response to good advice in allowing Perdita to live, and thus the possibility of his redemption may be traced to his own actions, while redemption itself will also require something more than Apollo's mercy. Although the oracle suggests a brighter prospect to an audience, it predicts alternatives that depend on human behaviour and therefore claims for the gods only a limited control within the fictional world. That 'the king shall live without an heir, if that which is lost be not
found' gives the mortals primary responsibility for effecting a happy ending: Hermione must remain hidden from her husband, as her earlier disclosure would signify an intention to produce an heir; for the same reason, Leontes must not remarry but remain contrite and faithful to the memory of his queen until their daughter returns; the younger couple must place their love above fear of reprisal if Perdita is to leave Bohemia; and Camillo must retain his love for Leontes if he is to direct Perdita homeward.

In so far as the oracle is understood by the fictional characters, of course, it constitutes a direct command and therefore imposes a measure of control over them; but in no sense is it a covenant guaranteeing reward for specified behaviour, nor is it obeyed primarily from a regard for religious duty. Paulina argues that Leontes's remarriage would disobey the 'tenor' of Apollo's words and 'to the heavens be contrary' (v. I. 38, 45), but Leontes at this point has already declined his counsellors' advice in memory of his love for Hermione. Hermione, in her greater awareness, is more directly responsive to the oracle; as she says, it 'gave hope' that her daughter was alive, and she remained hidden in order 'to see the issue' (v.3.127, 128). But she has no assurance of finding Perdita, and, like that of Leontes, her continued celibacy depends on enduring fidelity rather than dutiful obedience or the certainty of coming reward. Hence the principal characters reunite themselves by independently preserving what Leontes had allowed his passion to destroy, and their combined efforts cohere with the 'tragic' action in a continuous illustration of the results of imperfect and perfect love. To be sure, Apollo aids a desirable outcome: a timely dream causes Antigonus to abandon Perdita where she will be protected by shepherds and later discovered by Florizel. But if serious romance can admit the supernatural, its shaping principle is the adherence of mortals to a standard of ideal behaviour; while divine justice and mercy are part of the scheme, the play, like Arthurian and Renaissance epic romance, takes primary meaning from a demonstration of human influence over human destiny.

III

The relationship of structure to this shaping principle is most easily approached through a comparison of The Winter's Tale with its source, Robert Greene's Pandosto. In the first section of the original story, Pandosto's jealousy of his childhood friend, Egistus, results in the exile of his daughter, Fawnia, and the death of his son and wife. Subsequently, the scene changes to Egistus's realm where Fawnia is found and brought up by shepherds, is courted by Prince Dorastus, and for the second time escapes a king's wrath as she flees with her lover. Finally, the scene shifts again to Pandosto's court, where Fawnia is unsuccessfully wooed by her lustful father before she is identified and the joy of her return and marriage to Dorastus is offset by Pandosto's guilt-inspired suicide. Thus the major difference in the two plots is in their endings: in Greene a comic outcome involves the mortification of the evil Pandosto, in Shakespeare the restoration of Leontes and Hermione to their former felicity. Despite these different conclusions, however, the fundamental pattern of the two stories is identical, and the play therefore presents a more complex structure than is generally recognized. The first movement in both works constitutes a discrete segment of fictional time, a single 'organic action' (to use Bernard Beckerman's terminology of dramatic structure), in which a king's passion runs its dreadful course and the initial dramatic conflict is brought to a standstill. But in contrast with this 'tragic', falling action, the events rising to comic reconciliation in both play and novel comprise two integral movements, the one dealing with young love, the other chiefly with the further adventures of Pandosto and Leontes. The dramatic conflict in the first part of The Winter's Tale is, in effect, re-enacted between the young lovers and Polixenes, and matters are again brought to a standstill with the removal of those accused of conspiring against the king's interests. Furthermore, this second organic action is also followed by a major shift in time and place, which in turn precipitates another organic action ending with the return of Hermione. Thus, rather than symmetrical events on either side of Time's chorus, Perdita's two ocean voyages are structural interruptions that precede and initiate second and third movements, much as Polixenes's voyage to Sicily initiates the first. Like Greene, Shakespeare employs a three-part structure, each part having its separate setting and grouping of characters, its individual reversals of fortune and mood, its discrete increment of fictional time.
This is not to deny the pivotal effect that is enhanced by Time's chorus at the centre of *The Winter's Tale*; as Emrys Jones points out, the Shakespearian pattern of equally apportioned action and reaction that A. C. Bradley noted in the tragedies is clearly present here. At the same time, however, Shakespeare develops fully his usual comic pattern of oppression, mistaken identity, and final clarification in a series of structural segments that in combination make up the whole. Moreover, if the conspicuousness of the central break between Acts III and IV has tended to obscure this tripartite structure, it has likewise drawn attention from a coinciding triptych of parallel actions and language that Shakespeare also shares with Greene. Acting under false assumptions, Pandosto allows his 'reason' to be 'suppressed with rage' (p. 190) and passes an unlawful judgement upon his wife, and this series of impelling circumstances is twice repeated: in the second part as Dorastus finds that his unlawful love for the unidentified Fawnia is 'not to be suppressed by wisdom, because not to be comprehended by reason' (p. 205), and in the third as Pandosto is also attracted by a mere shepherdess and vainly seeks 'by reason and wisdom to suppress this frantic affection' (p. 219). Similarly, *The Winter's Tale* presents three occasions on which a prince labouring under false assumptions approaches the daughter of a king to deny both reason and law in judging the propriety of her outward appearance and her suitability as a bride. In Act I Leontes illogically claims that Hermione's stray'd 'affection . . . dost make possible things not so held' (2.138-9), his illegal judgement of her ironically foreshadowing the central events of Act IV, where Florizel also ignores a counsel of 'reason' in favour of 'madness' and 'fancy' and finds himself 'heir to my affection' (4.482 fl.). And so, too, in the ceremonial Statue Scene at the end of the play, passion and reason are once again dramatically opposed as the king steps forward to judge the merits of a queenly guise. Having exhibited what is assumed to be a mere counterfeit of Hermione, Paulina turns to Leontes (1. 56) and offers to close the curtain and thereby end the ceremony. Leontes twice rejects this and, responding to her alleged fear that his 'fancy' will belie reality, adopts Florizel's earlier attitude: 'No settled senses of the world can match / The pleasure of that madness' (11. 72-3). Paulina then mentions that she could 'afflict' him further, to which Leontes agrees, and having addressed the statue he attempts to kiss it. Finally, her last offer to close the curtain (1. 83) is followed by her announcement that, although it may seem 'unlawful', she can make the statue move, and the assent of Leontes completes a third judgement in which fantasy has been preferred to reason.

So close a resemblance between plot, structure, and cross-referential technique, moreover, suggests that the two authors have the identical intention of illustrating varied qualities and effects of motivating passion. In both stories jealousy is ugly and self-defeating, but love enlists our sympathy and predicates creative rather than destructive results; and although the endings differ, they would appear to demonstrate the same governing principle: Pandosto's suicide contrasting with the triumphant marriage of Dorastus, and the fidelity of Leontes and Florizel bringing its similar rewards. But if this is Greene's purpose, he fails to realize it, primarily because the implications of the parallel action in *Pandosto* conflict with the principles of heroic romance. Fawnia owes her safe conduct back and forth across stormy seas to an arbitrary and capricious 'Fortune', and any evidence of human control over the course of the plot is denied by the inability of Greene's characters to control themselves. Dorastus refrains from imposing his will on Fawnia, and his eventual oath of loyalty in trothplight is also commendable (p. 212); but the central conflict in Greene's pastoral scene is Dorastus's interior struggle between prudent disgust for so demeaning a marriage and what proves to be overwhelming sexual desire. Like Pandosto, he caroms helplessly between the dictates of reason and passion, and his surrender to Fawnia's charms implies no pertinent alternative to Pandosto's jealousy and lust, but merely proves that he, too, is passion's victim rather than its lord. Despite a surface of fashionable moralizing, the overriding point in Greene's story is the similarity of crucial events whose governing principle is the mysterious power of the emotions to 'perplex' and subdue the mind. Consequently, although a single theme illustrated in similar circumstances imparts a certain unity to the tale, an inherent disavowal of human responsibility deprives its three parts of further rationale for their juxtaposition, either as contrasting moral exempla or as a continuous demonstration of human influence over human destiny.

These contradictions are resolved in *The Winter's Tale*, chiefly through a far more elaborate use of cross-referential action to redefine the theme of motivating passion. Shakespeare omits Dorastus's anxious
soliloquies that show love victorious over reason, as he does the events that explain and nearly justify Pandosto's suspicion of his wife, the point being that reason is neither a necessary prologue to jealousy and love nor always a suitable means for confronting them: like all humankind, Leontes and Florizel on attaining sexual maturity unavoidably became subject to that 'stronger blood' that Polixenes implies is 'hereditary ours' (1.2.73, 75), and neither man can support his behaviour on the basis of circumstantial evidence. But while an implied comparison shows the fallibility of passion and reason, it also shows that one's actions should none the less be based on unhampered judgement and a recognition of prior commitments. Unlike Dorastus, Florizel has no qualms about his loved one's social status, and his intuitive perception of Perdita's merit condemns Leontes's biased judgement of her. Moreover, in Shakespeare's version of the story the young lovers have already dared to 'mingle faith' (IV.4.461), thereby entering into a formal contract that raises their relationship above the illusive sway of the affections; like Leontes and Hermione, they are pledged from their first appearance in eternal trothplight, and thus a comparison of the two men's behaviour is morally significant. Having succumbed to passion, Leontes eclipses his 'faith' with his 'folly' (I.2.429, 430); but while Florizel acknowledges himself heir to his affection, he nevertheless rejects both passion and reason as unreliable guides to be transcended, according to his 'oath' and his 'honour', in view of his 'faith' (IV.4.335, 478, 492). His state of mind, as Frye says, is above rather than below reason; moreover, it is above passion as well, and it therefore redefines Leontes's irrational jealousy as a lack of constancy in love.

Confined to Florizel and Leontes, however, the comparison is incomplete and somewhat misleading. If Florizel has sworn allegiance to Perdita, he is also bound in duty to his father, and that the latter obligation predates the former would seem to lend support to Philip Weinstein's argument for Florizel's culpability. But the point here is that the dramatic conflict between father and son that Shakespeare brings to the tale repeats the formal judgement scene of Act III from a different perspective. As king and magistrate, Polixenes gathers what appears to be incontrovertible evidence of Florizel's guilt, and his verdict, though given in anger, is measurably justified. As an enemy to love, however, he ignores the primacy of honourable trothplight because he finds his own 'honour' in jeopardy (IV.4.437). Like Leontes, he misjudges Perdita, debases his own offspring (IV.4.419-20), and discovers an illicit relationship where none exists. Thus, although Weinstein is correct in saying that the Pastoral Scene mirrors 'life as we have seen it in that fatal country Sicilia', the echo of Leontes's jealousy that he hears in Florizel is in fact sounded by Polixenes, the implication being that the young prince stands between two irreconcilable claims to choose the greater. Although exile is 'desperate' Florizel 'needs must think it honesty' (IV.4.488) and, in rejecting his father's appeal to reason, he actually employs reason to choose the more honourable course.

Furthermore, implication is followed by proof when at the end of the Pastoral Scene the method of Shakespeare's alterations is fully revealed. In retrospect, one can see that the second movement imitates the sequential development of the first, passing from a stayed departure, to suspicion of sexual treachery, to a picture of the impassioned lover, controversial views of Perdita, a climactic judgement scene, and exile. But exile results from different causes, and it elicits different responses from the gods, whose actions as an integral part of the parallel sequence are morally definitive. Blinded by anger, Leontes orders that his child be burnt and, although this sentence is modified by the influence of Paulina, Antigonus dutifully abandons Perdita to chance and probable death. But Leontes's judgement is overruled when Perdita is inadvertently conveyed to safety, and his punishment is confirmed when Antigonus dies for his obedience and the shepherds resolve to suppress her identity. Impelled by love, Florizel also causes Perdita's exile, and again a 'ponderous and settled project' is modified by courageous advice. But Florizel acts against misused authority, and his contrasting behaviour causes what had been arranged by the gods as an equally contrasting response. Whereas Antigonus's dream of the weeping Hermione had directed Perdita to Bohemia, Camillo's vision of Leontes's joyful welcome redirects her homeward (IV.4.548), and whereas the shepherds had unknowingly condemned Leontes, the decision to reveal their secret endorses Florizel's behaviour by anticipating his reward.
Shakespeare continues this technique in the third movement, employing the pre-established sequence and varying the individual action to demonstrate a varied result. The plea of Cleomenes and Dion at the beginning of Act v, that Leontes remarry and produce an heir, is to be compared with the stayed departures of Polixenes and Camillo in Acts I and IV. Alike in their brevity and expositional function, each of these occasions presents a character who is urged to neglect a primary duty to someone he loves, and thus a series of initiating motifs emphasizes the tripartite structure and calls attention to the theme of fidelity under stress. In the third movement, however, this motif coincidentally advances the parallel sequence, the whole of which will now have a dual reference. In remaining true to his vow to revere Hermione, Leontes reverses his initial behaviour and, in taking an oath not to remarry until she returns, he stands, as had Florizel, between private and public obligations to choose the greater. Next, Perdita's worth is once again defended and then denied, and again a king becomes suspicious of sexual treachery. Leontes's question, 'Is this the daughter of a King?', is ominously iterative, as is his remark that Florizel has broken from 'where you were tied in duty' (v. 1.207, 212). But on this occasion the judge is amenable. Whom he once would have burnt and Polixenes have scratched with briars, Leontes now can wish to have for himself; where Polixenes had found only dishonour, Leontes finds a more important bond than filial duty, so long as 'honour' is 'not o'ertrown by your desires' (v. 1.229); and whereas a disregard for the sanctity of trothplight had caused dishonour and confusion, the willingness of Leontes to intercede on the lovers' behalf is immediately followed by the discovery of Perdita's true identity.

Hence, the sequence to this point represents a corrected re-enactment of the past. Leontes's present fidelity to Hermione would have forestalled the unhappy consequences of his passion, and with a proper judgement of Florizel's behaviour Polixenes's objections to the match disappear. At the same time, Leontes's imitation of Florizel also indicates that Perdita's return has been a joint enterprise. While Florizel is responsible for initiating the chain of events that led her homeward, these events are allowed to occur because Leontes has remained constant to his own trothplight in the face of similar demands that he recognize his duty to the state. Moreover, Leontes's reversal of his behaviour as lover and magistrate provides both cause and model for his further redemption. In the Statue Scene Paulina assumes Polixenes's former role as she interrogates the lover surreptitiously, urging prudence while disguising her ability to react to his decision. But Paulina is aware of the gods' secret purposes, and her response, like theirs, will be compliant and morally definitive.

Overwhelmed by the statue's authenticity, Leontes fancies that it is truly his queen and accepts responsibility for Paulina's bringing it to life, an act that, as she says, may appear 'wicked' and 'unlawful'. Furthermore, Paulina draws attention to the full meaning of his decision when she says that 'It is required / You do awake your faith' (11. 94-5). Here, again, 'faith' assumes its literal meaning, denoting the fidelity mutually sworn in anticipation of formal wedlock; as elsewhere in The Winter's Tale, the term is synonymous with 'trothplight' and 'contract' and represents an ideal whose violation sets man against himself and his society, but whose veneration effects integration and harmony. Leontes is required to reaffirm his faith in order to recover his bride, and with his command to 'proceed', Paulina beckons Hermione from her pedestal in a final demonstration of the power of fidelity to make possible things not so held.

While repeating both theme and pattern, moreover, parallel action in this last movement is made to carry an additional burden, the index to which is a calculated challenge to our credulity. Because Florizel and Leontes have already earned their rewards, events follow one another with little sense of cause and effect, and the third movement becomes progressively more artificial as we encounter the sheer unlikelihood of the Statue Scene. That Paulina and Hermione would subject their king to so elaborate a reconciliation is quite improbable, and for withholding the true state of affairs from his audience Shakespeare has been accused of sacrificing credibility to an expedient bravura ending. Furthermore, this departure from previous standards of versimilitude is not to be explained in terms of generic convention. Improbability is sometimes meant to be tolerated by an audience as a part of the comic spirit, and, as Leo Salingar has pointed out, conspicuous artifice at the end of Shakespeare's comedies often provides a contrast with what has gone before and thereby enhances and 'testifies to a reality within the spectacle'. But in The Winter's Tale terminating artifice imitates an established sequence of events, and although these events are obviously improbable they are to be seriously
regarded as a part of the reality of the spectacle.

Unaware that Hermione is alive, we no longer share the author's Olympian point of view in the Statue Scene and are enjoined with Leontes to expect the impossible. But our experience, though similar, is qualitatively different. As in the first movement, Leontes must choose between love and reason, and a willingness to renew his trothplight is only one of several indications of his continued devotion and the true lover's denial of reason. As onlookers, however, we do not undergo a trial of allegiance to Hermione, and thus we hear in Paulina's call for faith overtones of the word's religious usage, which signifies objective trust in a merciful, all-powerful deity, and which is favoured by the allegorical critics. But the word as addressed to the audience merely borrows from its religious meaning, Paulina's stipulation, as Frye points out, being a call for the 'imaginative faith' necessary to grasp the truth that art has to offer. The several references to developments in the play as being like an 'old tale' raise the question of the ability of art to reproduce nature and anticipate our own reaction to an analogous but more complicated set of circumstances. Having witnessed the means of Perdita's escape and return, we do not share the amazement of the fictional characters on learning her true identity; what to them seems miraculous is to us the final result of a series of independent actions. But in the Statue Scene we are equally nonplussed on being told that Hermione can return to life, while at the same time our memory of a parallel sequence strongly suggests that she will, and thus an apparent conflict between art and reality in the minds of the audience requires that we, like Leontes, undergo a trial of faith. While referring to black magic, Paulina's denial that she is about 'unlawful business' also indicates our obligation to continue to suspend our disbelief and trust in the verity of the artistic illusion. Like Time, she asks that we 'impute it not a crime' if the usual 'law' and 'custom' of dramatic probability are temporarily overthrown, but, unlike Time's, her tone is imperative and implies that we, too, must deny reason and momentarily accept, not only that the impossible will occur on the stage, but that its occurrence will represent an accurate imitation of life. Without a personal commitment to fidelity as a guide more valuable than reason, we are not qualified to appreciate the truth of the Statue Scene and do not deserve to share in Leontes's reward. Like him, we should regard Hermione's awakening as an 'art lawful as eating', and hence we are required to acknowledge our trust in the power of love to achieve and art to represent what we do not yet understand, or else to rise early from our places and leave the theatre.

Notes


2 Price, p. 45.


5 See Ernest Schanzer, The Structural Pattern of The Winter's Tale', Review of English Literature, 5, No. 2 (April, 1964), 72-82 (pp. 78 ff.).


8 'An Interpretation of Pastoral in The Winter's Tale', SQ, 22 (1971), 97-109 (pp. 97, 102).
9*The Winter's Tale*, edited by J. H. P. Pafford (London, 1963), III.2.134-5. For convenience, quotations in my text from both *The Winter's Tale* and Robert Greene's *Pandosto* are taken from this Arden edition, with page references to the latter work which appears there as an appendix to the play.


13 For a similar view of the play as an illustration of the power of love rather than 'an allegory of resurrection', see *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, edited by Geoffrey Bullough, 6 vols (London, 1966-75), VI, 153.


15 Pafford recognizes a three-part structure but does not argue the point; see *The Winter's Tale*, p. liv.


17 Shakespeare most often employs 'faith' with its literal meaning of 'trust, observance of trust, pledge', or 'troth' (see *OED* and *Barlett's Concordance*), and the words 'faith' and 'trothplight' are virtually interchangeable throughout the play. Florizel refers to his trothplight as early as IV.4.49-51, and, although it is not yet celebrated publicly, it is recognized as valid by Leontes in v.3.149-51.

18 For a discussion of Shakespeare's use of the two terms and of the legality of the trothplight, see Pafford's note, *The Winter's Tale*, I.2.278.


22 Though it is not necessary that one's memory be precise; as William Empson says of the double plot, parallel action 'does not depend on being noticed for its operation'. See *Some Versions of Pastoral* (London, 1935), p. 25.

**Joseph M. Lenz (essay date 1986)**


*[In this essay, Lenz divides the play into three distinct sections, associating each with a certain genre and outlining the steps of the "prepared surprise" as a structural unit.]*

Romance, like all modes, creates and maintains a consistent fictive world, an other world with laws unto itself, so events in *The Winter's Tale* can fall out "like an old tale," differently than they would in "real life."
Because that other world does not behave according to "normal" expectations, romance asks that we adjust our vision to meet its own. In fact, romance closure, the sense of eucatastrophic achievement, depends upon the confirmation of its vision, as we have seen in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *The Faerie Queene*. The author must therefore assist his readers to make the necessary adjustment. Medieval romance's literary ancestry gives the author the various ethical systems that complicate the action, setting one knight in conflict with another and sometimes with himself. By watching which system (knight) prevails we recognize that story's values. In an art romance, one that imitates the medieval version, the author more deliberately toys with generic conventions. The encyclopedic *Faerie Queene* contains epic, chivalric romance, chronicle, historical allegory, pastoral, and myth, Spenser using them to enrich his make-believe world, to provide a background for his knights, and to facilitate our understanding of his vision by presenting something familiar: poetry teaches us what we already know. Our participation in romance does not rely on the other world's similarity to the "real" world; it relies on our familiarity with other literary genres.

Walter F. Eggers, who examines how "traditional generic distinctions function in a reader's or audience's experience," describes how the reader discovers a given text's genre: "we inevitably make successive, unsatisfactory guesses about the nature of a work as a whole, until, to satisfy ourselves, we make a last guess at its 'intrinsic' genre." The language ourselves, we make a last guess at its 'intrinsic' genre." The language recalls our discussions of closure. It too is a "last guess" about the "nature of the work as a whole," a guess confirmed by a revelation: the Gawain-poet's envoi, Malory's explicit, Chaucer's palinode, and, most notably, Spenser's Mutabilitie Cantos, each breaks the fiction's bounds by revealing its artificiality. Since romance's generic catholicity makes it perhaps the most artificial mode, it requires this sort of acknowledgment to close, to identify its otherness. In other words, regardless of the ordering principle, whether narrative, spatial, or revelatory, revelation is inherent in romance closure. *The Winter's Tale* offers a prime example of romance as a revelatory mode.

Partly because of its ending, partly because of its beginning, we are not quite sure what to label *The Winter's Tale*. Eggers describes too well our critical experience. We make "successive, unsatisfactory guesses about the nature" of the play, for it is protean, changing its shape before our eyes. The play owes much of its elusiveness to its allusiveness. It belongs to tragedy, comedy, tragicomedy, pastoral, and romance—or, rather, all of these belong to the play. The fascination with identifying each and every genre in it bears out Eggers' contention that we are not comfortable with a fiction until we know its nature.

Despite the recognition that *The Winter's Tale* presents Polonius' rare combination of "tragical-comicalhistorical-pastoral" or Quince's "very tragical mirth" (a recognition of its literary origins), there seems to be an irresistible tendency to discuss the similarity between Shakespeare's creation and the "real world." Howard Felperin, one of the latest and best of the play's commentators, focuses on the "lifelike characterization" which, to some extent, is effected by the play's varied descent from Greek romance, chivalric romance, and the mystery and morality plays. "The best romance," he writes, "manages to pass itself off as the image of the real" by "shadowing or qualifying or problematizing the triumphs it presents." A touch of tragedy, like Mamillius' death, makes romance seem more "real." Likewise, for Fitzroy Plye, "Shakespeare's Romances are the comedies of a man who having written the tragedies is not prepared to cut the material of life to the customary measure of comedy." Again we have the generic blend and again we have the confusion of literary and "real" worlds. What these critics describe as the "lifelike" quality of *The Winter's Tale* results from the density achieved by Shakespeare's combining several generic intentions and expectations. Just as the epic context of *The Faerie Queene* contributes a sense of narrative progress, the record of the hero's trials which informs the final realization of his quest, so too the dramatic context of *The Winter's Tale* forces the romance to accommodate the theatre's demands. Unlike narrative, where episode follows episode and where the reader is free to pick up and put down the book at will, drama assumes an immediate ending. Since drama is performance oriented, the play must be presented within certain prescribed time limits, hence the popularity of the unity of time, in which the plot time should concur with the performance time. Thus the dramatic structure itself, the plot, can reflect the impending conclusion. In *The
Tempest, for instance, Prospero names the hours between two and six as the time needed to complete his scheme, and he repeatedly measures the time left to him. If nothing else, a stop to the action and an epilogue tell us the play is over. Ideally, however, drama shares with romance the self-fulfilling prophecy. From the beginning the playwright sets his dominoes so that in the last act he can tip one to make the whole line fall, revealing the discrete units to be part of a unified, coherent design. Long ago Aristotle defined the complex plot, one which provided an end that both reversed the situation and provoked a recognition, as the best possible dramatic design. For Aristotle, drama, especially tragedy, must always work towards an end: "the structure of events, the plot, is the goal of tragedy, and the goal is the greatest thing of all."6

Still, drama is more than a narrative: it is a representation. Sir Philip Sidney explains the difference "betwixt reporting and representing": "As, for example, I may speak (though I am hereof Peru, and in speech digress from that to the description of Calicut); but in action I cannot represent it without Pacolet's horse." And he complains about too much reporting being done on the stage: "you shall have Asia of the one side, and Afric of the other, and so many other under-kingdoms, that the player, when he cometh in, must ever begin by telling where he is, or the tale will not be conceived."7 Anyone would think that he had just seen Antony and Cleopatra. Nevertheless, dramatists are cautious about "representing" without a warning that their show is only pretense. So much does Bottom worry about his audience's gullibility (or, more likely, his own ability) that he asks Quince to "Write me a prologue, and let that prologue seem to say, we will do no harm with our swords." "This," he concludes, "will put them out of fear"(MND, 3.1.16-21).8 We may smile at Bottom's simplicity, but dramatists possess a cabinet of tranquilizers to put their audiences out of fear. Stages, costumes, actors and acting, sets, asides, apostrophes, prologues, epilogues, all blatantly advertise the play's fictiveness. In drama we are especially challenged to suspend our disbelief because we are so often reminded of the need for belief.

Drama's self-reflexive or self-revelatory conventions complement romance's penchant for calling attention to itself, especially as it reaches its end. In the previous chapter we noted how Spenser develops the correspondence between the knight's quest and the poet's as Book Six draws to its close, making Calidore, as well as Colin, a figure for the poet. A tale's open admission of its literariness does not necessarily undermine its acceptability. In fact, William Nelson, who traces the debate between fact and fiction during the Renaissance, sees self-consciousness as a rhetorical trick played by romancers to escape the classical, humanist, and moral charges against them for lying:

But the proper relationship between the author and his audience required a mutual understanding that the story was neither history told 'for true' nor a childish confusion of make-believe with real, but a transparent device calculated to appeal to a less-than-serious aspect of human nature.9

When a writer admits his tale is a fiction, he asks that we do not impose sense on the tale; in time the tale will make its own sense to us, and its sense, as Spenser insists in Book Six's final stanza, is to give pleasure. The romance writer, like Bottom, does not want his audience to fear a live lion when they should enjoy a make-believe one, or, more pertinently, to confuse a real bear with a stage bear.

But the point where having fun becomes making fun is difficult to establish precisely. Self-consciousness in a story can turn too easily from a "device calculated to appeal to the less-than-serious aspect of human nature" to a device calculated to ridicule. Here drama is particularly dangerous to romance. The very fact that we can see the characters limits the range of their actions. To produce on stage Redcrosse's fight with the dragon, as Spenser describes it and with the same effect, is of course impossible. We expect human actors to behave according to normal human motivations and within certain boundaries of action, time, and space.10 This mimetic expectation makes drama a natural form to satirize romance fantasies, as it does in The Old Wive's Tale and The Knight of the Burning Pestle.
In *The Winter's Tale* Shakespeare uses drama to test the credibility of his romance vision. Throughout the play he alternates between representation and report, between dramatic performance and tall story telling, an alternation evidenced in the play's structure. It divides into three distinct sections, each associated with a specific genre and each reflecting one means by which closure can be attained. Part One (Acts I, II, III) uses a causal narrative reminiscent of tragic plot to order events; Part Two (Act IV) establishes an enclosed space on the pastoral Bohemian island and alters the narrative to an analogical order; Part Three (Act V) presents the statue scene, the eucatastrophe which reveals the play's true kind, a miraculous balance between dramatic belief and romance incredibility.

I

While certainly not a satire, *The Winter's Tale* demonstrates how drama alters romance material and how the intercourse between the two satisfies and frustrates audience expectations of both. The legitimacy of Leontes' much debated jealousy affords a fine example. Critics divide into two schools on this matter: those, like Northrop Frye, for whom "the jealousy explodes without warning"; and those, like Neville Coghill, who see the "fuse already burning early in L.ii."11 The first group regards the jealousy as romantic or incredible, the second as dramatic or credible. Both are correct.

The suddenness and ferocity of Leontes' jealousy are surprising, and Shakespeare alters his source, Robert Greene's *Pandosto*, to accent the surprise. Although Greene outlines the plot, "Wherein Pandosto (furiously incensed by causelesse Jealousie) procured the death of his most loving and loyall wife," he does take pains to show there is some cause for Pandosto's suspicion: the constant companionship between Bellaria and Egistus, their secret meetings in the garden, and Bellaria's provocative habit of "coming her selfe into his [Egistus'] bed chamber to see that nothing should be amis to mislike him."12 Yet, despite appearances, we have Greene's assurance that Pandosto's jealousy is causeless.

In *The Winter's Tale*, however, we have no general announcement of plot. All of our early information concerning Leontes and Polixenes details their long friendship, their alliance, Leontes' promised visit, and the extension of Polixenes' present stay. Just prior to admitting his jealousy, Leontes and Hermione recall their courtship, when

Three crabbed months had sour'd themselves to death
Ere I could make thee open thy white hand
And clap thyself my love.

(I.ii. 102-04)

Leontes' marital suspicion contrasts sharply, and unexpectedly, with his premarital hopes. In his extreme passion he turns his suspicion against the most innocent party present, Mamillius:

Art thou my boy? (I.ii.120)

Art thou my calf? (127)

Most dear'st! my collop! Can thy dam?—may't be? (127)

He subsequently makes his plans to murder Polixenes, his lifelong friend. The sheer irrationality of Leontes' behavior tells us he is mistaken, just as surely as if Shakespeare had followed Greene's example by explaining the plot in a prologue. Greene sets jealousy against a background of suspicious actions; Shakespeare sets jealousy against a background of long established mutual amity—"They were trained together in their childhoods; and there rooted between them such affection, which cannot choose but branch now" (I.i.22-24).
The eruption of Leontes' jealousy in the face of "such affection" shocks us. Where we accept Pandosto's jealousy, partly because it seems more rational, we take exception to Leontes' sudden outburst.

Yet, as Coghill has shown, careful analysis of I.ii reveals that we are prepared for Leontes' explosion. Leontes' efforts to persuade Polixenes to extend his visit are terse and perfunctory, to the point that Hermione scolds, "You, sir, / Charge him too coldly" (29-30). Leontes' cold manner, his silence while Hermione and Polixenes banter, and his possible sarcasm—"Is he won yet?" (86)—all indicate something is amiss. Leontes promptly identifies that something:

But to be paddling palms and pinching fingers,  
As they are now, and making practiced smiles  
As in a looking-glass, and then to sigh, as 'twere  
The mort o' th' deer—O, that is entertainment  
My bosom likes not, nor my brows.

(115-19)

Leontes' confession of jealousy invites us to reinterpret the earlier dialogue. Camillo's remark about the friendship "which cannot choose but branch now" takes on a double-meaning: that which was united must now divide, an ominous prediction of the succeeding action. We can even trace the logic that leads Leontes to conclude he has been cuckolded. Hermione insists that Polixenes stay, and persuades him to do so after Leontes has failed—"At my request he would not" (87). When the topic is courtship and sexual temptation, Hermione confuses (for Leontes at least) who sinned with whom:

Th' offenses we have made you do we'll answer,  
If you first sinned with us and that with us  
You did continue fault and that you slipped not  
With any but with us.

(83-86)

Her statement is triply ambiguous. She could mean "you" (Polixenes and Leontes) sinned with "us" (Polixenes' wife and Hermione); or "you" (Polixenes) with "us" (his wife and Hermione); or "you" (Polixenes) with "us" (Hermione, using the royal plural). The ambiguity increases when Hermione teases, "I have spoken to the purpose twice":

The one for ever earned a royal husband,  
The other for some while a friend.

(106-08)

The parallel clauses encourage Leontes to equate the two purposes. Hermione's payment to the "earned" (the correct verb to fill the ellipsis) friend is the same as her payment to the "earned" husband: the marriage bed.

What surprises us about Leontes' jealousy is that it makes sense, despite its sharp contrast to former friendship and love. Like Greene, Shakespeare provides evidence, or the suggestion of evidence, to make his protagonist's jealousy plausible. Unlike Greene, whose continual exclamations of Bellaria's innocence and Pandosto's "causelesse Jealousie" force sympathy for her and antipathy for him, Shakespeare allows the drama itself to guide our responses. The pastoral tranquility which fosters friendship and love is subtly undercut by hints of discord. The opposition is focused when Leontes admits his jealousy, as much a recognition for us as it is for him. Coghill calls this the technique of the "prepared surprise." The audience is given an expectation.
that the dramatist can play upon and later confirm. Frank Kermode, we remember, defines this ironic process as *peripeteia*, the falsification of expectations which discovers "something real." By reversing the flow of our naive expectations an author can provoke our recognition of the true course of events. In Leontes' case, we believe that all is well in Sicilia, that Leontes, Hermione, and Polixenes dwell in mutual friendship and harmony. Leontes upsets this belief when his jealousy erupts. But because that jealousy concurs with bits of information embedded in the dialogue, we can accept it as plausible, even if it conflicts with our original beliefs and even if we think Leontes mistaken.

The "prepared surprise" constitutes the basic structural unit of *The Winter's Tale*. We can identify a set formula which the "surprise" follows: a prophetic statement; a series of remarks, actions and events that substantiate the prophecy; and the ironic fulfillment of the original statement. This pattern, which recalls romance closure through prophetic fulfillment, can be found in the play's plot skeleton. There is the oracle about finding that which is lost, the scenes devoted to the lost one, Perdita, and her eventual restoration to her father, each step corresponding to a section of the play as I have divided it: prediction (Part One), substantiation (Part Two), fulfillment (Part Three). Curiously, Shakespeare takes even greater care to ground his scenes' trueness as the play develops and as the action becomes more dramatically preposterous.

Let us take for example Antigonus' unfortunate demise, which concludes Part One. Shakespeare's most famous stage direction distresses some and delights others. "The deep damnation of his taking off," so detestable to Arthur Quiller-Couch, evokes peals of laughter from Coghill, at least as he would stage it. In the bear scene S. L. Bethel hears the "deliberate creaking of stage machinery" which "draws attention to the play as play by obtruding matters of technique upon the audience." As we have noticed, the deliberate advertisement of the play as play distances the audience from the action, permitting them to view it with that "less-than-serious aspect of human nature." Whether he used a real bear or a man in costume, Shakespeare does not want to affright the ladies.

As he does with Leontes' jealousy, which surprises because it makes subtle sense against the tenor of the opening scene, Shakespeare carefully prepares us for the bear's entrance. Antigonus predicts his own death when he begs Leontes to save the baby's life: "I'll pawn the little blood I have left / To save the innocent" (II.iii.166-67). The statement is reinforced by Leontes' curt "It shall be possible" (168) and by his charging Antigonus to abandon the baby "On thy soul's peril and thy body's torture" (181). Later, when cataloging the suffering caused by Leontes, but before Antigonus lands in Bohemia, Paulina mourns "my own lord, / who is lost too" (III.ii.230-1). And, just prior to leaving the baby, Antigonus reflects on his dream in which Hermione warns "thou ne'er shalt see / Thy wife Paulina more" (III.iii.35-36). Thus, Antigonus' death is heralded from several quarters. Even the manner of his death has its harbingers. When he accepts Leontes' charge Antigonus prays that "Wolves and bears" will show the baby mercy (II.iii. 187). When they arrive in Bohemia, the Mariner cautions that "this place is famous for the creatures / of prey that keep upon't" (III.iii. 12-13). The timing of these statements, one following Antigonus' pawning his life for Perdita's, the other preceding the actual exchange, underscores the irony inherent in the bear's fulfillment of the predictive statements. Rather than being a haphazard or lazy stage trick, "Exit pursued by a bear" belongs to the basic structural pattern of the play, initiated by Leontes' jealousy and completed by the statue.

In *The Winter's Tale* Shakespeare makes his metaphors literal. The friendship cannot choose but branch now, and does. Antigonus names "that which is lost" Perdita. When he first takes up the baby Antigonus hopes that Nature will show it mercy:

Come on, poor babe.  
Some powerful spirit instruct the kites and ravens  
To be thy nurses. Wolves and bears, they say,  
Casting their savageness aside, have done  
Like offices of pity.
He is thinking of rumors, stories, myths, like that of Daphnis and Chloe, in which beasts act more humanely toward abandoned babies than the bestial humans who abandoned them. But Antigonus does not really believe such a thing will—or even can—happen; he merely wishes for it to be so. Without casting its savageness aside the bear does perform an office of pity. It pursues Antigonus instead of falling upon the helpless Perdita, evidently preferring old goat to lamb. "They are never curst but when they are hungry," the Clown asserts. With its belly full of Antigonus the bear poses no threat to Perdita, thus saving her to be found by the Shepherd. We experience the same surprise or irony here that we do when we realize the plausibility of Leontes' jealousy. Events fall out in nearly the exact terms that Antigonus predicts: he does pawn his life for Perdita's and a bear does perform a peculiar office of pity.

Not only does the episode provide another example of the prepared surprise, it also punctuates the first part of the play without closing it. The bear scene makes the transition from prediction to substantiation, from Sicilia to Bohemia, from court to country, from tragedy to pastoral, without breaking the play at the seams. Because it occupies the last scene of the first major section of the play, the bear reflects back on the previous action as well as forecasts subsequent events.

The bear scene completes a series of predictions about Antigonus' death. It also begins to substantiate Apollo's oracle: "the king shall live without an heir if that which is lost be not found" (III.ii.134-36). "That which is lost," Perdita, is found by the Shepherd while the bear dines on Antigonus. The scene also rehearses much of the action. After his dream, Antigonus correctly names the baby but mistakenly deduces that Hermione did sin with Polixenes, recalling for us the original cause for his presence in Bohemia. The rehearsal continues with the Shepherd's entrance, his opening lines summarizing the plot so far:

I would there were no age between ten and
three-and-twenty, or that youth would sleep out the rest;
for there is nothing in the between but getting wenches
with child, wronging the ancienty, stealing, fighting.

A woman got with child has delivered her baby, ancient friends, traditions, and gods have been wronged, reputations and lives have been stolen, friend and friend, king and subject, husband and wife have all fought.

In the first section Shakespeare seems to strive for lifelike characterization and for action that imitates nature. His characters remember things past and lost. They are conscious of time's passing—Polixenes is nine months in Sicilia, his sailors have expected his departure for two days, he quibbles with Leontes about staying another week or month, the messengers take twenty-three days to journey to Delphos and back. His characters weep, take sick, give birth, get angry and jealous, make mistakes, repent, die: they represent that illusion of reality once described as "rounded" characters. Shakespeare moves his plot from scene to scene and act to act with an expediency fit for tragedy. The Winter's Tale opens with a brief history of Leontes, Polixenes, and Hermione, presents Leontes' jealousy, and develops, in quick succession, the immediate consequences of his jealousy—Camillo's defection and Polixenes' flight, Hermione's trial, Perdita's birth and the queen's "death," all without a single digression. Messengers are sent to Delphos; therefore we have a scene (III.i) showing their return, introduced by a servant in II.iii and followed by the delivery of the oracle in III.ii. The sequence of events is ordered by cause-effect logic. The first section of the Winter's Tale contains an economic, concentrated tragedy, Shakespeare demonstrating that he can observe the unities of action and place.

The bear, however, chases tragedy from the scene. Even while reminding us of the previous action III.iii alters our perspective on that action. The change of locale from Sicilia to Bohemia changes the tragic vision to
comic. In Sicilia we witness Othello-like jealousy and the cost of that jealousy—estranged friends, a dead son, a supposedly dead wife, an exiled daughter. In Bohemia life is different. It is a place where a shepherd believes in fairies ("It was told me I would be rich by the fairies. This is some changling"), a place where a man's dream comes true (Antigonus does not see Paulina again), a place "famous for the beasts of prey that keep upon't" where myth ("Wolves and bears, they say") is realized. In the very act of recording yet another casualty to Leontes' tyranny Shakespeare asserts the significance of the new locale. We are startled to see a bear chase a man across the stage, startled, I think, to laughter. Shakespeare confirms this response by following the bear with the Shepherd and the Clown. The Clown's description of the shipwreck and the bear's dinner, his comparison of the tossed ship to a cork in a hogshead, his inability, like Dogberry's, to keep track of his points, are all genuinely humorous. By making light of the twin disasters, which are a direct result of the tragic action in the first section, at the conclusion of that section, Shakespeare transmutes the tragedy into comedy.

Yet even this generic exchange has its preparation. Veins of comedy course through the first part of *The Winter's Tale*. For one thing Shakespeare bases his characters on stock comedy personnel. Antigonus, for instance, is the harassed husband, a Noah with a nagging wife. Throughout Paulina's attempt to persuade the King to accept Hermione's baby (II.iii), Leontes rails at Antigonus:

What, canst thou rule her? (46)

    Thou dotard, thou art woman-tired, unroosted
    By the Dame Partlet here

(74-75)

He dreads his wife. (79)

    And, lozel, thou art worthy to be hanged
    That wilt not stay her tongue.

(108-09)

If Antigonus is the hen-pecked husband, Paulina is the pecking hen: "Dame Partlet," "Lady Margery," "A callat of boundless tongue, who late hath beat her husband" (91-92). But these insults flow from Leontes, the imaginary cuckold, the petty tyrant who out-Herods Herod. His exaggerated jealousy and irrationality make him an object of humor too, as he himself realizes: "Camillo and Polixenes / Laugh at me, make their pastime at my sorrow" (II.ii.23-24). Antigonus, the touchstone used to detect Leontes' true metal, agrees: his king's behavior will raise us "To laughter, as I take it, if the good truth were known" (II.i.198-99). Similarly, he reduces Leontes' threat to hang all husbands who cannot quiet their wives to its logical absurdity:

    Hang all the husbands
    That cannot do that feat, you'll leave yourself
    Hardly one subject.

(II.iii.110-12)

The king, in fact, would probably hang himself, for, as far as he knows, he cannot keep his wife faithful, let alone quiet. Such nuggets scattered over the first part of the play hint at the wealth to be mined in the second.

With the entrance of the Shepherd and the Clown, obvious representatives of pastoral and comedy, we recognize, if we had not already, that the "rounded" participants in the domestic tragedy belong to stock
comedy after all. Now we see Leontes' dark suspicions through the shepherd's eyes: "This has been some stairwork, some trunk-work, some behind-door-work" (III.iii.73-75). The pastoral setting that ends this section links up with the pastoral descriptions that begin the play, thus encasing the intervening tragic action in, as Florizel will say, "a swain's wearing." The tragic impact is mitigated by these comic and pastoral elements, bringing about a re-cognition of the first section. We begin to get at "the good truth."

In its reassessment of certain thematic structures, this end functions like the close of a complete work. But because the play is only at its midpoint Shakespeare must leave some strings untied. Our romance expectations call for Leontes and Perdita's reunion. The oracle reinforces that expectation and opens the possibility that Leontes' question, "Shall I live on to see this bastard kneel / And call me father?"—needs to be answered. The Shepherd's promise to take up the baby "for pity" (and for fairy gold) requires depiction. Finally, although we do not know it yet, the Clown's report of the twin disasters—

how the poor souls roared, and the sea mocked them, and how the poor gentleman roared, and the bear mocked him, both roaring louder than the sea or weather

(III.ii.94-97)—

anticipates the close of the play, when Leontes will remark how "we are mock'd with art."

II

At the end of Part One Shakespeare transfers his scene to Bohemia, a place where dreams, myths, and oracles come true. He begins the Bohemian interlude with that iconic anachronism, Father Time, using him to bridge the "wide gap" between the play's parts; he ends it by returning his cast to Sicilia, once more dislocating the action. Thus the play's second part is confined to that idyllic enclosed space, the pastoral island, a space delineated in the play itself. This new locale allows Shakespeare to continue the comic trend from the previous scene, strengthened by a new narrative order, and to explore dramatically pastoral's reflexive landscape—the outward show that mirrors an inner reality.

At his simplest Father Time makes a transition from Leontes to Perdita, from prediction to substantiation; on a more complex level, he reminds the audience about who controls the play. Time emblemmatizes, literally, the joining of the dramatic and the romantic. Using him Shakespeare leaps over place and time, committing the fault that so annoyed Sidney:

Impute it not a crime
To me, or to my swift passage, that I slide
O'er sixteen years and leave the growth untried
Of that wide gap, since it is in my pow'r
To o'erthrow law, and in one self-born hour
To plant and o'erwhelm custom.

(IV.i.4-9)

He ushers a player on stage to report the change in years, leaving "the growth untried" or unrepresented. As hundreds of years of commentary tells us, dramatic "law" and "custom" argue against such practice, but Time is Shakespeare's "Pacolet's horse." Shakespeare defies one dramatic custom, the unity of time, by employing another, the chorus. What's more, Time knows he is a character in a play. He steps from one kind of fiction, the emblem book, onto another, the stage. He is both a "chorus" addressing "Gentle Spectators" and the symbol for time, winged, carrying a glass, identifying himself in riddles:
I, that please some, try all, both in joy and terror
Of good and bad, that makes and unfolds error,
Now take upon me, in the name of Time,
To use my wings.

(1-4)

The obvious—and yet ambiguous—riddle can be applied to the author as well, for he too pleases some and tries all. To demonstrate his power over law, Time passes from Leontes, definitely a tried man whose error has been made and unfolded and who has tasted the terror of badness, to Perdita, whom Time hints will enjoy goodness.

In a sense, Time is the playwright. By calling attention to his own conventionality Time shows the other conventional characters in bold relief: the shepherd, the Clown, the cuckold, the shrew, "a son o'th' King's," and "A shepherd's daughter." He claims the play as "my tale." He even predicts, in general terms, the remaining plot:

A shepherd's daughter
And what to her adheres, which follows after,
is the argument of Time.

(27-29)

The most telltale sign, however, is his instruction to the audience:

imagine me,
Gentle Spectator, that I now may be
In fair Bohemia, and remember well,
I mentioned a son o'th'King's which Florizel
I now name to you.

(19-23)

We remember well that this is Father Time's first appearance, and that only Polixenes and Leontes have mentioned the king's son, back when these characters were first introduced. Time here speaks for the playwright, with whom he shares a "self-born" power. Like Puck, Rosalynde, and Prospero, who beg for applause at the ends of their plays, and most like Gower, who acts as guide through Pericles, Father Time interrupts The Winter's Tale to arrange the play and reassure the audience. We may also remember the subtitle of Shakespeare's source: "The Triumph of Time." At its start, then, the second part's outward show reveals a truth, the playwright's debt to both dramatic and narrative custom.

The triumph that follows—and there is something processional about Act IV—exhibits a narrative order different from causation. It follows a method more familiar in Shakespeare's comedies, that of introducing several characters or character groups in a series of scenes, with little apparent regard for unity of action, and then weaving them all together. The lovers, fairies, and mechanicals of A Midsummer Night's Dream provide an ideal example. Shakespeare presents each group in a series of scenes (I.i, I.ii, II.i) in which the groups announce their reasons for going to the forest on midsummer night. The scenes do not logically advance the supposed main plot, the marriage of Theseus and Hippolyta. However, the scenes do explore the play's subject matter—marital love—by replacing Theseus and Hippolyta with three very different versions of their relationship: the Athenian quartet's premarital misadventures, Pyramus and Thisbe's tragic elopement, and Oberon and Titania's marital quarrel. At the play's end, when each group has had intercourse, of one kind or
another, with the others we recognize the matter that holds the plots together. This development of a comedy by thematic variation and association approximates romance's analogical narrative, for both contain multiple plots unified by their "matter."

So it is with Father Time, Polixenes and Camillo, and Autolycus and the Clown, who appear in scenes i, ii, and iii, respectively. Part One's direct narrative, together with the clues about what comes next, leads us to expect Perdita as the next order of business. Instead, Shakespeare introduces new characters. Father Time and Autolycus each makes his first appearance, and two others, Polixenes and Camillo, have not been seen since i.ii. Only the Clown, who does not appear until the third scene, belongs to the set of characters who end Part One. Further, the action of each scene seemingly bears little relation to the others: Father Time tells us Perdita is next, but she does not appear; instead Camillo talks of returning to Sicilia while Polixenes plans to spy on his son's affairs; then Autolycus enters to rob the Clown. The scenes are only tangentially related by their reference to Perdita, just as the wood connects the groups in A Midsummer Night's Dream. However, they do triangulate on scene iv, the sheep shearing festival, where Shakespeare collects the first three scenes together by repeating their order: Perdita and Florizel wooing, as Time hints; Polixenes testing his son; and Autolycus again duping rustics. True, the section does follow a general plot line—"A shepherd's daughter/And what to her adheres"—but it is the scenes' thematic unity that really binds them together.

The fourth act consists of four scenes that adhere to Perdita, but the main plot is secondary to the matter of identity. "Any well constructed comedy," writes Northrop Frye, will contain three phases: a Period of Preparation (the initial social block—parental interference, exile, and so on); a Period of License (loss of identity), and a Period of Festivity (discovery of identity). Each phase can be associated with successive scenes in Part Two. Polixenes prepares to interfere with his son (ii). Autolycus adopts a new identity to separate the Clown from his purse (iii). Polixenes discovers himself to Florizel, and Perdita is thought to be something more than she seems (iv). But the loss of identity, a matter closely tied to the finding of Perdita, the next step needed to substantiate the oracle, predominates over the action. We are not faced with one lost identity, we are faced with many. Polixenes and Camillo, the king and his counsellor, disguise themselves as gentlemen. Autolycus, a displaced courtier, becomes a robbed traveller, a peddler, and a courtier again. Prince Florizel transforms from swain to prince to peddler. And Perdita, the lost Princess who thinks she is a shepherdess, changes from festival queen to something anonymous. The last exchange of clothes between Florizel, Perdita, and Autolycus (IV.iv.624-59) integrates the trickster, who has thus far interacted only with the rustics, into the main plot. We should note that he becomes involved in the lovers' escape, not by an accident of plot (being in the right place at the right time), but by their ability, like his own, to shape-shift. Perdita may well speak for Autolycus—and everyone else—when she remarks,

I see the play so lies
That I must bear a part.

(655-56)

The lost identities, shown by all the costume changing, particularly those done openly on stage, follows Time's lead and flaunts a dramatic truth.

I earlier described The Winter's Tale as protean, changing before our eyes like its characters who slip in and out of costume. This shape-shifting or metamorphosis—the realized potential—is basic to the romance world, where revelation, whether of a knight's identity or of a story's kind, depends so much on adaptability, on the knight's and thus the reader's ability to keep his balance and discern the truth amidst myriad possibilities. In the fourth act of his own old tale Shakespeare represents several variations on the theme of change. Father Time initiates it by changing the subject from Leontes to Perdita. Camillo and Polixenes complicate it by donning disguises. Autolycus, the chamelion who changes color to fit his setting, amplifies it. But the theme does not reach its fullest orchestration until the fourth scene. Indeed, the word "change" and its
synonyms—"transformation," "alters," "exchange"—occur fifteen times in that one scene alone. There we see or hear of transformations at nearly every level, divine, human, chronological, animal, vegetable, each one a deliberate show and each one revealing a hidden truth.

Like any proper pastoral lover Florizel is a disguised prince and to defend his "swain's wearing" he invokes divine practice:

The gods themselves
(Humbling their deities to love) have taken
The shapes of beasts upon them. Jupiter
Became a bull and bellow'd; the green Neptune
A ram and bleated; and the fire-rob'd god,
Golden Apollo, a poor humble swain,
As I seem now.

(IV.iv.25-31)

If the great Jove can become an animal, Florizel sees no reason why a prince cannot masquerade as a shepherd. He fittingly selects Ovid's stories as his text, alluding to one of Shakespeare's own sources and advertising the "magic" behind his change. Later in the scene Autolycus satirizes these metamorphoses in his coarse ballads:

Here's another ballad, of a fish that appear'd upon the coast on Wed'n'sday the fourscore of April, forty thousand fathom above water, and sung this ballad against the hard hearts of maids. It was thought she was a woman and was turn'd into a cold fish for she would not exchange flesh with one that lov'd her. The ballad is very pitiful, and as true.

(275-86)

Autolycus' puns realize another change: a woman who does not "exchange flesh" with her lover is of course a cold fish. Shakespeare includes Sylvius and Phebe in As You Like It to parody and authenticate the conventionality of Orlando and Roslynde's love. That is, by demonstrating the absurdity of romantic love Shakespeare makes it palpable. So, too, he parodies mythological transformations and pastoral disguises with folk ballad. If Jove can change into a bull and bellow, then why cannot a woman turned fish appear on the "fourscore of April, forty thousand fathom above water"? Both fictions are "very pitiful, and true."

The trueness of change is indeed a matter of deep concern to pastoral romance writers. As we saw in the previous chapter, Spenser combines the pastoral's predilection for debate or contest with the artist's desire for permanence, following Book Six with an allegorical debate about permanence and change. Like a proper pastoralist Shakespeare too addresses the question of mutability in the brief exchange—a debate—between Perdita and Polixenes.

Appropriate to the topic, Perdita repeats the progress followed by Spenser's Mutabilitie, speaking in terms of the cyclic year:

Sir, the year growing ancient,
Not yet at summer's death, nor on the birth
Of trembling winter, the fairest flow'r's o'th' season
Are our carnations and streak'd gillyvors
(Which some call Nature's bastards).
Perdita strives for a natural decorum. To the visiting gentlemen, "men of middle age," she matches flowers "Of middle summer" (107); to Florizel, "I would I had some flow'rs o' th' spring" (113). She talks of "the blasts of January" (111), "the winds of March" (120), and even of "the gods that control natural cycles": Proserpina, Cytherea, and Phoebus. Although she seems attuned to Nature's contrary ways, Perdita distrusts contradiction. She would plant the bastard gillyflowers, "No more than were I painted I would wish / This youth should say 'twere well, and only therefore / Desire to breed by me" (101-03). The irony, of course, is that she herself is contrary. Moments before, this pranked up girl and her prince did desire to breed, hoping for "that nuptial, which / We two have sworn shall come" (50-51), and she readily admits to being painted:

You see, sweet maid, we marry
A gentle scion to the wildest stock,
And make conceive a bark of baser kind
By bud of nobler race. This is an art
Which does mend Nature—change it rather; but
The art itself is Nature.

Polixenes believes that the gardener actually changes Nature, just as Perdita supposes that her costume alters her character. And, again like Perdita, Polixenes sets up his own contradictory disposition. He will forbid his royal son ever to enter "These rural latches" again, an injunction which ignores his horticultural advice of marrying "A gentle scion to the wildest stock." Thus both disguised characters exhibit contradictory behavior, but a behavior which, paradoxically, hints at the eventual truth: Perdita will marry Florizel with Polixenes' full approval.

To appreciate fully the ironies in this episode we should remember Nature's judgment of Mutabilitie:

I well consider all that ye have sayd,
And find that all things stedfastness do hate
And changed be: yet being rightly wayd
They are not changed from their first estate;
But by their change their being doe dilate:
And turning to themselves at length againe,
Do worke their own perfection so by fate:
Then ouer them Change doth not rule and raigne;
But they raigne ouer change, and doe ther states maintaine.

We could do worse than choose Spenser's words as a gloss for The Winter's Tale, The alteration in the appearance of a thing elucidates its nature, a truth just as basic to drama as it is to romance. Polixenes is wrong to suppose that the gardener's art changes Nature: the flower is still a flower for all its piedness. Jove may metamorphose into a bull, but he is no less Jove; the change illustrates his divine prerogative. Perdita desires to breed by a prince because she is a princess. Polixenes forbids the marriage because romantic comedy demands a blocking parent. Both of them act as they do in Whitsun pastorals because they are actors in a pastoral: "I see the play so lies that I must bear a part." All of the central characters in Act IV adopt several parts, each part revealing, not disguising, something new (or true) about them.
Camillo and Autolycus, especially, "worke their own perfection." The act ends with two parallel scenes. In the first, Camillo directs the lovers' costume change and their escape to Sicilia. In the second, Autolycus manages the Shepherd and Clown's passage, as well as his own. These twin episodes answer the section's earlier scenes, the desires of Camillo to return home, of Polixenes to check his son, of Autolycus to fatten his purse, and echo Part One by shipping Perdita to sea again. Further, the congregational flight to Sicilia associates all the characters in one course of action, the central plot of finding that which was lost. Camillo can prophesy:

Methinks I see
Leontes opening his free arms, and weeping
His welcomes forth; asks thee, son, forgiveness,
As 'twere F th' fathers business; kisses the hands
Of your fresh princess; o'er and o'er divides him
'Twixt his unkindness and his kindness: th' one
He chides to hell, and bids the other grow
Faster than thought or time.

(548-54)

He envisions his plot's end, an end, as we shall see, coincident with the play's end, when it too discovers its kind-ness. The Shepherd's decision to reveal his truth about Perdita, a reminder of Part One's end, sets The Winter's Tale's final stage.

Thus it is that the plotting, scheming, planning, disguising, changing, all belong to returning Perdita—and everything else, the play included—to the proper estate. Like the players who don costume after costume, the play itself passes through several stages, each one a new revelation, each one provoking another guess at its true nature. Despite the altered appearance of The Winter's Tale brought off in Part Two, the stock characters, the pastoral setting, the comic plot, the new age, even a different world order, the substance of the play remains the same. Time turns his glass; he does not trade it for another.

In some ways the second section serves as an analogue of the first. For instance, the comic pattern of preparation-license-festivity mocks the prepared surprise pattern found in Part One, mocks because so little surprises in Part Two. Polixenes can make his plans, adopt his disguises and reveal himself at the proper time, with few subtle hints or hidden meanings. Act IV, scenes ii, iii, and iv ridicule Leontes' behavior through Acts I, II, III. His admission of jealousy pairs with Polixenes' proposal to spy, his attempts to convince the court of Hermione's guilt become Autolycus' deception of the Clown, and Apollo's oracle is mimicked by Camillo's prophecy. Once more analogy dominates over the structure of events. The first and second parts are unified by their thematic structure, their matter. In Sicilia we see the tragic implications of mistaken identity and deception; in Bohemia we witness the comic portrayal of disguise and deceit.

A king's mistaken jealousy rules in Sicilia. Although Leontes claims to base his suspicion on appearances, "paddling palms and pinching fingers," once that jealousy gains credibility, at least for himself, he loses all faith in reason. He dismisses past love of and for his wife and friend. He ignores the entire court's protestations. He denies the physical evidence of the baby's likeness to himself. He repudiates Apollo's oracle. In short, Leontes imposes a personal fiction, an internal doubt (witness the number of his asides), on the Sicilian reality. In Bohemia Shakespeare turns Leontes' self-deception outward. We have already noted how the characters broadcast roles make a comedy of their lives. Polixenes openly plans to watch his son. Autolycus openly tricks the Clown. Florizel openly admits his rustic disguise. Perdita openly plays the festival queen. Camillo openly plots his return to Sicilia. In this second section the audience knows something else as well. Every character supposes that Perdita is either a shepherd's daughter or an abandoned bastard, and all their poses and counterposes (except Autolycus') are based on that supposition. They are, of course, mistaken. In this case a Bohemian fiction imposes on their personal realities.
III

With the return to Sicilia we should recognize the legitimacy of the three part division of *The Winter's Tale*. The change of locale once more predicates an alteration in genre and narrative technique. The play that begins as a tragedy, laced with comedy and pastoral, and turns to pastoral, informed by comedy and romance, finishes as a romance. Perhaps Fitzroy Pyle, in his book-length study of the play, best describes Part Three:

> The last act is tightly packed. It has a great deal to do and little space to do it in. It has rapidly to reinstate the thesis figure, Leontes, bring the antithesis into relation with the thesis, and introduce a synthesis. For this purpose it divides into three scenes—interrelated, like the movements of the play itself.\(^{23}\)

Pyle reduces the play to a telling dialectical syllogism, bespeaking his awareness of the play's structure and identifying the final act as instrumental in clinching that structure. Scene one, which begins with unhappy memories and the Bohemian's arrival, fits section one, which starts with happy memories and ends with the flight to Bohemia. Scene two, which reports the joy and betrothal of a verily identified girl, matches section two, which portrays the tribulations of a variously identified girl. And scene three, the statue's metamorphosis, represents the third section itself, a final "movement" (a happy choice) that integrates the world orders of Sicilia and Bohemia, tragic plot and comic plot, mimetic representation and romantic sensation, personal fiction and public display.

Because they interrelate with the play's major divisions, the last three scenes can be associated with stages in the dramatic surprise formula. Leontes' vow to remarry only with Paulina's permission (V.i.69-70) predicts the final outcome, a remarriage. Perdita's return substantiates the oracle's condition that prohibits Leontes from marrying again until "that which is lost be found." The restoration of Hermione to Leontes provides the ironic twist to his remarriage: he indeed marries again, but his new wife is his old wife, thus maintaining the proper estate. The remarriage symbolizes on a mundane level the ending's cosmic implications: "The recognition toward which romance moves is more than a matter of stripping away a few disguises or sorting out a few cases of mistaken identity; it is an epiphany of Apollinian order, clarity, and harmony in the universe."\(^{24}\) Shakespeare shares his vision of an Apollinian order with other romancers, notably Longus, Chaucer, and Spenser, though with one important distinction: Shakespeare achieves his on the stage, where physical limitation prohibits ascending to the eighth sphere or contemplating Revelations. Hermione's surprise re-appearance is the eucatastrophe, a deliberately artificial representation that mirrors the play's magic.

Referring to this scene, Adrien Bonjour says that, "we enjoy the effect produced on the characters of the play much better than if we received at the same time with them the shock of the complete surprise."\(^{25}\) We are not, I think, completely surprised by the plot's ending. Shakespeare takes us into his confidence; we share a more omniscient view, possessing a superior knowledge than that of the purblind characters. Shakespeare drops hints like Hansel and Gretel dropping bread crumbs: the path is easily found. Yet the last scene does have special impact, partly because, like the bear scene, it so literally fulfills the predictions, and partly because Shakespeare obscures his destination by not following a well-known trail.

He makes Hermione's return more affecting by downplaying Perdita's reunion with her father. All of our romance experience points to the necessary ending, the reunion of child and father, and the whole of *The Winter's Tale* supports that expectation. From the moment Leontes asks, in the first section, "Shall I live to see this bastard kneel / And call me father?", we fix our attention on Perdita, awaiting the inevitable moment when she does kneel and claim her father. In order for events to end happily the oracle demands that she be found. We follow Perdita from Sicilia to Bohemia and back to Sicilia again. Time's argument for Act IV involves "what adheres" to Perdita. By the end of the second section, with Camillo bent on forcing Leontes and Polixenes together and the Shepherd bent on producing the heirlooms, we know Perdita's recognition will be swift and sure. Shakespeare even teases us further at the opening of the final part. Seeing Florizel and
Perdita together reminds Leontes that, "I lost a couple, that 'twixt heaven and earth / Might thus have stood, begetting wonder" (V.i. 132-33). The announcement of Polixenes' arrival momentarily creates tension, until we remember that the Shepherd stands ready with the trinkets. The moment is at hand.

But we do not see it. At the climactic moment, when her ascending star has reached its zenith, Perdita all but disappears from the play. She speaks only twice in the entire fifth act. True, her presence on stage is important, but her importance is relative to Hermione. The first, and perhaps most surprising, twist at the close of The Winter's Tale is that Perdita plays a supporting role to her mother. Her beauty is remarkable, but only insofar as it reminds Leontes of his wife. Her reunion with her father is joyful, but it is counterbalanced by the loss of Hermione: "Our king, being ready to leap out of himself for joy of his found daughter, as if that joy were now become a loss, cries, 'O, thy mother, thy mother!'" (V.ii.49-52). Even her return, supposedly the solution to the play, is important in terms of Hermione, as the queen herself admits:

    for thou shalt hear that I,  
    Knowing by Paulina that the oracle  
    Gave hope thou wast in being, have preserv'd  
    Myself to see the issue.

(V.iii.125-28)

Shakespeare goes beyond mere comparisons, however. He emphasizes Perdita's subsidiary role by withdrawing her "scene" from the play. Directors often complain that the long, drawn-out description of all that joy and all that sorrow is unplayable. Of course it is: that is the point. The Gentleman can remark, ironically, that: "The dignity of this act was worth the audience of kings and princes, for by such was it acted" (V.ii.79-81). Obviously so, for we are none of us kings and princes, and none of us is in that audience. The scene is one which we have often seen acted, even (or especially) in Shakespeare. He gives us romantic versions in As You Like It and Pericles, and a tragic version in King Lear. Shakespeare readily admits the conventionality of the reunion: the news is "like an old tale" (28), "like an old tale still" (61). The Gentlemen repeatedly complain of their inability to describe it: "I make a broken delivery of the business" (9); "Then you have lost a sight which was to be seen, cannot be spoken of (42-3); "I have never heard of such another encounter, which lames report to follow it, and undoes description to do it" (56-58). Evidently our familiarity with father-daughter reunions makes another one unnecessary: it does not have to be seen to be believed.

The ironic means of reporting Perdita's return is the surest sign that Shakespeare will offer something else, something better, some greater miracle with which to close his fiction.26 Frank Kermode, we remember, instructs that our sense of an ending is strengthened when "the fiction under consideration is one of those which, by upsetting the ordinary balance of our naive expectations, is finding something out for us, something real." To be sure, our naive expectations have been upset, but we have not found out "something real." In fact, Shakespeare makes the reunion as unreal as possible. We merely overhear courtiers' gossip. The news is like an old tale. "Such a deal of wonder is broken out within this hour that ballad makers cannot be able to express it" (23-25). The reunion between father and daughter is such a fiction that one gentleman regards the event with a critic's eye:

    One of the prettiest touches of all, and that which angled for mine eyes (caught the water though not the fish), was when, at the relation of the Queen's death (with the manner how she came to't bravely confessed and lamented by the King), how attentiveness wounded his daughter, till (from one sign of dolor to another) she did (with an "Alas!") I would fain say, bleed tears; for I am sure my heart wept blood. Who was not marble there chang'd color; some swounded, all sorrow'd. If all the world could have seen't, the woe had been universal.

(82-92)
Perdita's reception of her mother's death is "the prettiest touch," one "bravely" acted, that angles for attention. It is a special effect, in which the Gentleman "would fain say" Perdita bled tears. The touch is so affecting that "some swounded, all sorrow'd. If all the world had seen't, the woe had been universal." The Gentleman's conditional statements turn his report into another fiction. Perdita receives rave would-be reviews for a would-be scene.

While evaluating Perdita's performance the Gentleman introduces an even prettier touch. He identifies a number of transformations and indicates the next turn of events. Perdita, for instance, is again linked to the gillyflower: she gets pied in the face, changing "from one sign of dolor to another." Her histrionics angled at eyes and "caught water though not the fish." Autolycus previously sang of a spurning woman turned into a cold fish. Hermione, we next discover, is a spurned woman turned into cold stone. "The revelation of the Queen's death" is, like Autolycus's ballad, a tale "very pitiful, and as true," or so thinks the Gentleman: "Who was not marble there changed color."

Thus, if we are acute, we are prepared for Hermione's transformation. Autolycus's ballad parodies the metamorphoses invoked by Florizel to defend his costume. Ovid's stories also include the tale of Pygmalion, the woman turned to life from stone. That Romano's lifelike statue follows so quickly upon the heels of the recalled transformations and fills so conveniently the void left by Perdita's unseen performance ought to be enough to arouse our suspicions. Even if we are not acute, the accumulation of poses assumed, masks donned, and parts played should have taught us the simple lesson about outward show. Hence Leontes' refrain that "we are mocked with art." Fitzroy Pyle quite mistakenly insists that the audience must believe, with the characters on stage, they are actually witnessing a statue come to life. He is correct, though, to stress the dramatic quality of the statue scene:

The events related in V.ii were, considered in the context of the play, all the more effective for being reported as contrived, posed, arranged as though performed on stage. This event, on the other hand, is and must be performed upon the stage. It must be seen to be believed.27

Shakespeare reverses the procedure followed in V.ii. Where he first narrates a familiar, dramatic scene, he now dramatizes a rare, narrative scene. He audaciously attempts to produce on stage a romance wonder—and he succeeds.

Shakespeare encloses the statue scene within an opposing set of terms, the lifelike and the marvellous, the realistic and the magical. The statue is admired for its perfect imitation of Hermione's "natural posture." One stands before her in hope of answer. We are told to prepare "To see the life as lively mock'd as ever / Still sleep mock'd death" (V.ii. 19-20). Leontes can ask, "Would you not deem it breath'd?" (64), and Polixenes can agree, "The very life seems warm upon her lip" (66). Far from a mundane response, however, this mimetic masterpiece by that "rare Italian" who, like Father Time and the playwright, "would beguile Nature of her custom, so perfectly is he her ape" (V.ii.99-100), strikes awe into its audience. They regard it as a "wonder" (22), an "amazement" (87), a "marvel" (100). Leontes apostrophizes:

O royal piece,
There's magic in thy majesty, which has
My evils conjur'd to remembrance.

(38-40)

And indeed, Paulina does turn to conjuring to transform the inanimate statue into animate woman, her incantation rousing Leontes to proclaim, "If this be magic, let it be an art/Lawful as eating." (110-11)
We are mocked with art because the whole episode is a charade. Hermione never was dead, never a statue, except to pretense. She merely has "preserv'd" herself these sixteen years. Paulina pretends to be a magician, producing a play, setting the stage, preparing the audience, building suspense, displaying her final trick, one done, I am tempted to add, with mirrors. Her art is lawful, for it is a literary art. The "magic" needed for her play's success is audience belief: "It is requir'd / You do awake your faith" (94-95).28 Once Leontes admits his desire for Hermione, Paulina need only show the statue, tease about wet paint, and announce her power to "make the statue move" to apprehend Leontes' fixed attention: "Proceed, / No foot shall stir" (97-98). He will see the statue alive, regardless of "wicked powers" or "unlawful business." His willingness to believe Hermione adulterous begins the play; his belief in her rebirth ends it. In the interim, as Birnam Wood to Dunsinane, Bohemia has come to Sicilia, complete with its faith in fairies and its predilection for play, and Leontes realizes his, and his wife's, comic potential. Perhaps the final and most telling irony of The Winter's Tale is that no one objects to Paulina's joke. That Hermione has been alive, at court, for sixteen years bothers Leontes not in the least. Our characters, each of whom stages his own little play, appreciate a finely wrought fiction. Like Tinkerbell, art cannot be sustained without attention, without its audience's faith, and, again like Tinkerbell, it begs for it.

As we should expect from previous romance experience, the eucatastrophe does not resolve the play's conflicts, real or imaginary. F. R. Foakes believes that the final scene "holds the paradoxes in suspension, for they cannot be resolved."29 Shakespeare chooses that moment when the play reaches its fullest, densest, and yet clearest statement of generic identity to dissolve his fiction. To compose his final arrangement he combines opposites. The mimetic and the marvellous we have noted, but others can be added, Camillo listing several in one speech:30

My lord, your sorrow was too sore laid on
Which sixteen winters cannot blow away,
So many summers dry. Scarce any joy
Did ever so long live; no sorrow
But kill'd much sooner.

(49-53)

The oppositions belong to nature, emotion, time: winter/summer, live/kill'd, joy/sorrow, so long/much sooner—all of which resonate through the play. The sentence structure yokes antithetical phrases, yet, through parallelism, balances their meaning, and as with all balanced oppositions, the terms are cancelled. Thus, when Paulina contrives her little drama about a mythical metamorphosis, when she mocks Shakespeare's transformation of Pandosto into The Winter's Tale, the play made from prophecy and surprise, tragic consequences and pastoral license, the credible and the incredible, prepares to make its end.

Leontes' last speech empties the stage. Complemented by his queen and flushed with his renewed role of King, Leontes now assumes the functions of stage manager and epilogue. He forbids Paulina her intended role as pathetic widow ("I, an old turtle, / Will wing me to some wither'd bow") and forces the demands of genre upon her. He summarizes the plot, begging forgiveness from both Hermione and Polixenes for his "ill-suspicion" and verifying Florizel and Perdita's troth-plight. More importantly, he draws a final, emphatic line between the worlds of the play and the world outside the play:

Good Paulina,
    Lead us from hence, where we may leisurely
Each one demand and answer to his part

The ending has met the beginning. "Since first we were dissever'd" connects with Camillo's opening observation about the friendship "which cannot choose but branch now," not to mention the original severance
of "play" time and "real" time. "This wide gap of time" directly refers to Father Time's prologue, as well as alludes to the time expired during which each of these actors "his part / Perform'd." The characters are, after all, only characters; they exist only in stories, and to keep themselves alive they exit to swap tales, revealing the wooden O, the enclosed space that literally shapes the play, and leaving it vacant.

*The Winter's Tale* is about winter's tales, tall stories about wonderfull successes achieved against impossible odds. We remember the references to tales and tale-telling, plays and playwrighting, and know that Shakespeare "wrights" a play about romance. He takes a prose romance for a source, transforming its narrative order of fulfilled prophecy into the dramatic prepared surprise. He uses the stage as the space that encloses the other world, a space mirrored by the pastoral island. He pours the heart's blood of romance, mutability, the principle that all things must pass, into the play. The characters change their clothes, change their roles, change their locales, change their hearts. They allude to divine, natural, human, and literary change. They debate the ethics of change. They believe in change, the play ending with the players producing a scene modelled on an Ovidian metamorphosis. When all is said and done, when even the play has shifted genres, *The Winter's Tale* works its own perfection and does its state maintain.

Like many others before him, Shakespeare addresses mutability by making a fiction about it; yet in the end the fiction itself is transitory. Where others seek the permanence of print for their stories, Shakespeare chooses to dramatize his. We must think a moment of the implications. We need only flip Malory's book over to begin again, to turn from apocalypse to creation. The theatre audience lacks that option. We can come again another night, but as everyone knows, as Shakespeare knew, another performance means another play. Our experience of a closed dramatic romance is a golden age, unique, permanent, inviolate, ephemeral, never to be had again.

Notes


4 Felperin, 52.


8 All references made to Shakespeare's plays are to *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974).


13 Coghill's essay examines how "contrivance works" in six key scenes—Leontes' jealousy, the bear, Father Time, the exchange of clothes between Perdita, Florizel, and Autolycus, the report of Perdita's return, and the statue (198-213).


16 Colie, *Living Art*, 248, explains that the pastoral elegy "offers a marvellous rationale for death," a fusion of the shepherd-poet and his inspiration, a creation of a "world of imagination in which, depending on his temperament, he could live as he would." In a sense the pastoral world offers both an after-life and an alter-life. It is at the moment of Antigonus' death, Colie notices (268), that the pastoral in *The Winter's Tale* begins. As we shall see, the pastoral elements start much earlier, but it certainly takes over at this point.

17 Knight, 86, and Bethel, 59-61, both mention the comic possibilities of Leontes' jealousy.

18 Norman Rabkin writes that Shakespeare's romances call "attention to the fact that what we are experiencing is art, not life, whether by the use of such awkward playwright surrogates as Time or Gower, or the incessant allusions to stage performance, or the drama of real characters in fairy-tale gardens, or sudden changes from tragedy to comedy, or in *The Tempest* the clear implication that Prospero is in some way to be thought of as


20 In Act IV, Foakes aptly remarks, "clothes seem to make the man." He sees the series of disguises as transformations that culminate in the statue scene (134-135).

21 Rabkin, 50-53

22 Of this debate Rosalie Colie has written: "With these literary or generic or social mixes, comes also moral mixture, a mixture of ways of life set in actual or implied contradistinction or even contradiction" (*Living Art*, 253). We note that the mixture of roles, "ways of life," within a character, not between them, creates the conflicts, much as it does in chivalric romance.

23 Pyle, 153. Compare Pyle's statement to the following quotation from Guarini, *Il Pastor Fido e il compendio della poesia tragicomica*, ed. Gioachino Brognoligo (Bari, 1914), 282:

   Now this untying has three parts worthy of consideration: the first is employed in the preparation of the matter, and is the most important of all; the second is the act itself by which the untying of the knot and the reversal of the action takes place; the third is entirely filled with delight and joy, according to the true end of tragicomic poetry.


24 Felperin, 25.


26 Felperin, 17: "It is the central place that Shakespearean comedy and romance accords to the extraordinary in experience which distinguishes it from the other tradition of comedy that presents, in Sidney's phrase, 'the common errors of our life,' and which enables it to add the effect of 'wonder' to the 'delight' of most comedy."

27 Pyle argues that in the last scene "the effect aimed at is that of a statue coming to life, not of a woman pretending to be a statue and pretending to come to life" (122-23). In keeping with the theatrical bravura of the play, I rather think the final scene should have the flavor of an amateur production, one not much more refined than Quince's. We ought to see a woman pretending to be a statue and pretending to come to life.

28 Frye cautions against investigating too deeply the credibility of the statue scene, for it is more on the level of wish fulfillment (like Bottom's dream) than 'historical' event. He draws a distinction between actual belief and the desire to believe: "The world we are looking at in the conclusion of *The Winter's Tale* is not an object of belief so much as an object of desire." He links this world to that of Leontes' jealousy: "the world of Leontes' jealousy does not exist at all; only the consequences of believing in it exist" (*Natural Perspective*, 117). Shakespeare blurs this distinction; when we awake our faith we lend any fiction credibility.
Foakes, 144.

Traversi, 108, notes that Camillo also opens the play with a speech (I.i.21-32) that combines "under one set of images two processes apparently contradictory—that of natural unified development existing side by side with widening division." That Camillo should combine opposites at the close of the play is no accident.

The Winter's Tale (Vol. 36): Further Reading


Compares themes of the play to problems in seventeenth-century English society, especially in the contrast between court life and country life.


Examines the capacity of words to accurately represent truth, how words are used in relationships, and Leontes's failure to understand others or himself.


Focuses on Hermione's courageous defense of herself in her trial, and how it contrasts with Leontes's irrational passion.


Discusses the symmetry of the play's two halves in terms of dramatic irony.


Describes the perceived role of female fidelity in maintaining social order, and compares the motives for and growth of jealousy in Othello and Leontes.


Examines the basis of Leontes's jealousy from a Jacobean perspective.


Compares The Winter's Tale to King Lear and Anthony and Cleopatra, and discusses the metaphor of "seeing" in all three plays.

Compares *The Winter's Tale* with Shakespeare's other romances and argues that its combination of romance and realism makes it one of his greatest works.


Describes the subtle methods by which Shakespeare prepares his audience emotionally for the resurrection of Hermione.


Considers the methods by which Leontes is protected from the immediate condemnation of the audience, and examines the relationship of Leontes and Paulina and the roles they fill for each other.


Discusses two patterns of development in the scheme of the play: fall and redemption, and a gradual development from disease to health.


Describes a pattern of "merged opposites" in *The Winter's Tale*, as revealed in the language of the characters, and the structures and themes of the play.


Compares Leontes's jealous delusion to a type of pornographic fantasy replaying the archetypal female deceit—the Fall of Eve—and the rehabilitating power of the female characters to transform Leontes and preserve the patriarchy.


Considers the role contemporary political forces played in shaping *The Winter's Tale*, and conversely, the role of Shakespeare's dramas in shaping audience attitudes towards the absolutist culture of the royal court.


Explores the relationship between the extended family and hospitality or entertainment in Jacobean England, extending the discussion to the families of *The Winter's Tale*, and demonstrating that the fractured relationships begin to heal only once Leontes reexercises hospitality.


Examines the influence of women's language in the play, and the challenge it presents to men's power.

Considers the sources which inform *The Winter's Tale* and other plays by Shakespeare, most notably Robert Greene's *Pandosto*.


Discusses the influences of Renaissance art on *The Winter's Tale*, and Shakespeare as an artist himself.


Describes Leontes's actions in terms of a childish innocence, claiming that such hysterical behavior is akin to that of a spoiled child; however, he argues, the play concludes with a new innocence, ushered in by the confident female characters and Leontes's own personal growth.

Ziegler, Georgianna. "Parents, Daughters and 'That Rare Italian Master': A New Source for *The Winter's Tale*." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 36, No. 2 (Summer 1985): 204-12.

Reviews sources from which Shakespeare possibly could have learned of Julio Romano, the "rare Italian master."

**The Winter's Tale (Vol. 45): Introduction**

The Winter's Tale

In 1672, John Dryden considered *The Winter's Tale*, along with *Measure for Measure* and *Love's Labour's Lost*, to be "grounded on impossibilities, or at least, so meanly written, that the Comedy neither caus'd your mirth, nor the serious part your concernment." Such an opinion typifies the history of ambivalence toward *The Winter's Tale*. Since its first performance critics have been perplexed by the play's disparate elements. Among other things, *The Winter's Tale* offends against classical standards of dramatic unity and genre, mixing tragedy and comedy and leaving a sixteen-year lapse in the action. Additionally, it presents the audience with an incredible plot, which includes the sudden restoration of Hermione after her long absence, and the survival of Perdita and her eventual union with the son of her father's former best friend. It also engages in historical and geographical confusion, giving landlocked Bohemia a coastline and bringing together an ancient Greek oracle with the Emperor of Russia, among others.

Although *The Winter's Tale* has generally confounded its audience, recently a number, of critics have tried to discover meaning in the play's disorder, particularly by analyzing Shakespeare's use of dreams. Scholars such as Marjorie B. Garber (1974) and Julie Burton (1988) provide the groundwork for such a discussion by examining Shakespeare's source materials, including the literature of ancient Greece and Rome (particularly Ovid) and traditional English folklore. Insight into the operations of dream work in the play has provided critics new avenues of interpretation. For example, while those working against a Christian background have found little reason for Leontes' outbursts, recent explorations, particularly by Garber, have contended that Leontes subconsciously substitutes his dreaming for reality in an effort to vent his latent propensity for sexual jealousy. Kay Stockholder (1987) claims that Leontes isolates himself through his dreaming in order to idealize his surroundings and rescue himself from his destructive passions. She cites Leontes' redemption and his incredible reunion with Hermione to be a dream-like resolution. For Ruth Nevo (1987), the play's dreaming instructs Leontes and the audience that regret is not enough to regenerate the past unless it is infused with a transcendence of this isolation. The return of Hermione is brought about paradoxically by both
overcoming the self-involvement of dreaming and accepting the possibility of dream-like metamorphoses: "It is required / You do awake your faith" (The Winter's Tale, Act 5, Scene 3).

Reinforcing the centrality of dreaming to the play's narrative is Shakespeare's use of time. According to critics such as Stanton B. Garner, Jr. (1989), dramatic tensions arise from the nostalgic recollections of the past coming into conflict with an imaginary network of present events. In this interpretation, Leontes' jealousy is jarring primarily because of its coming into conflict with the idyllic picture of his childhood friendship with Polixenes. Leontes' reunion with Hermione marks the overcoming of loss by the overcoming of time. According to Garner, "the harsh line between past and present blurs, shading the memorial presence of the statue into the living presence of Hermione." For Nevo, the severance of the play by a sixteen-year gap in time provides a structure of duplications in which events of the first part are repeated in the second part, when jealousy and fear of usurpation are reenacted— with Polixenes for Leontes, Florizel for Polixenes, and Perdita for Hermione. Humanity's tragic folly is iterated in the later events of the play, marking a shift in emphasis in Shakespeare's late romances. As David Bevington (1988) notes, although the return to an idyllic countryside is reminiscent of Shakespeare's comedies, in The Winter's Tale "the restoration is at once more urgently needed and more miraculous than in the 'festive' world of early comedy." So, while the structure and characterization of The Winter's Tale have historically troubled its audience, recent critical approaches have appealed to Shakespeare's use of dreams and manipulation of time in an effort to understand the actions of Leontes, to analyze the dramatic tensions, and to relate the play's tragic and comic elements.

The Winter's Tale (Vol. 45): Overviews

David Bevington (essay date 1988)


[In this essay, Bevington relates The Winter's Tale to Shakespeare's late romances in an effort to highlight its tragic elements, particularly Leontes' jealousy.]

The Winter's Tale (c. 1610-1611), with its almost symmetrical division into two halves of bleak tragedy and comic romance, illustrates perhaps more clearly than any other Shakespearean play the genre of tragicomedy. To be sure, all the late romances feature journeys of separation, apparent deaths, and tearful reconciliations. Marina and Thaisa in Pericles, Imogen in Cymbeline, and Ferdinand in The Tempest, all supposed irrecoverably lost, are brought back to life by apparently miraculous devices. Of the four late romances, however, The Winter's Tale uses the most formal structure to evoke the antithesis of tragedy and romance. It is sharply divided into contrasting halves by a gap of sixteen years. The tragic first half takes place almost entirely in Sicilia, whereas the action of the second half is limited for the most part to Bohemia. At the court of Sicilia we see tyrannical jealousy producing a spiritual climate of "winter / In storm perpetual"; in Bohemia we witness a pastoral landscape and a sheepshearing evoking "the sweet o' the year," "When daffodils begin to peer" (3.2.212-213; 4.3.1-3). Paradoxically, the contrast between the two halves is intensified by parallels between the two: both begin with Camillo onstage and proceed to scenes of confrontation and jealousy in which, ironically, the innocent cause of jealousy in the first half, Polixenes, becomes the jealous tyrant of the second half. This mirroring reminds us of the cyclical nature of time and the hope it brings of renewal as we move from tragedy to romantic comedy.

Although this motif of a renewing journey from jaded court to idealized countryside reminds us of As You Like It and other early comedies, we sense in the late romances and especially in The Winter's Tale a new preoccupation with humanity's tragic folly. The vision of human depravity is world-weary and pessimistic, as
though infected by the gloomy spirit of the great tragedies. And because humanity is so bent on destroying itself, the restoration is at once more urgently needed and more miraculous than in the "festive" world of early comedy. Renewal is mythically associated with the seasonal cycle from winter to summer.

King Leontes's tragedy seems at first irreversible and terrifying, like that of Shakespeare's greatest tragic protagonists. He suffers from irrational jealousy, as does Othello, and attempts to destroy the person on whom all his happiness depends. Unlike Othello, however, Leontes needs no diabolical tempter such as Iago to poison his mind against Queen Hermione. Leontes is undone by his own fantasies. No differences in race or age can explain Leontes's fears of estrangement from Hermione. She is not imprudent in her conduct, like her counterpart in Robert Greene's Pandosto (1588), the prose romance from which Shakespeare drew his narrative. Although Hermione is graciously fond of Leontes's dear friend Polixenes and urges him to stay longer in Sicilia, she does so only with a hospitable warmth demanded by the occasion and encouraged by her husband. In every way, then, Shakespeare strips away from Leontes the motive and the occasion for plausible doubting of his wife. All observers in the Sicilian court are incredulous and shocked at the King's accusations. Even so, Leontes is neither an unsympathetic nor an unbelievable character. Like Othello, Leontes cherishes his wife and perceives with a horrifying intensity what a fearful cost he must pay for his suspicions. Not only his marriage, but his lifelong friendship with Polixenes, his sense of pride in his children, and his enjoyment of his subjects' warm regard, all must be sacrificed to a single overwhelming compulsion.

Whatever may be the psychological cause of this obsession, it manifests itself as a revulsion against all sexual behavior. Like mad Lear, Leontes imagines lechery to be the unavoidable fact of the cosmos and of the human condition, the lowest common denominator to which all persons (including Hermione) must stoop. He is persuaded that "It is a bawdy planet," in which cuckolded man has "his pond fished by his next neighbor, by / Sir Smile, his neighbor" (1.2.195-201). Leontes's tortured soliloquies are laden with sexual images, of unattended "gates" letting in and out the enemy "With bag and baggage," and of a "dagger" that must be "muzzled / Lest it should bite its master" (11. 197, 206, 156-157). As in King Lear, order is inverted to disorder, sanity to madness, legitimacy to illegitimacy. Sexual misconduct is emblematic of a universal malaise: "Why, then the world and all that's in 't is nothing, / The covering sky is nothing, Bohemia nothing, / My wife is nothing" (11. 292-294). Other characters too see the trial of Hermione as a testing of humanity's worth: if Hermione proves false, Antigonus promises, he will treat his own wife as a stable horse and will "geld" his three daughters (2.1.148). Prevailing images are of spiders, venom, infection, sterility, and the "dungy earth" (1. 158).

Cosmic order is never really challenged, however. Leontes's fantasies of universal disorder are chimerical. His wife is in fact chaste, Polixenes true, and the King's courtiers loyal. Camillo refuses to carry out Leontes's order to murder Polixenes, not only because he knows murder to be wrong but because history offers not one example of a man "that had struck anointed kings / And flourished after" (1.2.357-358). The cosmos of this play is one in which crimes are invariably and swiftly punished. The Delphic oracle vindicates Hermione and gives Leontes stern warning. When Leontes persists in his madness, his son Mamillius's death follows as an immediate consequence. As Leontes at once perceives, "Apollo's angry, and the heavens themselves / Do strike at my injustice" (3.2.146-147). Leontes paradoxically welcomes the lengthy contrition he must undergo, for it confirms a pattern in the universe of just cause and effect. Although as tragic protagonist he has discovered the truth about Hermione moments too late, and so must pay richly for his error, Leontes has at least recovered faith in Hermione's transcendent goodness. His nightmare now over, he accepts and embraces suffering as a necessary atonement.

The transition to romance is therefore anticipated to an extent by the play's first half, even though the tone of the last two acts is strikingly different. The old Shepherd signals a momentous change when he speaks to his son of a cataclysmic storm and a ravenous bear set in opposition to the miraculous discovery of a child: "Now bless thyself. Thou mett'st with things dying, I with things newborn" (3.3.110-111). Time comes onstage as Chorus, like Gower in Pericles, to remind us of the conscious artifice of the dramatist. He can "o'erthrow law"
and carry us over sixteen years as if we had merely dreamed out the interim (4.1). Shakespeare flaunts the impracticality of his story by giving Bohemia a seacoast (much to the distress of Ben Jonson), and by employing animals onstage in a fanciful way ("Exit, pursued by a bear"; 3.3.57 s.d.). The narrative uses many typical devices of romance: a babe abandoned to the elements, a princess brought up by shepherds, a prince disguised as a swain, a sea voyage, and a recognition scene. Love is threatened not by the internal psychic obstacle of jealousy, but by the external obstacles of parental opposition and a seeming disparity of social rank between the lovers. Comedy easily finds solutions for such difficulties by the unraveling of illusion. This comic world also properly includes clownish shepherds, coy shepherdesses, and Autolycus, the rogues peddler, whose songs help set the mood of jollity and whose machinations contribute in an unforeseen manner to the working out of the love plot. Autolycus is in many ways the presiding genius of the play's second half, as dominant a character as Leontes in the first half and one whose delightful function is to do good "against my will" (5.2.125). In this paradox of knavery converted surprisingly to benign ends, we see how the comic providence of Shakespeare's tragicomic world makes use of the most implausible and outrageous happenings in pursuit of its own inscrutable design.

The conventional romantic ending is infused, however, with a sadness and a mystery that take the play further than is usual in comedy. Mamillius and Antigonus are really dead, and that irredeemable fact is not forgotten in the play's final happy moments. Conversely, in Shakespeare's most notable departure from his source, Greene's Pandosto, Hermione is brought back to life. All observers regard this event, and the rediscovery of Perdita, as grossly implausible, "so like an old tale that the verity of it is in strong suspicion" (5.2.29-30). The play's very title, The Winter's Tale, reinforces this sense of naive improbability. Why does Shakespeare stress this riddling paradox of an unbelievable reality, and why does he deliberately mislead his audience into believing that Hermione has in fact died (3.3.15-45), using a kind of theatrical trickery found in no other Shakespearean play? The answer may well be that, in Paulina's words, we must awake our faith, accepting a narrative of death and return to life that cannot ultimately be comprehended by reason. On the rational level we are told that Hermione has been kept in hiding for sixteen years, in order to bring Leontes's contrition to fulfillment. Such an explanation seems psychologically incomprehensible, however, for it casts both Hermione and her keeper Paulina in the role of sadistic punishers of the King. Instead we are drawn toward an emblematic interpretation, bearing in mind that it is more an evocative hint than a complete truth. Throughout the play, Hermione has been repeatedly associated with "Grace" and with the goddess Proserpina, whose return from the underworld, after "Three crabbed months had soured themselves to death" (1.2.102), signals the coming of spring. Perdita, also associated with Proserpina (4.4.116), is welcomed by her father "As is the spring to th' earth" (5.1.152). The emphasis on the bond of father and daughter (rather than father and son), so characteristic of Shakespeare's late plays and especially his romances, goes importantly beyond the patriarchalism of Shakespeare's earlier plays in its exploration of family relationships. Paulina has a similarly emblematic role, that of Conscience, patiently guiding the King to a divinely appointed renewal of his joy. Paulina speaks of herself as an artist figure, like Prospero in The Tempest, performing wonders of illusion, though she rejects the assistance of wicked powers. These emblematic hints do not rob the story of its human drama, but they do lend a transcendent significance to Leontes's bittersweet story of sinful error, affliction, and an unexpected second happiness.

T. G. Bishop (essay date 1996)


[In the following essay, Bishop provides an overview of The Winter's Tale, focusing on the characterization, the sources of Leontes' paranoia, and the mythological and narrative patterns that structure the play.]

O what venerable creatures did the aged seem! Immortal Cherubims! And the young men glittering and sparkling Angels, and maids strange seraphic pieces of life and beauty! I knew
not that they were born or should die; but all things abided eternally.

Thomas Traherne

Gib Deine Hand, Du schön und zart Gebild!
Bin Freund und komme nicht zu strafen.
Sei guten Muts, ich bin nicht wild.
Sollst sanft in meinen Armen schlafen!

Der Tod und das Mädchen

Dum stupet et medio gaudet fallique veretur,
rursus amans rursusque manu sua vota retractat;
corpus erat: saliunt temptatae pollice venae.

Ovid

Shakespeare seems to have been the first English dramatist to give his plays "poetic" titles, by which I mean not high-flown ones, but ones that stand in a complex figurative relation to the plays they name. Earlier dramatists offered proverbial titles such as Enough is as Good as a Feast or Like Will to Like, but this is not quite the same thing. The practice begins as early as The Comedy of Errors and Love's Labours Lost and reaches a kind of climax with Twelfth Night or What You Will. Given this attentiveness to the resonance of title, we ought especially to pay attention when one of the plays makes a point of citing its title during the action. It does not happen very often, but when it does it orients us strongly on where the playwright himself sees the network of complex interrelations having one of its primary interpretive nodes. This is especially true of his comedies, for which there is a less neutrally designating set of title conventions than for, say, The Life of Henry the Fift or The Tragedy of Julius Caesar (though that "o f teases). At one point in the middle of his career, Shakespeare seems deliberately to have set out to mock or wrong-foot this very kind of attention with apparent throwaway titles like As You Like It and Much Ado about Nothing. All's Well that Ends Well looks like the same sort of gesture, except that the phrase then appears twice in increasingly rocky straits on the very lips of the heroine (IV.iv.35, V.i.25) and makes us pay attention.

In both The Winter's Tale and The Tempest, as if in this they were a pair, this underlining gesture is not merely a secret citation for our ears alone, but a reference to an act or occasion of story-telling itself, with an even higher degree of self-consciousness. Of Prospero we might expect such a metadramatic gambit, since he is at once magician and theatre-manager. He speaks his line to Ariel, almost to himself, looking back on his masterplot as its final suite of gestures is about to unfold:

PROSPERO Now does my project gather to a head:
My charms crack not: my spirits obey, and Time
Goes upright with his carriage: how's the day?
ARIEL On the sixth hour, at which time, my Lord,
You said our work should cease.
PROSPERO I did say so,
When first I rais'd "The Tempest."

(V.i.3-6)

This punctuation is tendentious, of course, but I think it matches what audiences hear, and the line points them to an enhanced awareness of the closing movement of the whole play.1
In *The Winter's Tale*, on the other hand, the title-allusion has little of this deliberate affirmative to it. A small boy makes it, without even quite "getting it right," so that we may even work a bit harder to notice. Why would such a gesture of self-consciousness be given to a minor character in a scene that looks like an introduction or prologue to the main event of the act? Or is Mamillius closer to the center of the play than he appears? What sorts of things do we learn about him in his two short scenes that might justify the dignity of having him allude to the play's title in this canny way? We know, or we may already feel, that he is to be sacrificed. Insofar as his name associates him with his mother, we may wonder whether he can escape his father's blind wrath against her. And though Leontes apparently decides that the child is after all his, solicitude for his son's welfare does not include actually bringing him with him in subsequent scenes: he is as effectively banished from the King's company as his mother is, more so in fact. Whether he cries on being haled from her we do not know, but we are reasonably sure he grieves terribly later on. Even Leontes proclaims this much, though he glosses it as shame at his mother's behavior—or on her behalf.

But what do we see that might help us understand why his small story bears the weight of the whole play? By his own criteria, his is a "winter's tale"—brief and clouded, haunted by haunted figures. His two appearances revolve first around his father, then his mother. "Revolve" as there is a prominent element of oscillation in the boy's movement in each case: he moves away (is pushed away in fact) and returns. This pattern of separation and recovery in relation to both parents is important for defining him as a dramatic figure. The stakes, it will appear, are high both for him and the play in understanding the tentative alternations between identification, detachment, and resistance that these stage movements come to map.

It is in the scene with his mother, more set off from its surroundings than that with his father, that the play marks him for its own. Stanley Cavell has drawn attention to Leontes' discovery of the boy whispering to his mother, and read it as another scene of suspicion to add to his burgeoning fear and rage at the insidious knowledges of him he sees proliferating around him.

For Cavell the moment focuses Leontes' secret wish—secret perhaps even from himself—to make away with Mamillius, and through and with him all generation. But the odd thing about Cavell's attention to this scene is that it seems in some ways to repeat Leontes' own gesture by banishing Mamillius himself from real consideration. For we see more of the scene than Leontes, and we know that Mamillius is *not* whispering a secret about him—or at least, not the secret he most fears and desires. What then is he doing with his "sad tale . . . of sprites and goblins"? Cavell speaks of the moment between mother and son as "a result of mutually seductive gestures," which is acute, but there are many kinds of seduction. What are the elements of this one that it should issue in this story?

I

The scene begins with Hermione pushing Mamillius—his mother's boy—away, in exasperation at something he has been doing, as if she were afraid he is about to exhaust her patience: "Take the boy to you; he so troubles me, / 'Tis past enduring." She speaks over his head, into an adult world that converts her command into a gamesome and seductive entreaty: "Come, my gracious lord, / Shall I be your playfellow?" But Mamillius knows enough to know what is going on, if not enough to respond with urbanity: "No, I'll none of you. . . . You'll kiss me hard and speak to me as if / I were a baby still." If he has been irritating his mother, perhaps the rub has been mutual: he is trying to grow away from a defenseless dependency he considers past. Making his own play for power, he tries to set his antagonist against her companion ("I love you better"), who is indulgent ("And why so, my lord?"). And now Mamillius has a chance to strut his discriminating knowledge of female beauty. Contrary to Polixenes' claims in the previous scene for the lambkin innocence of boyhood, this boy has a keen eye for sexual attractiveness and an interest in seeing how he can exploit what he sees. He even claims to have his lore from his own observation ("I learn'd it out of women's faces"), and he knows and perhaps resents it when his precocity is made fun of ("Nay, that's a mock"). The playfulness of this exchange are clear enough, yet they are not the same for boy and women, and the delicate psychological observation of the small scene rests in these differences. Though he relaxes into their indulgent teasing, even uses it to shine in, Mamillius has more to lose, and he finds in the end that their power to hurt is more real.
than he had hoped when they put before him the image of his strutted independence unpleasantly taken at its word, and begin to speak, again almost over his head, of "women's matters":

1. LADY Hark ye,
The Queen your mother rounds apace; we shall
Present our services to a fine new prince
One of these days, and then you'd wanton with us,
If we would have you.
2. LADY She is spread of late
Into a goodly bulk. Good time encounter her!

(II.i.15-20)

Hermione interrupts the pair at this point with a rebuke, as though she knows the conversation is heading into deeper waters. She readmits the boy to her, offering reassurance of her continued presence and love, as though this were also a pledge for the future: "Come, sir, now / I am for you again." The expedient she hits on for letting him show his authority over her is that of story-telling, a move that allows mother and son to collaborate in a mutual dependence where he is active and controlling but still needs her consent and scope for his showcase. The two negotiate and Mamillius plays once more at refusal and aggression, a gambit Hermione is willing, even eager, to accommodate:

HERMIONE Pray you sit by us,
And tell's a tale.
MAMILLIUS Merry or sad, shall't be?
HERMIONE As merry as you will.
MAMILLIUS A sad tale's best for winter. I have one
Of sprites and goblins.
HERMIONE Let's have that, good sir.
Come on, sit down, come on, and do your best
To fright me with your sprites; you're pow'rful at it.
MAMILLIUS There was a man—
HERMIONE Nay, come sit down; then on.
MAMILLIUS Dwelt by a churchyard. I will tell it softly,
Yond crickets shall not hear it.
HERMIONE Come on then.
And giv't me in mine ear.

Enter Leontes, Antigonus, Lords

(II.i.22-32)

This is deft stuff. We watch Mamillius and his mother together shaping the stakes and prospect of his frightening her. No doubt she will exclaim with fear at suitable intervals, giving him the delicious pleasure of mastering at once her and his aggressive impulse against her, since he will know of course that she is not "really" frightened. The "winter's tale" proves a narrative device to stage and explore the psychic strain of their coming separation, alike feared and desired by both. It maps and cycles anxiety into story, just as the spatial movement away from and towards Hermione maps more complex separations ahead of the threat of his displacement—a threat contained in his own maturation, but also threateningly hastened by her insistent "goodly bulk." The story about ghosts itself ghosts much that cannot be directly faced. These are indeed "mutually seductive gestures," but they are carefully hedged by a definite agression also acknowledged sidelong by both.
What must Mamillius make then of his father's terrible irruption into this scene? It is sometimes asserted that Leontes in some sense "is" the man who "dwelt by a churchyard." For Mamillius, however, the "winter's tale" does not so much continue as spin wildly out of his control and into some weirdly hyper-literal realm, as though he had all along been casting a spell without knowing it. There could hardly be a worse nightmare than the sudden appearance of this dark phantasm of accusation in the person of his father. At some level, this is profoundly not what Mamillius had in mind, yet it may seem to him as if his own desires have somehow called forth this vengeful demon in the shape of his father: just how much of Leontes' appalling musings may we think of the boy garnering in the previous scene? As long as there is a medium for managing and so dispelling such forebodings, Mamillius can play secure. But now he must watch his own deeper half-promptings realized in the father who both demands and banishes him, at once fulfillment and retribution for his daring against his mother:

LEONTES Give me the boy. I am glad you did not nurse him. Though he does bear some signs of me, yet you Have too much blood in him. HERMIONE What is this? Sport? LEONTES Bear the boy hence, he shall not come about her. Away with him! and let her sport herself With that she's big with, for 'tis Polixenes Has made thee swell thus.

(II.i.56-62)

To Mamillius, this exchange must be both horrifying and deeply inscrutable. To hear that he "bears some signs of this Leontes comes too close to what he has been imagining himself: recall his earlier claim to his father "I am like you, they say"—but would he want to be like this father? To be forced from his mother's side in this manner, leaving her to "sport" with the new child, is also too much like the way the scene began ("and then you'ld wanton with us, / If we would have you") and carries a darker undercurrent mixing childish and adult sexuality in Leontes' bitter reference to Hermione's "sport." Have his entwined desire for and rejection of independence begotten such a monstrosity as this between them? What relations obtain between the boy's desire against his mother and his desire for her? Is his mother now to suffer for what he has thought and felt, and at the hands of this dark cartoon of himself grown-up?*

Such considerations cast a terrible light on what we hear of the boy's decline through the rest of the play. It is important that Leontes' claim on him does not extend to more than enquiring after him, as far as we know. Mamillius is sequestered from both his parents, and Leontes' cry "Away with him" is only the first of many such cries to follow, cries that seek apparently to banish the whole world and leave him in the company only of his own fantasies ("Away with her, to prison"; "Away with that audacious lady"; "My child? Away with't"). Cavell's suggestion that Leontes' rage is against Mamillius as well as Hermione, in spite of his apparent solicitude, seems only too accurate, and although this may be because of the "too much blood in him" of which he speaks, it seems also to speak of a more pervasive aggression, one we find turning even on himself—sleepless, restive, and thought-fretted as he becomes.

Mamillius, then, awakes from a world whose nightmares he controls to one where they are alive, where they strut and glower and spit accusations. His response to what he has done is to sicken, neurotically as we may suppose from Leontes' description, though we need not accept Leontes' specific diagnosis:

LEONTES How does the boy? SERVANT He took good rest tonight; 'Tis hop'd his sickness is discharg'd. LEONTES To see his nobleness,
Conceiving the dishonour of his mother!
He straight declin'd, droop'd, took it deeply,
Fasten'd and fix'd the shame on't in himself,
Threw off his spirit, his appetite, his sleep,
And downright languish'd.

(II.iii.10-17)

Cavell on these lines is worth quoting directly: "this sounds more like something Leontes himself has done, and so suggests an identification Leontes has projected between himself and his son. The lines at the same time project an identification with his wife, to the extent to which one permits 'conceiving' in that occurrence to carry on the play's ideas of pregnancy." But may this not also be something Mamillius has done? If Leontes' interpretation of Mamillius' condition is suspect, his description of it need not be. Though "the boy," as he calls his son, has perhaps not "conceived" Hermione's dishonor (and both their notions of "conception" must be important here), he may regard her slander and punishment as in some way his doing, in which case his "fixing" of "the shame on't in himself would be an attempt to undo what his momentary aggression has so rashly and magically done. This would be acute child psychology certainly, and would explain and complete a strange circle of identifications among the members of this apparently doomed family. Mamillius is trapped between identifications with father and mother. Too like his father in his violence and sleepless languishing, he is now willing himself to take his mother's place in conceiving and drooping. It is indeed a noble gesture, but not quite of the kind Leontes imagines. By it Mamillius attempts to take his mother's part as the object of his father's sexual violence, and to perform this part partly to deny his part in his father (and his father's part in him). Bastardizing himself is, in a sense, the price of redeeming his mother. In effect, he will kill himself for being like his father by becoming like his mother, taking her place to pay for both his own and his father's violence. "With mere conceit and fear / Of the Queen's speed" he races his mother to a death he now identifies as the outcome (and perhaps the engine) of male desire. In this heroic resolution he is all too successful.

There is a sense of Mamillius as having "seen the spider" through these brief glimpses, but the spider in this case is a sexual intimation for which he has inadequate preparation and no expressive recourse save this of his fatal sickening. The question of his mimetic "conception" of his mother's dishonor is shadowed, and perhaps interpreted, by the fact of his own "conception" by her at an earlier time through an act of "sport" not unlike aggression. Paulina's language in describing the etiology of the Prince's decline touches directly on this point, since it sees Leontes' current slanderous rage to "sully the purity and whiteness of my sheets" (his own phrase at I.ii.326-7) as intimately but obscurely connected to the Prince's secret "conception" of the act that created him:

PAULINA Nor is't directly laid to thee, the death
Of the young Prince, whose honourable thoughts,
Thoughts high for one so tender, cleft the heart
That could conceive a gross and foolish sire
Blemish'd his gracious dam.

(III.ii.194-8)

Paulina here clearly indicates she regards the boy's death as induced by a "high" revenge enacted on himself for having a "heart" base enough to "conceive" of his mother's staining by his "gross" father. Some part of a divided Mamillius has made itself a party to that imagined or real act of pollution, while another part has determined to wipe it out as far as he can—by wiping out at once both the cause (his heart) and the effect (himself). Leontes, more ruthless or more selfish, has meanwhile chosen to attack what he calls, with his typical obscure clarity, "the cause . . . part o' the cause" (II.iii.3). But children often confuse cause and effect
like this. D. W. Winnicott has spoken of the imaginative paradox of the "transitional object" in a way that deeply illuminates Mamillius' predicament:

it can be said that it is a matter of agreement between us and the baby that we will never ask the question: 'Did you conceive of this or was it presented to you from without?' The important point is that no decision on this point is expected. The question is not to be formulated.\textsuperscript{11}

For Mamillius the imaginative object has spun horribly out of his control, and fused itself with dark images of "conception" that point fearfully to him. The threat to his mother precipitates the need to formulate and decide the question of "conception" as a matter of urgency through suggesting that some magical potency in his own tentative aggressions has re-created the world as a nightmare. Has he produced his father's accusation or not? If he has, he must punish himself; if he has not, he must protect his mother. Further underlying this traumatic complex of ambivalences lies a terrible but obscure intimation of sexual generation—the very act that produced him, that he has somehow now repeated—as intimately involved with violence, staining, and mortality. Rather than consent to his inevitable part in that nest of spiders, Mamillius revenges himself on mortality by depriving it of its prize in him.

II

These conjectures on the relation between the Prince and his parents may seem somewhat overdeveloped, but they follow strictly what we see or are told, and they have the advantage that they do not rely on Leontes' surely confused sense of "the cause" to explain what happens to the boy. The obscurity of the connections Mamillius makes is registered by the play both lexically and dramatically, in their withdrawal deep within the texture of his lines, and of his character itself from the action. Where Leontes "stages" his suspicions, for Mamillius the process of violent desire goes on "behind the scenes." The play shows us a complex triangle of identifications in which both males deeply, and perhaps similarly, mistake the nature of their relations with Hermione and with each other. We need therefore now to look at the play's own dreadful "primal scene" of Leontes' suspicions, a scene in which Mamillius is also an intrusive—and, I believe—catalytic, presence.

It has been argued recently that Leontes' resentment and paranoia spring from his suspicion of female generativity in general, and his dependence on Hermione's in particular. His violence has been linked thence to the general history of patriarchy and its simultaneous use and devaluation of childbirth as "the woman's part." There is much truth in this view, yet it also seems to me insufficiently precise to account for just what happens in this case, where, for all the mystery of their genesis, there is a clear and precise notation of "events." One serious problem to be faced by the diagnosis of misogynist suspicion of women as the root cause though it is certainly the route Leontes' rhetoric takes once mobilized is that it is touched off not by femaleness in general (as it is in, say, Iago) or even with birth \textit{per se}, but specifically with the birth of a \textit{second} child. If it was merely a matter of suspicion of female sexuality in general, one would have expected it to have broken out with Hermione's first pregnancy, her first evidence of "openness" to male penetration, or even earlier, as it apparently does with Othello, around the initial moment of marital consummation.\textsuperscript{12}

But this is not what happens. Instead the crisis precipitates only when mediated through the presence not only of Polixenes but of Mamillius, the latter a genuinely new element in the familial equation. It is worth recalling that the boy is first mentioned in the opening scene, in what seems otherwise a rather awkward transition, immediately after Archidamus has said of the two kings' love: "I think there is not in the world either malice or matter to alter it."\textsuperscript{13} And though Leontes comes upon or is seized by his suspicion unprompted by any explicit thought of his boy, its efflorescence is curiously interleaved with another scene in which the child moves towards and away from his parent, alternately embraced and dismissed by him.
Yet if the actual genesis of Leontes' suspicions unfolds independent of Mamillius (though the boy is on stage and presumably doing something, perhaps playing, while his elders talk), the question of the sort of sexual consciousness boyhood has is very much in the air. It is discussed at some length between Polixenes and Hermione (does Hermione have her son in mind? are he and Leontes playing together?), and its nature is explored in images of a pastoral mutuality elsewhere reserved in Shakespeare for girlhood. What Polixenes recalls, or fantasizes, with especial plangency is a lack of any sense either of development and change or of sin, specifically of sexual sinnings associated with the appearance of women on the scene as occasions or, more strongly, instigators of (male) desire. The highlighting enjambment at "chang'd" is very relevant here, as though when we revise its meaning from "altered" to "exchanged" we, with Polixenes, avoid a thought of mutability:

HERMIONE Come, I'll question you
Of my lord's tricks and yours when you were boys.
You were pretty lordings then?
POLIXENES We were, fair queen,
Two lads that thought there was no more behind
But such a day tomorrow as today,
And to be boy eternal.
HERMIONE Was not my lord
The verier wag o' th' two?
POLIXENES We were as twinn'd lambs that did frisk i' th' sun,
And bleat the one at th'other. What we chang'd
Was innocence for innocence; we knew not
The doctrine of ill-doing, nor dream'd
That any did.

If we suppose for the sake of argument that Polixenes and Hermione are here watching Leontes and Mamillius at play, the scene before them becomes doubled by an imagined scene which peculiarly charges it with a nostalgic pathos springing from the necessity of whatever was "chang'd" in adult development. A heretofore perfect economy between equals then suffered an imbalance, coincident both with the perception of time as mortality and with "the doctrine of ill-doing." Polixenes seems here peculiarly to repeat a moment in the past where, like Mamillius in a later scene, he had to decide whether the "stronger blood" of sexual excitement that bears within it the intuitions of both mortality and punishment has come to him from within or without. Hermione points out the implication despite Polixenes' delicate attempt to turn it aside by framing her as "most sacred":

Had we pursued that life
And our weak spirits ne'er been higher rear'd
With stronger blood, we should have answer'd heaven
Boldly, "Not guilty"; the imposition clear'd,
Hereditary ours.
HERMIONE By this we gather
You have tripp'd since.
POLIXENES O my most sacred lady,
Temptations have since then been born to's: for
In those unfledg'd days was my wife a girl;
Your precious self had then not cross'd the eyes
Of my young playfellow.

HERMIONE Grace to boot!

Of this make no conclusion, lest you say

Your queen and I are devils.

(I.ii.72-83)

Polixenes' way of putting it—of temptation's having been "born to's"—both points to the particular issue at stake and neatly sidesteps the need to decide precisely where the origins were of this "conception" for him and Leontes. His description of Hermione "crossing the eyes" of "my young playfellow"—which sounds rather like Leontes on Mamillius—likewise conceals inside a more neutral phrase a (remembered?) resentment or taunt or sense of damage at her hands. After seeing Hermione, Leontes' vision became faulty, even as his desire fledged.

The later scene between Hermione and Mamillius, from this point of view, explicitly responds to Polixenes' vision of male childhood as insulated innocence, and with it we can be precise about the latter's sentimentality. Sexual knowledge is continually in development, mediated and modulated through play and fantasy and in constant contact with other emotions such as anger and fear. It is not a catastrophic creation from some female "nothing." But the question that needs answering here is: does Leontes too think this is what happened to him? There is some evidence that he does, at some level—though this thought itself may, as we shall see, screen a deeper self-knowledge he wishes not to call to account.

If we continue to imagine Leontes as coming into the scene from playing with Mamillius (hence as himself in contact with boyhood, even as Polixenes describes it), we can see at once the relevance of what Polixenes says about "eye-crossing" to what Leontes now finds before him. Indeed Leontes' testing and accusing of the world from here on frequently appeal to the arrant and visible truth of his fantasies to any "head-piece extraordinary." Though the "lower messes" are still "purblind" (as once both he and all were "Blind with the pin and web"), now he has "eyes / To see" all that's "beneath the sky" (I.ii.310, 180). His fierce accusation that Camillo is one who "Canst with thine eyes at once see good and evil" (I.ii.303) sounds not unlike resentment at having had his own eyes "cross'd" by his wife. And when he later confronts Hermione, he has the half-indulgent rage of an enlightened demystifier before his former illusion, redeeming himself by helping others on to the cure:

You, my lords,  
Look on her, mark her well; be but about  
To say she is a goodly lady, and  
The justice of your hearts will thereto add  
'Tis pity she's not honest—honourable.  
Praise her but for this her without-door form  
(Which on my faith deserves high speech) and straight  
The shrug, the hum or ha (these petty brands  
That calumny doth use—O I am out—
That mercy does, for calumny will sear  
Virtue itself), these shrugs, these hums and ha's,  
When you have said she's goodly, come between  
Ere you can say she's honest: but be't known  
(From him that has most cause to grieve it should be)  
She's an adultress.

(II.i.64-78)
There is a remarkable anticipation here of the eventual image of Hermione's fate at Leontes' hands. With a brutal connoisseurish swagger, Leontes gives his men a tour of his wife as though she were some object of aesthetic pleasure and moral inspection he had unveiled for them, to delight and to instruct. The "aesthetic" distance he thus achieves measures the extent to which he must defend himself from the possibility of responding to her as a human presence. She is as it were an exemplary picture, a monitory emblem labelled "feminine fraud." Only a fool would take her for the real thing. The play here imagines Leontes' aesthetics as a defense against his psychology, against a deeper commitment or a more carnal knowledge. And as usual, wrapped up in his fulminations, Leontes lets a truth slip "out" which he must either ignore or repudiate. Here the neatly chiastic form of the passage—his calumny coming between him and his wife—telegraphs the "insideness" of this truth to Leontes, around which he buttresses the more extravagantly his theatrical, aestheticizing gestures. Now at last, with a colder vision, Leontes thinks he can recognize the truth of Polixenes' charge that Hermione "cross'd his eyes."

Polixenes' low but distinct note of suspicion against Hermione is also picked up and amplified into the theatrical in Leontes' own recollection of his courtship as a time when "Three crabbed months had soured themselves to death, / Ere I could make thee open thy white hand, / And clap thyself my love" (I.ii.102-4). Sexual longing and the intimation of mortality, a sense of being closed out, a sense Leontes has of forcing Hermione, and also a strange and alienating theatrical dependency—as if he were on a stage awaiting Hermione's applause—all intertwine here. (The last sense prefigures Hermione's scene with Mamillius, where she provides an audience for his performance.) As Leontes watches Hermione now give that same hand to Polixenes, much that was allayed by her speaking then is stirred up again.

If Leontes' experience of childhood and the springing of desire has been as Polixenes describes it, then the relevance of Mamillius to the scene as a potential double of a young Leontes is immediately clear. Leontes himself admits this much, and we need not assume he is fabricating; indeed, his sense that he is so hides the deeper truth of a man who keeps his variant self-knowledges precariously concealed from one another:

Looking on the lines  
Of my boy's face, methoughts I did recoil  
Twenty-three years, and saw myself unbreech'd  
In my green velvet coat, my dagger muzzled,  
Lest it should bite its master, and so prove  
(As ornament oft does) too dangerous.  
How like (methought) I then was to this kernel,  
This squash, this gentleman. Mine honest friend,  
Will you take eggs for money?  
MAMILLIUS No, my lord, I'll fight.  
LEONTES You will? Why, happy man be's dole!

(I.ii.153-63)

Leontes' identification with his son is quite explicit here, even if the instant of recognition makes him (uncomfortably) "recoil." The figure of "myself unbreech'd" (incidentally revealing Leontes to be younger than we often think: under thirty—Hamlet's age), "unbreech'd"—either "not yet breech'd" or "with breeches removed"—and with his power to hurt in restraint or underdeveloped, is both a regression and an inversion of the adult, revealing by contraries how Leontes now thinks of himself. Particularly worth considering is the dagger: it seems, like a dog, to have a life of its own. In its adult form it is presumably unmuzzled and ready to bite, and its clearly phallic resonance suggests again that sexual maturity and damage go together, though an adult ought to be in control of both. But against whom is it now turned? The fear of the child's dagger biting "its master" might suggest that sexual maturity and desire threaten as much a self-wounding as an aggression directed against others, say against women. Deeper yet, the two potential woundings may be
understood as one. Does the perception of desire as a wounding of others or of the self come first? The vision of rape or the vision of castration: can one say which is prior, or do they emerge simultaneously and without hope of disentanglement? Antigonus, a genial chauvinist, later takes his potency and patrimony alike to depend on Hermione's faith. If she is, as Don John would put it, "any man's Hero," then all bloodlines are as good as scrambled, and men might as well castrate themselves ("I had rather glib myself) and find some other means of grasping at the future than generation ("I'll geld 'em all; fourteen they shall not see / To bring false generations"). But Antigonus, with all his huffing and puffing, does not really see what's at stake for Leontes here. What kind of mastery does Leontes imagine himself to have achieved over his own violence, and what relation does that imagined violence have to the reproductive potency that both dagger and son shadow?19

Desire and violence are thus very intimately linked. When Hermione "cross'd the eyes" of Leontes, the harmlessness of his muzzled dagger was converted into danger, and it at once bit or breached its master. The "mutually seductive gestures" of the scene between Hermione and Mamillius also gloss the remembered scene of courtship.20 Leontes' desire to wound Hermione, which she provokes and which is (a response to) his sexual desire, wounds him also by its inhuman aggression, so much against the tenor of a would-be idealization ("O my most sacred lady"). Desire's intimation of mortality and its revelation of himself as an aggressive and stained and staining figure are all alike laid at her door. His resentment and fear of his own violence is (inadequately) cloaked in the intuition of her crime—of her having (yet again) "cross'd his eyes." In response to Winnicott's "question not to be asked" Leontes wishes to reply that his "conception" has come from outside, from her. It was and is all her fault. Hence his central assertion throughout the following scenes, the one intuition that he must uphold, is: "It was not I who impregnated her." The rest follows from that. ("Yet it was someone like me—who better than my brother? Yes, it must have been he: look at him now—disgusting.") It is an implicit rejection of the universe of generation and mortality as one to which Leontes is necessarily bound through his desire.21 Leontes thinks to stand away from the world of generation and regard it as an object of contemplation, of lessons, even perhaps of beauty, but as fundamentally remote from him. Hence his intense frustration in Act II at his inability to find the "peace" which ought to come with his sequestration.

Such considerations can help us find our way through one of the most deeply obscure passages in Shakespeare, during the course of which Leontes tries to unfold to himself (or fold up in himself) his sense of what is happening to him:

Can thy dam?—may't be?—
Affection! Thy intention stabs the centre!
Thou dost make possible things not so held, 
Communi cat'st with dreams (how can this be?),
With what's unreal thou co-active art,
And fellow'st nothing. Then 'tis very credent
Thou may'st conjoin with something, and thou dost
(And that beyond commission) and I find it
(And that to the infection of my brains,
And hardening of my brows).

(I.ii.137-46)

The dark stuttering that gives way to a hectic rhythm here suggests a deep disturbance that moves many ways at once. Leontes seems to be talking at once about perception, imagination, and sexual desire, uncertain where to locate or how to feel any of them: each bleeds over into the next. "Affection!" is a cry that refuses to settle even into clear rhetoric: is it noun? verb? apostrophe? diagnosis? accusation? Is it her emotion or his? Whose center does it stab, even supposing it is the referent of the following pronoun? It is at least the cry of itself as it wounds Leontes, as through Leontes it wounds Hermione with its/unmuzzled dagger. "Thy intention" is
equally difficult: as though an emotion could have one—and if it can, there is a sense of Leontes as possessed by some force with its own inscrutable, perhaps malevolent, designs. Is this perhaps a "tenting in" that stabs at some wound in the—heart? genitals? Some such quasi-etymology seems implied. But which way are affection and intention moving: towards or away from Leontes? "Affection" is somehow transformed into "infection," combated as an invader.

Any commentary on these lines threatens to reproduce their own turbulent movement, as the critic's imagination becomes "co-active" and joins in the act of reading Leontes' sense of being pushed around by obscure implicating forces. The same applies to the spectator, for whom the actor's expression and movement may both clarify and complicate. What the lines uncover or create or "fellow"—in a manner at once poetic and sexual—is an indeterminate and alarming hermeneutic plasticity which mimes a vertigo within or surrounding Leontes, where ambivalent cross-currents of attraction and repulsion coincide. All we can really count on is Leontes' sense that he has come across (but does he "find" or create it?) something that causes "infection" and "hardening"—terms that suggest at once groin and head, in a play that inquires how these two sites of knowledge are related. The very non-specificity of Leontes' first suspicious remark becomes important here: "Too hot, too hot! / To mingle friendship far is mingling bloods" (I.i. 108-9). Though the coldness of his irony bespeaks adult control and self-observation, this is rather vague as the opening gambit of a specific jealousy. It sounds more like a horror at sexuality in general as contamination or overheating than at adultery in particular: the horror and disgust a child might express at discovering the truth (which so often seems like a bad joke) about its sexual origins. Just who is it that is (or was) "too hot"? And when? He and Hermione have just recalled their courtship and the "clapping" that concluded it. Only slowly does the particular accusation Leontes wants emerge, and it might as easily be a displacement resisting his own implication in acts of "mingling bloods," either as producer or as product. The play undertakes a curious "layering" of occasions from its beginning, insistently citing the kings' boyhood, their courtships, their progeny, and introducing an immediate image of the latter in Mamillius. The associative plasticity of Shakespeare's rhetoric at such moments invites us to see how many of these "stages" are caught up and addressed through the ongoing work of Leontes' fantasy.

Leontes' attitude to Mamillius throughout this "primal scene" of suspicion oscillates, not surprisingly, between identification and rejection: he hugs him ("Sweet villain! / Most dear'st! my collop!") and he spurns him ("Go play, boy, play."). His search of his son's face for signs of himself works not only in the obvious way to test and confirm paternity, but more deeply to evoke self-recognition ("yet were it true / To say this boy were like me")—and he finds himself there, not only in the nose which "they say . . . is a copy out of mine," but also in the "smutch" on the nose: the boy is sullied, as he has been (but when?), sinking both suddenly and gradually "Inch thick, knee-deep, o'er head and ears." He treats his son with a kind of indulgent contempt, as if embarrassed at his own affection: the boy is a "kernel," a "squash," but also "mine honest friend" who will show how his manly spirit is being "higher rear'd" by offering to "fight," perhaps to fight him. Yet he is no sooner alone with him than he sends him away in disdain, as though the thought of any relationship were greatly to his distaste. Marking this ambivalence is his use of the word "honest" ("Go play, Mamillius, thou'rt an honest man," I.i.211), which has the ring at once of Iago on Cassio and, more oddly, of Othello on Iago. That Leontes is his own Iago is a commonplace, but it comes as more of a shock to hear him making his son one too.

Leontes' search for connection to his son thus gives him both less and more than he desires: less in that it does not seem satisfactorily to still the doubts and intimations that prompted it in the first place, more in that it renews in him thoughts and modes of thought long thought overcome or put aside—thoughts that reemerge from the strange amalgam of childhood, friendship, rivalry, and courtship that the scene anneals. This "complex" of thought and feeling is further glossed—from a developmental perspective—by the subsequent scene between Mamillius and his mother, where a broadly similar moment of tension is about to be allayed or managed by the introduction of "a winter's tale"—a tale not only for winter but also of winter, that winter of the heart in which aggression defeats, or worse unmasks, love.
The centrality of Mamillius to the unfolding of *The Winter's Tale* will now be clear. But the connection of his childish "play" to Shakespeare's own has still not been fully explored. Play is what we see him doing, and what most explicitly links him to his parents in Leontes' savagely punning formulation: "Go play, boy, play. Thy mother plays, and I / Play too" (I.ii. 187-8). Childish recreation, female sexuality, and male self-consciousness are yoked together in this triad, and allude in turn to the Shakespearean stage that represents them all. Before we reach the metadramatic proper, however, and the relation of Leontes' theatre of cruelty to Shakespeare's, we need first to face the question of Mamillius' play as child's play. Again, it is the emergence of Mamillius' play-story as the name also for Shakespeare's play-story (augmented into *the winter's tale*) that we are looking to explain.

There is no doubt that Shakespeare's play is interested from the outset in the question of "development," that is, as an aspect of time, and that the task of "development"—as we now speak of "childhood development"—is especially focused in Mamillius. Shakespeare seems as aware as any modern psychologist of the implications of "play" in this sense. Leontes also knows, though he uses the knowledge dismissively, that what children characteristically do, and must do as part of the business of becoming adults, is "play." But the concern with time and what it requires also goes deeper. It is the opening subject of the play. In the first scene, Archidamus and Camillo trace both the occasion of their speech and its urgent sense of economic and social indebtednesses to an earlier time when the recent difficult and attornied negotiations now perhaps becoming a burden—were part of a simpler structure. The large register of ebonomic language in the play noted by Cavell—all the talk of debt, payment, gift, redress, revenge, just desert, and so forth—emerges from a need to confront and reconcile differences that emerge developmentally as gaps, branches, partings, and "vasts." What one party owes to another—that is, the difference between them and what to do about it (and among others what to do or say about sexual difference)—is an almost ubiquitous concern. Difference is the topic of the opening remark of the play, and its implications as debt are disputed in a courtly manner between Archidamus and Camillo throughout the first scene:

> ARCHIDAMUS If you shall chance, Camillo, to visit Bohemia on the like occasion whereon my services are now on foot, you shall see (as I have said) great difference betwixt our Bohemia and your Sicilia.
> CAMILLO I think, this coming summer, the King of Sicilia means to pay Bohemia the visitation which he justly owes him.
> ARCHIDAMUS Wherein our entertainment shall shame us: we will be justified in our loves; for indeed—
> CAMILLO Beseech you—
> ARCHIDAMUS Verily, I speak it in the freedom of my knowledge: we cannot with such magnificance—in so rare—I know not what to say—We will give you sleepy drinks, that your senses (unintelligent of our insufficience) may, though they cannot praise us, as little accuse us.
> CAMILLO You pay a great deal too dear for what's given freely.

(I.i.1-18)
Archidamus' sense of "difference" between their two countries here concerns less their societies or landscapes than their resources for discharging the great debt of hospitality. Insofar as the kings take their names from their countries, this also suggests a network of obligation between the friends (one also expressed by Polixenes at the opening of the next scene). Camillo's denial of the obligation does not relieve Archidamus of his sense of an individious and unbridgeable "difference" which will only be overcome by some subterfuge—whether "sleepy drinks" or "cross'd eyes." Camillo in reply begins himself to chafe, and denies the need to feel any burden of "insufficiency" by explaining the essential unity of the two kings from childhood friendship, a unity which has maintained its perfectly equilibrated economy of love almost by miracle. Within such a relationship there cannot be any question of a difference that can "count," of any "too much." Yet the strain of this mutual unity appears in a sense of the gigantic effort now expended to sustain it:

CAMILLO Sicilia cannot show himself overkind to Bohemia. They were trained together in their childhoods; and there rooted betwixt them then such an affection, which cannot choose but branch now. Since their more mature dignities and royal necessities made separation of their society, their encounters (though not personal) have been royally attorney'd with interchange of gifts, letters, loving embassies, that they have seem'd to be together, though absent; shook hands, as over a vast; and embrac'd, as it were, from the ends of oppos'd winds. The heavens continue their loves!

(I.i.21-32)

Camillo's concluding prayer almost suggests that something more than human will be required to maintain this stance. An immense quantity of material and social energy is being expended to "fill up" (as Polixenes will say) and hence in some sense to deny what is to all others a very palpable sundering. The flaw, as Camillo expresses it, lies in the inevitable changes of "development," of young trees "trained" together (are there two or one?), their roots intermixed but growing only to "branch." This suggests that development itself—the organic processes of life—necessitates the unraveling of primary unities into difference and separation, and that this unraveling can be traumatic, and hence generate resistance. Like Hegel's bud that contains in dialectic both the stem and the flower, time here is the engine of an unfolding that both flourishes and severs—two senses in which "affection" may "branch." Leontes and Polixenes strain ever more energetically to preserve a superseded version of their relation. And perhaps the strain is beginning to tell. It is precisely at this point that Archidamus first refers to Mamillius.

If the language of debt, gap, gulf, vast—and also "part"—emerges from this concern with ineluctable development and the management of its transforming consequences, the young Prince's task in relation to his parents—his play that is an attempt to cope with change within himself and his family—once more becomes a central focus of the tale. Change, ambivalence, the presence of contrary states of being or feeling in developmental dialectic with one another: how are these to be accommodated, processed, and represented by and to the ongoing self that mediates them? Mamillius' "sad tale . . . for winter" is, we saw, an attempt to do just this, and the play takes it appropriately as a model for its own processes of adjustment and symbolization. If we understand the child's play of the ghost story to be a way of responding to his developing ambivalences at once about his parents and about his feelings towards them, Shakespeare's play will also be understood as a tale told to mediate a complex ambivalence, to respond to a developmental pressure by acting on it symbolically through the control and disposition of the energies of narrative. But what ambivalence and pressure are at issue?

The answer is surely that they are, at least in part, Leontes' sexual paranoia and hysteria, and this returns us to the relation between Mamillius as "player" and Leontes' remark that "thy mother plays and I / Play too, but so disgraced a part, whose issue / Will hiss me to my grave" (I.i.187-9). If we understand Leontes not only to be speaking of "a part" that he "plays" here in some diabolical theatre (to that implication we will return), but also to be engaged in "play" like that of Mamillius in thus rubbing the quat of his desire into a wound of
delusive jealousy, what do we imply that he is doing? Precisely that his jealousy is a narrative structure with its own logic and progress under his control which covers, manages, and substitutes for something else. Leontes almost admits this very connection between his imaginings and those of child's play in a moment of outraged self-justification:

No; if I mistake
In those foundations which I build upon,
The centre is not big enough to bear
A schoolboy's top. Away with her to prison!

(II.i.100-3)

The "centre" here seems moreover to refer back obscurely to that earlier "centre" stabbed by affection at the heart of his dark feeling. Both Leontes' jealousy and Shakespeare's play provide an "intermediate area"—and they provide it in response to the same fundamental fact or fantasy: male terror at the nature and implications of sexual desire.

Leontes' behavior invites us to see him as an hysteric terrified of his own capacity and wish to inflict the aggressive pain of his sexuality on the female. So terrified in fact that, "deciding" such an inhuman (as he sees it) impulse can hardly come from himself, he "prefers" to arrange it or act it out as a fantastic scenario of her guilt and his justice. Leontes gives himself a sleepy drink to avoid knowledge of his own "insufficiency"—hence the link between his spider-poisoned cup and Archidamus' joke. This allows him the vicarious and secret pleasure of acting on his aggression even while denying it, in fact while outwardly justifying it as Hermione's fault even against his own more secret "knowledge" of the untruth of this charge. Hence Leontes' extraordinary and quite uncanny tendency all through these early acts to speak directly about his situation and yet not hear himself. Over and over again, in breathtaking acts of "unsight," he shouts out the truth: "Your actions are my dreams. / You had a bastard by Polixenes, / And I but dream'd it" (III.ii.82-4).

His bitter but exquisite announcement that "I play too" is therefore in part an acknowledgment of the constructing and manipulating aspect of his suspicion, of its aspects at once active and passive, exactly corresponding to his deep doubts about his sexuality—whether it is more properly "his" or something that "comes upon" him from outside, from Hermione. This split in the origin of his desire for "play" explains the sudden and overwhelming irruption of a theatrical consciousness into Leontes' world and language at just this point. As desire is both "his" and "not his," so also Leontes sees himself as both ruler and instrument, both on stage and remote manipulator/observer of the spectacle, at once (anti-)hero and playwright.

Leontes casts himself as either villain or dupe (or both) with "so disgraced a part / Whose issue will hiss me to my grave"—fatherhood becomes a demeaning, secondary role. His theatricalized consciousness even begins to bleed male suspicion out into the audience in an attempt to infect others in its own defense. The effect on an audience can be very disturbing indeed, the more so as it is difficult to shrug off:

There have been
(Or I am much deceiv'd) cuckolds ere now,
And many a man there is (even at this present,
Now, while I speak this) holds his wife by th' arm,
That little thinks she has been sluic'd in's absence,
And his pond fish'd by his next neighbour.

(I.ii.190-5)
This is equal parts disgust at female sexuality and comfort—even exultation—at the community of sufferers. The "it" to which the speech insistently returns is also presumably Leontes' way of referring to, without explicitly examining, the surging source of this kind of thought in a sort of primal "fitness" at once of perception and feeling, his and not his. Metatheatricality is just one way of showing Leontes as half-aware of, intervening in, several levels of manipulation from this point on.

As playwright and supervisor, Leontes can assign roles himself, can arrange events to fit his fancy. This is a way to "solidify" perception by giving it at last reliable and external objects, everting it from the darker and more terrible contemplation of his own self-division: it distances comfortably into a stance of spectacle, erects a boundary between the play and audience along which a judicial and policing action can be staged. Yet that same staging must at the same time go unacknowledged, lest the spectator discover himself all along as the secret author of the piece, and therefore as implicated in its fantastic elaboration. Leontes continues to speak of himself at once as plotter and plotted against: "There is a plot against my life, my crown; / All's true that is mistrusted" (II.i.47-8) but "I am angling now, / Though you perceive me not how I give line" (I.ii.180-1) and

the harlot king
Is quite beyond mine arm, out of the blank
And level of my brain, plot-proof; but she
I can hook to me—say that she were gone. . . .

(II.iii.4-7)

Leontes creates spectacles of Hermione ("You, my lords, / Look on her, mark her well") to keep her at arms' length, yet at the same time to control her, "hook her" to him in a terrible parody of an embrace. The trial he stages, as he says, to "openly / Proceed in justice" against one "too much belov'd " is a theatrical fiction already plotted out by him, "devis'd / And play'd to take spectators" (III.ii.36-7) as Hermione knowingly phrases it. The "flatness" of her misery, which she wishes her father could behold "with eyes of pity, not revenge" (III.ii.120-3), is the flatness of cardboard characters devised by an amateur and melodramatic imagination. And in the end the king's own sense of being trapped in a play not of his making, of being a foolish and infuriating theatrical spectacle, is part and parcel of his suspicion of his own fantasy: the only way to cast out his doubt is to make of it a finished device he can then stand aside from. Again, the impulse towards the aesthetic, towards the perception of a definite "shape" for judgment, defends against the inchoate threat of the psychological, with its implication of implication. Reading defends against being read. "Play out the play," cries Leontes, "I have much to say in the behalf of that Leontes!"

Leontes' imaginings are therefore a "theatre of cruelty" not only in that they are cruel, but also in Artaud's sense that that same cruelty is intended to be cathartic in some way—to purge passions and representations Leontes can neither disown nor acknowledge. Leontes himself speaks of prosecuting Hermione "to the guilt or the purgation" (III.ii.7), but it might as well have suited his purpose to say "the guilt and the purgation" since enforcing the one will accomplish, for him, the other. The courtroom drama is one devised to cover and deflect a deeper scenario of intertwined violence and desire which he cannot accept either as "his own or not his own." Unable to intuit the desire without the violence, he wishes to expropriate both. Yet this is not only or wholly a vicious strategy if we accept that an important reason why Leontes cannot accept his desire is that he finds its implications of violence towards its object at some level morally and humanly repulsive. Leontes' paranoia is scarcely an advance over Mamillius' suicide, yet it is rooted in the same impulse to refuse violence. Perhaps this sense that Leontes has the right problem but the wrong solution goes some way to explaining why the play in the end wants to recover him.\textsuperscript{28} He has seen the spider all right—but the appropriate thing to do is to find the antidote, not smash the goblet.

\textbf{IV}
That versions of theatre seem to multiply in the middle acts of the play is only one way of drawing our attention to the stakes for theatre once Leontes has begun his pageant of calumny. *The Winter's Tale* incorporates a kind of "career in review" of the manifold dramatic modes in which Shakespeare has worked over the years. In the present case, our revulsion at the "Leontine" dramaturgy of paranoia and scandal threatens to turn itself backwards upon Shakespearean tragedy and expose it as no more than a vast and incomparably more sophisticated (but not therefore less impugnable) version of the same thing. *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Coriolanus*—all those delirious plays of female-blaming parade themselves, unwittingly indicted by Leontes' own desperately compensatory rage. Is *this* what has been at stake through those works, *The Winter's Tale* prompts us to ask? What fantasy were those plays all along managing and concealing that this play seeks at last to expose, confront, and, if possible, undo? Is the choice of Mamillius' "winter's tale" as the title of this play merely a way of denying the more apposite simulacrum in Leontes' forensic melodrama? That Shakespeare should represent man's sexual impulses as a source of hysterical terror and self-alienation to men themselves is one thing. That he should go on to see this terror as hysterically refused and converted into an animus against generation in general and women in particular, and then link this gesture to the modes of his own poetic and dramatic work, suggests great depth of self-reflection.

But Leontes' theatre is not the only one made available to us, and does not exhaust the range of Shakespeare's theatrical fictions. Alternative theatres or versions of theatre multiply throughout *The Winter's Tale*, according to the developmental principle of dialectical "branching" announced by Camillo: no one theatre will serve all consciousnesses or states of mind. Even as Leontes speeds on in his theatre of blame towards an inevitable appointment with the death he must refuse to acknowledge in his own desires, his messengers, Cleomenes and Dion, tell us of another spectacle and voice, and another, if rarer, auditorium. Themselves "theorists" of a certain kind of knowledge, they are also "theatrists" of certainty in knowledge—a certainty guaranteed for us by the impact they record as audience of its impress on them. If Shakespeare cannot have us meet the gods directly (as he tried in *Pericles* and *Cymbeline*), he can at least suggest what an audience who felt they had might be moved to say:

DION . . . O, the sacrifice!
How ceremonious, solemn, and un-earthly
It was I' th' off ring!
CLEOMENES But of all, the burst
And the ear-deaf'ning voice o' th' oracle,
Kin to Jove's thunder, so surpris'd my sense,
That I was nothing.

(III.i.6-11)

Much of the thematic vocabulary of wonder sketched out in Chapter One appears here: the appeals to eye and ear as distinct portals of perception, the sense of imminent damage which goes hand in hand with a rush to knowledge, the apocalyptic thrust, the ambush by a superior force, all play their part in sketching in the image of a "theatre of total conversion" in which selves and their knowledges are battered and reconstituted by a divine afflatus to which they willingly accede. Yet for us this remains an echo only, an ideal perhaps of a kind of drama never to be for us, since a modern stage at least could not present it without a self-consciousness that would inevitably at some point keep us at a distance. The play's presentation of such an experience through Cleomenes and Dion offers us a limit case at once of an absolute knowledge and an absolute theatre—a theatre whose powers of skepticism have been abolished by *force majeure*, and which has therefore abolished itself as theatre. This is what principally we take to guarantee that what Apollo says—with unusual clarity for an oracle—is a truth beyond the theatre of its saying.

Along with the Apollonian (anti-)theatre of absolute knowledge there is also the gelid theatre of remorse that emerges under Paulina's direction after Hermione's death. This theatre refuses all impulse of development: it
remains stuck in a rocky and willed wilderness of abjection whose very unflinching severity is a punitive
allegory of the stoniness of heart that brought it into being. It is also a futile performance since it cannot win
the attention of the very audience it seeks:

PAULINA . . . therefore betake thee
To nothing but despair. A thousand knees,
Ten thousand years together, naked, fasting,
Upon a barren mountain, and still winter
In storm perpetual, could not move the gods
To look that way thou wert.

(III.ii.209-14)

This is a ghost-theatre, the permanent ossification of remorse into the posture forecast for it by Mamillius in
the story of the churchyard man. Yet by being here lived instead of told, it cannot be escaped: it is a prison
lacking a principle of release, of dénouement. Since the proper audience (the gods? Hermione?) is never
present, it cannot fulfill itself, cannot be forgiven. It is damned to perpetual repetition: "Once a day I'll visit /
The chapel where they lie, and tears shed there / Shall be my recreation" (III.ii.238-40), where the latter is also
"re-creation." There is no other principle of development but this one of obsessive commemoration: any other
gesture, as we are informed in Act V, is horribly shadowed by the repetitive vengefulness of its own sense of
self-wrong in wrongdoing others:

LEONTES Whilst I remember
Her and her virtues, I cannot forget
My blemishes in them, and so still think of
The wrong I did myself; which was so much
That heirless it hath made my kingdom, and
Destroy'd the sweet'st companion that e'er man
Bred his hopes out of.

(V.i.6-12)

There is no way out of such a structure. It must repeat in an older, colder key that same conjugation of
Hermione's virtue and breeding, between which came Leontes' "blemishes" that killed her. Were it not for
what Paulina knows in secret, she and Leontes would torment each other forever with images of Hermione's
"sainted spirit," conjuring it to "Again possess her corpse, and on this stage / (Where we offenders now)
appear soul- vexed" (V.i.57-9). Marriage in such a theatre is still and always linked to murder.33 What now
holds Leontes is only a moralized abreaction from his earlier contradictory intuitions about desire—this has
not gone beyond them, it merely seeks to pay their price.

V

I have attempted to locate the origins of theatricality in the first half of The Winter's Tale in the difficult
meditations of the self on its desires and in its attempts to shape responses to its intuitions about the meaning
of those desires. The Winter's Tale is hardly exceptional among Shakespeare's plays in focusing attention on
how human life copes with time and the changes it forces. Yet it does insist with unusual strength on the
psychic difficulty of change, on the potential disasters that can occur. By this late stage in his career,
Shakespeare's dramatic language has become an instrument subtle and searching enough to register not only
the surface gestures of a character, but also the secret affections or intentions that inform those gestures. The
imagination has become a layered thing, often obscure to itself, inventing its purposes moment by moment at
several levels. Characters at times hardly hear what they say, so deeply can they become self-enchanted. In
order to read such a language, it is sometimes necessary to extrapolate or extend an obscure inkling into an entire line of thought. In doing so, I have been employing a mode of discussion familiar to modern psychoanalysis, but I have preferred not to use the more technical vocabulary and, in particular, the shaping fantasies of that mode of interpretation. This is because it seems to me these modern fictions conceal at least as much about the pattern of Shakespearean psychology as they reveal. It is by no means certain that the mythological narratives that recent depth psychology has constructed will correspond to the inner mythography of a Shakespearean fiction. For that to be the case, one would have to posit either a universal structure not only of feeling but also of mythic transcription of that feeling, or a specific inheritance in psychoanalysis from Shakespeare (perhaps the most likely), or some common source for both. That Shakespeare was a writer interested in the life and permutations of deeper fantasy, and in the possibility of curative action where fantasy was distorting personality, we have no reason to doubt. But the more pressing question for a full account of Shakespeare's psychology is the one not asked by most modern psychoanalytic critics: what are the particular mythological or narrative patterns subtending Shakespearean dramatic fictions, on which the fictions themselves are built and which they reflect? From what experience of the persistence of fantasies or fictional structures in the imagination did Shakespeare himself develop, without the benefit of modern psychology, his particular sense of their "layering," their struggle for expression, and their potential for change?

In the readings of *The Comedy of Errors* and *Pericles*, I attempted to demonstrate the workings of a dynamic of self-recognition in Shakespeare's drama, by which the poetic underpinnings of the plays are eventually brought to light and transformed. It is a curious fact about these structures that a surface influence or indebtedness often conceals a deeper one which emerges only during the course of the action. Thus the elaborately Plautine surface action of *Errors* converts itself eventually into a Biblical-Ovidian amalgam that shapes an early version of a peculiarly Shakespearean poetics I have called "incarnational." And in *Pericles*, an elaborately acknowledged indebtedness to Gower also overlies and eventually cedes to an awareness of underlying Ovidian myths—in particular those of Niobe and Narcissus. *The Winter's Tale* represents Shakespeare's fullest working-out of this pattern, and in it at last the presence of latent narrative substructures shaping action beneath acknowledged schemata is not only the method of the action but also one of its subjects. Mamillius' small tale already points us in this direction insofar as it shows surface narrative as an occasion for confronting and controlling less easily acknowledged kinds of feeling and knowing. So we are returned once more to Shakespeare's choice of title: at the level of the Shakespearean imagination what foundational myth is being confronted and metamorphosed anew by the action of dramatic composition?

Jonathan Bate's recent work on the complex relations between Shakespeare and Ovid notes of the opening act of *The Winter's Tale* that it "does not contain a single mythological reference. Everything seems to come from within Leontes' brittle psyche, nothing from the gods." In fact the whole of the early part of the play having to do with Leontes is devoid of mythological or mythographic reference until very late, as though the king's "brittle psyche" had swept all clear. Yet this very brittleness and surface absence may point to a mastering myth within: there is no one so keen not to acknowledge the presence of a myth as he who is its captive. Following a suggestion variously put forward by both Stanley Cavell and Ruth Nevo, that Shakespeare's composition often moves, in Nevo's phrase, "backwards through a retrospective succession of partial recognition scenes," we should expect the relevant latency to emerge into view later in the play. Bate's work points to one possible answer in his study of Perdita, the figure the play positions most forcefully opposite the dark king who governs its secret and in-terior undertale, and who will be eventually the corrective to his terrors. Perdita's chief mythological association in the play, as she herself announces, is with Proserpina. What Leontes throughout the opening action may be both resisting and, by the very hysterical intensity of his resistance, confirming, is the intuition of male desire as capture by death, couched in the archaic tale of the rape of Ceres' daughter.

E. A. J. Honigmann proposed some time ago that Ovid's tale and Golding's translation of it in particular provide a "secondary source" for the play, and showed how traces of Golding have worked themselves back
into the play in several places. It is possible to go further than these verbal traces, however, if one connects the tale of Proserpina's abduction by the King of Death, a terrible figure for all his imperial dignity, with Leontes' own dark intuition of the damage lurking in sexuality. There is some evidence that the myth (with that of Narcissus, one of Shakespeare's deepest purchases from Ovid) pervades the whole play, often in unexpected places. Leontes himself directly echoes Golding's Jove in calling his child a "collop" of himself, and the whole Ovidian episode provides a mythic background for the nomination of "winter" as the mode of the play's opening, as well as for its location in Sicily, where the rape took place. As far back as A Midsummer Night's Dream, the passage in which Ceres curses the ground of Sicily and strips it of fertility had haunted Shakespeare's imagination. Now that act of abomination, and the violence of male desire that underlay it and whose inner deathliness it responds to, returns as the deeper inkling of Leontes' fantasy, and turns the play he heads from a tale "for" or "about" winter into "The" Winter's Tale, the tale of Winter in its mythic origin, its sexual meaning, and its psychological inflection.

In Ovid's tale, initiation into sexual life for Proserpina is the rush into a darkness never to be thrown off, a snatching by and into the embrace of a frozen shadow. Dis' sexual desire is male sexual voraciousness as death, deriving from and inflicting death. In Ovid, its violence is figured in the blow of the "sceptrum regale" that opens a passage for Dis through the lacerated earth into the underworld. This may be the original blow that "stabs the center." In resisting the image of himself as Dis, Leontes resists all involvement in the sexual. Leontes will be Jove, judging from a distance, putting it all in order, righting the wrong his brother Dis/Polixenes has done. Paulina calls on him at last, like Ceres to Jove, to "Look down / And see what death is doing" (III.ii. 148-9), to pretend no longer to the immortality of the Olympian master, but to acknowledge himself at last as the very figure of Death, the bringer of death to his wife and child. Terribly, Leontes awakes and finds it true. The "man who dwelt by a churchyard" was the man who saw himself as Dis. For him sexual desire and death have secretly shared a certain hardness, which is also that of winter—rigor mortis and rigor sexualis have been coactive.

Other aspects of the play seem likewise to root in Ovid's tale. What happens to Hermione, deprived of her children by death and abduction, is given in what happened to Ceres when she heard at last where Proserpina had been taken: "Hir mother stoode as stark as stone, when she these newes did heare, / And long she was like one that in another world had beene" (632-3). Goddesses recover more quickly than humans, and it takes Ceres much less than sixteen years to put aside "hir great amazednesse" (634). But when she does, her announcement is strikingly similar to the one with which Paulina undoes Hermione's stony captivity: "Behold our daughter whom I sought so long is found at last" (643).

Even the fearful and silly bear may be an Ovidian/Leontine bear, a final emblematic product of the angry, wintry world. If he is hungry (as the Clown suggests) it may be because he has just endured—and woken from—his winter sleep. There is a strange verbal anticipation in some of Leontes' remarks that seems to conjure up the bear before his time, lurking especially within the more violent of his outbursts: "Bear the boy hence" (II.i.59); "the centre is not big enough to bear / A schoolboy's top" (II.i.102-3); "It is but weakness / To bear the matter thus" (II.iii.2-3) or "and that thou bear it / To some remote and desert place" (II.iii.175-6). This last puts the burden of bearishness on Antigonus immediately in advance of his fatal encounter.

So much for the underworld of Leontes' fantasy. But a "winter's tale" is also a story told against the apparent devastation that surrounds: it wants to shield us from the storm of aggression, to make it bearable, to explain, protect, and deliver us from winter's intimation of universal death. Shakespeare's play, that is, may also be a tale against male sexual violence, not merely opposing it, but attempting to recognize and incorporate it into a larger pattern in order to rewrite or control it, as the tale by the fire offers to deliver us from the regime that howls outside of and for our death. Shakespeare's drama would then speak of Leontes' enchantment by the vision of death only eventually to cure both him and itself of captivity to that vision, a captivity once embraced as tragedy. In enacting the undoing of Leontes' fantasies, the play also works through its own relation both to Shakespearean tragedy and, even deeper, to Ovidian fictions of metamorphosis. The bear is
the emblem and commencement of a general unloosing both of narrative stringency and of tragic emotion insofar as its appearance must always be, for the audience, a moment of intense self-consciousness coupled with laughter—a laughter that, as Andrew Gurr has pointed out, looses the audience by its very staginess from too literal-minded and, following Barthes, "hysterical" a bondage to tragic fiction. Gurr comments that the bear "exploits [the] base level, the hysterical reaction, and then pushes the level of audience response higher up the scale by the blatant challenge to credulity which the bear offers," and Nevill Coghill calls the bear, in its staginess "a kind of hinge . . . passing from tears to laughter."44

In the task of "unbinding" that the second half of the play undertakes. Perdita is the crucial figure. Where the disguised Florizel hints at a repetition of the pattern of metamorphosis and sexual betrayal, Perdita counters with a wish to go back to the play's primal deep moment of disaster and undo it, to recoup Proserpina's flowers at the very moment of their loss and by so doing bring what was dead back to life. This will be her function at the level of the family story also: she is a general solvent of overgrown rigidities.

VI

From the moment of her appearance. Perdita exhibits a profound suspicion of the various designs and theatricalities thrust upon her. Her response to Florizel's opening accolade to her "unusual weeds" that "to each part of you / Does give a life" (IV.i.1-2) is that these are "extremes" in which she has been "pranked up." In part these fears are inflected socially and address the distance between aristocrat and shepherdess, yet at the same time social distance also figures an anxiety about female vulnerability to male predation, also felt as a discrepancy in power. Perdita's response to Florizel's citation of Olympian precedents for his love, even with his added promise that "my desires / Run not before mine honor, nor my lusts / Burn hotter than my faith" (IV.iv.33-5), is distinctly skeptical:

PERDITA O but, sir,
Your resolution cannot hold when 'tis
Oppos'd (as it must be) by th' power of the King.
One of these two must be necessities,
Which then will speak, that you must change this purpose,
Or I my life.

(IV.iv.35-40)

The last lines here may as easily intimate that the change will be in Perdita's life as a virgin as in her life as shepherdess, or that Florizel's changed "purpose" will be his protestation of honor. Florizel himself picks up the latter hint when he calls these "forc'd thoughts."

The scene of the presentation of flowers that follows has been commented on many times, but it is important to note that during its course Perdita at last refers directly to the myth of Proserpina I believe underpins so much of the play. Its open citation occurs here because now at last the implications of the myth are being directly confronted and resisted. Despite her doubts about the intentions inside male theatrical fictions such as Florizel's, Perdita publicly declares herself committed to active sexual expression, and to Florizel. Of all Shakespeare's young women, save perhaps Juliet, she is the most open in welcoming the biological life of the sexual body. But in order to assert this rightness of sexuality, she must somehow confront and defeat the pervasive connection between desire and death which has so far dominated the play.

For even as the play celebrates Perdita in the scene, it also hedges its account of her beauty with a male deathgaze whose implications we should by now be alive to. Perhaps jogged by her clearly expressed desire to have Florizel "breed by" her, together with her citation of the marigold "that goes to bed wi' th' sun, / And with him rises weeping" (IV.iv.105-6), Camillo's response to Perdita's beauty has wintry undertones that she
quickly pinpoints and laughs away:

    CAMILLO I should leave grazing, were I of your flock,
            And only live by gazing.
    PERDITA Out, alas!
            You'd be so lean, that blasts of January
            Would blow you through and through.

(IV.iv.109-12)

Within Camillo's image of himself as "gazing" we may descry Leontes' use of the aesthetic stance as a way of resisting human connection. Though Camillo himself does not see it, his way of putting it "freezes" both himself and Perdita into the postures of statuary. Perdita follows up the implications for sexual life of such an idolatry in order to undo them. She at once turns to Florizel and her companion shepherdesses "that wear upon your virgin branches yet / Your maidenheads growing," and it is to apprehend and gloss the moment of defloration that the thought of Proserpina's flowers springs up. The lines are famous, but for that reason often skimmed. For instance, the metrical pause at the first "daffadil" may well be a way to mark the difficulty of negotiating imaginatively the very moment of abduction and winter. The mythographic profusion, the sexual personality and reach with which the flowers are conjured from this hiatus is remarkable, and indexes the intensity of Perdita's wish to exercise imaginative control over the choice and meaning of sexual surrender:

    O Proserpina,
    For the flow'rs now, that, frightened, thou let'st fall
    From Dis's waggon! daffadils,
    That come before the swallow dares, and take
    The winds of March with beauty; violets, dim,
    But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes,
    Or Cytherea's breath; pale primeroses,
    That die unmarried, ere they can behold
    Bright Phoebus in his strength (a malady
    Most incident to maids); bold oxlips, and
    The crown imperial; lilies of all kinds
    (The flow'r-de-luce being one). O, these I lack,
    To make you garlands of, and my sweet friend,
    To strew him o'er and o'er!

(IV.iv.116-29)

Lively enjambments, especially of the sexually-charged "take" and of "behold," give the passage great energy. The lines are infused with metamorphic and creative power, growing out of their population by images of reproductive potency. Jonathan Bate comments eloquently of them that:

    the undertow of allusion to the classical gods forces us to read this speech mythologically as well as naturally. Flowers here have a metamorphic power—daffodils can charm the wild winds of March and yellow fritillaries can signify royalty. . . . And the language itself is metamorphic: "O, these I lack" comes as a shock because in the mind's eye the flowers have been present. . . . Something similar happens with the apostrophe to Proserpina: Perdita is saying that she is not like Proserpina, because she lacks the flowers, but in realizing the flowers linguistically she becomes Proserpina. She has picked up what her predecessor dropped when whisked away by Dis.45
Yet this is not quite so: Perdita becomes not Proserpina, but the maiden for whom Proserpina's story stands as a warning—to whom it has not happened. The flowers emblematize what must not be allowed to happen, what Perdita's strong imaginative response to the energies, even dangers, of sexuality will war against in the name of life. It is Florizel, like Leontes before him, who sees himself as "taken" into death by the profusion of flower-language, who associates it not with reproduction but with elegy: "What? like a corse?" Perdita insists that Florizel's desire will not become the portal of death ("icta viam tellus in Tartara"), but will remain forever the body of his life, the "sceptrum regale" "not to be buried / But quick and in mine arms." Its only rigor will be hers willingly to enjoy: "a bank for love to lie and play on," its death one to be played out "o'er and o'er" in the dying and rising of sexual love. And suddenly she seems to have overcome Dis, to have the very flowers she wished for: "Come, take your flow'rs."

Imaginative energy intercoupled with sexual longing have carried Perdita herself into a strangely metamorphic ambience, which she now registers with some hesitation as a version of the very theatricality over which she had earlier hesitated: "Methinks I play as I have seen them do / In Whitsun pastorals. Sure this robe of mine / Does change my disposition" (IV.iv. 133-5). Sexual inventiveness, it seems, creates out of its own—human—energy a correspondent impulse into fiction and theatre. The insight, over which Perdita is in doubt, answers more surely than anything so far the rather stiff conversation on "art and nature" with Polixenes that has preceded. Sexuality spins itself a metamorphic theatricality that rushes to keep up with, express, and render for consciousness the developmental urgencies of generative process and time. Perdita's local myth of the flowers of life thus not only provides a dialectical outgrowth of her own and Polixenes' positions from the earlier dialogue on "art" and "nature," it also answers very carefully across the waste of Leontes' tragic nightmare to Mamillius' abortive allegory of his frostbitten desires.

That the moment of Perdita's triumph is full of poetic release for Shakespeare also is suggested by the extraordinary hymn to Perdita that he now finds for Florizel. It has been little noticed how the rhythm of her conjuration is sustained and answered by the drive of his. The interchange is surely motivated by the energies unleashed through Perdita's exorcism of the covering figure of sexual death. Unchained from that dark intimation, Florizel sees Perdita as the miraculously human site of a kind of endlessly mobile self-reproduction he can only apprehend as the charging of each separate moment with the force and sweetness of the whole motion—and vice versa. Perdita seen so is a force never expended and ever renewing, that resists the freezing even of aesthetic celebration. His is a strange outburst, synthesizing a kind of stop-action perception with the sense of a fluid energy and continuity, whose best formula is the abstract and motionless motion of a wave, and whose achieved rhetorical image a chiasmus wrapped around an oxymoron and prolonged into a pun, all instances of a complex tension between motion and rest at once syntactic, semantic, and lexical. It is infinitely stronger than the "grazing/gazing" gambit of old Camillo it recalls, and we can measure in that difference the transformative work done by Perdita's refiguration of desire in between. It is the crowning moment of the scene, and will be answered itself in turn in the final animation of Hermione's statue, also a greatly stilled and moving moment:

FLORIZEL What you do
Still betters what is done. When you speak, sweet
I'd have you do it ever; when you sing,
I'd have you buy and sell so; so give alms;
Pray so; and for the ord'ring your affairs,
To sing them too. When you dance, I wish you
A wave o' th' sea, that you might ever do
Nothing but that; move still, still so,
And own no other function. Each your doing
(So singular in each particular)
Crowns what you are doing in the present deeds,
That all your acts are queens.
Aesthetic perception here is in constant dialectic with the vitality of the world. Florizel experiences both a desire to arrest Perdita's movement for contemplation and a counter-desire to give himself over to that movement in its unexpectedness. His formalizing impulse is constantly deferred by the worldward orientation of his love and desire. We are close here to the heart of what *The Winter's Tale* wants to make of the relation between sexuality and fiction as aspects and motives of human activity. The fictions that humans create are energetic responses to the complex and ever-metamorphic motions of desire within them. They take their shifting life in turn from the constant and developing transformations of consciousness in dialectic with what comes to it—both from within and from without. Camillo's opening principle of dialectical "branching" becomes a description of how the production of fiction must answer the needs it is called upon to translate and manage into representation. The slight rhetorical stiffness of the "carnation" dialogue on art and nature that precedes these passages represents the same issue seen more abstractly as a question of the ethics of control. The carefully positioned ironies of dramatic situation between Perdita and Polixenes, so well explored by Rosalie Colie, work in part to frame our detachment from the exchange as a recognizable "topos" or debate. Perdita is suspicious of just this kind of formalizing impulse imposed on the natural object, while Polixenes' sophistical chop-logic seeks to defend the prerogatives of planned intervention. But the central issue as the play has developed it is a slightly different one, less a matter of control than of decorum or correspondence: of what "kind" is the knack that fits a fiction to the need it answers, and how can we defend ourselves and others—as Leontes could not—against our generation of fictions that destroy or deform our needs into postures of sorrow or fatality, that "crush the sides o' th' earth together, / And mar the seeds within." The Bohemian pastoral shapes an answer to this only in the impassioned exchange of mutual fictions of desire between Perdita and Florizel.

**VII**

Seen in this light, Leontes' jealousy and the deep Ovidian generation of *The Winter's Tale* are intimately related to each other, and both to the small moment with which we began—in which a little boy gropes for a story whose purposes he hardly knows. The connection runs through their common practice of seeing the dynamic mediation of self and world performed via an imaginative structure, a story or fantasy which puts inner and outer fields of perception in touch with each other, sometimes benignly or even in such a way as to rectify or assuage discomfort, but sometimes in disastrous misprision. As Winnicott puts it: "the task of reality-acceptance is never completed, . . . no human being is free from the strain of relating inner and outer reality, and . . . relief from the strain is provided by an intermediate area of experience which is not challenged (arts, religion, etc.)." The case of an aberrant or dan-gerous fantasy of the kind that Leontes develops, the idea of which runs all through Shakespeare's work, is also described by Winnicott and again related to other modes of imaginative elaboration which we associate with artistic activity:

> Should an adult make claims on us for our acceptance of the objectivity of his subjective phenomena we discern or diagnose madness. If however, the adult can manage to enjoy the personal intermediate area without making claims, then we can acknowledge our own corresponding intermediate areas, and are pleased to find a degree of overlapping, that is to say common experience between members of a group in art or religion or philosophy.

The ease of movement from private to public fantasies here, and the sense of interconnection between danger and necessity in the functioning of the imagination to connect self and world, touch Shakespearean matters closely. In moments like the exchange of mutual imaginative visions between Florizel and Perdita, we see this process vividly at work as a spontaneous upwelling of imaginative apprehensions that feed at once and deeply on the needs of the self and its perceptions of the needs of the other. Florizel needs to be assured that his desire is not death-dealing, Perdita that her transformations are not self-betraying.
Janet Adelman suggests that the pastoral of Bohemia—and Perdita, its dramatic center—are a version of Winnicott’s “object that survives” its destruction by the child, therefore the proof to the child’s imagination of a universe outside the self that is not subject to the regime of death at the hands of the subject’s aggression.\textsuperscript{49} This complex of perceptions, I have argued, appears in the play as a doubt about the human value of sexual expression rather than as a problem in infant development \textit{per se}, though it could no doubt be argued that the former is a translated reprise of the latter. For the play, the rural environs of Bohemia are indeed a place of survival. Leontes casts Perdita forth, as he imagines, to “some remote and desert place” (II.iii.176) only to have her return intact from the plenitude of Bohemia—a plenitude as much of fictions as of flowers. In Bohemian pastoral, the abundance of theatrical forms in apposition—songs, dances, masquing, roguery, gods, and satyrs all mixed up—the very length of the scene itself, witness a resiliency and productivity of pleasure that Leontes’ absolute regime has shrunk and truncated. Even when the Leontine violence returns in the fearful images of what Polixenes will have done to those who oppose him, Camillo as playwright and Autolycus as survival’s ready rogue (for whom “the red blood reigns\textsuperscript{50} in the winter’s pale”) have their ways of outflanking and skewering that severity into a kind of comic impotence. From this point of view the infamous Bohemian “sea-coast” is neither a blunder nor a thumbing of the nose, but an insistence on the transgressive prerogative of the imagination in answering the needs of survival.

From this perspective too, the question of Autolycus’ relation to the rest of the play becomes clear: he presents at once the necessary freedom of story to range where it will in order to find its always-variable rightness (“And when I wander here and there / I then do go most right,” IV.iii.17-18), and the transgressive or resistive impulse resident within that freedom. He is a rogue always cheered by audiences because they see in him a spirit of their own energetic resistance to darker necessities, a resistance innately part of the impulse to play: Autolycus catches us grinning because in the theatre we are (or wish to be) his counterparts in imaginative ranging. His adoption—or theft—from Ovid is itself openly admitted in his name: poets take what they need and as they must.\textsuperscript{51} The prerogatives of fiction are subject to no law except that they must answer the needs that generate them. In Autolycus, as in Perdita though in different registers, we encounter a constant self-revision figuring a Shakespearean account of the temporality of fictions. The business of fiction-making is a never-ending one, endlessly and dialectically entwined with both itself and the need from which it springs to touch and open the world. Inside Shakespeare’s play lie the husks of those fictions he has himself consumed or been fertilized by, sedimented in varying layers of acknowledgment and power: Greene, Peele, Ovid. As the occasion of playing transforms, so the medium and content of the play must also develop, in part out of its own history. \textit{The Winter’s Tale}, long observed to thematize seasonal transformation and renewal, also proffers that cycle of loss and recovery as the way of its own imaginative genealogy. It is necessary to learn to imagine the absoluteness of neither life nor death in order to enter such a landscape. These are hard lessons, not learned in Leontes, who precipitates out of Polixenes’ fantasy of absolute boyhood life a terrible and reactionary image of absolute death, of “nothing.”

The openness with which Shakespeare acknowledges his own poetic genealogy through the play is of a piece with his whole understanding of the dynamics of composition as a version of the general dynamics of human life in time. Though the Ovidian fictions that lie inside \textit{The Winter’s Tale}—Proserpina, Arachne, Niobe, Autolycus, even Pygmalion—all unfold in \textit{Metamorphoses} as directly or indirectly associated with challenges to the authority of the gods, Shakespeare’s own writing in the end does not display such challenge and competition.\textsuperscript{52} Harold Bloom has remarked (\textit{Anxiety of Influence}, p. 11) on what he calls Shakespeare’s extraordinary ability to “swallow his precursors whole.” But perhaps “eating” is less apposite here than “breeding by.” It appears from \textit{The Winter’s Tale} that his assurance, so unlike that of Marlowe or Jonson, springs ultimately from an understanding of human fictions as always in need of transformation, an understanding that absorbs the lessons of metamorphosis and generation not only at the level of bodies, but also at that of fictions.\textsuperscript{53} Time has already stripped putative precursors of the necessity they had—from age to age, from reading to reading, they are not what they are. Hence Shakespeare’s recurrent insistence, as also in \textit{Pericles}, on the audience’s active role in absorbing and recirculating fictions. And hence also perhaps his apparent, and to some puzzling, unconcern about publication, again so unlike Jonson, since his own “works”
must in their turn be changed to answer the world they have in part transformed by their participation in it.

The climactic scene of the play's attention to the life of fictions is the final one of Hermione's statue. By now many strands of the play have gathered to make "the statuesque" a topic that combines a number of issues. It is for that reason principally that our consideration of wonder in The Winter's Tale, which must inevitably take the final scene as its central meditation, has had first to traverse the entire play. For whatever energies are released, caught up, opened, or conducted by the ceremonious and ecstatic rhythms of this scene, they have been led there carefully over the long haul. Though the scene celebrates and affirms, as commentators have pointed out, the vivifying and wish-fulfilling powers of theatre, there is a sense in which it also tells us of how at some point the theatre must be given up or relinquished. Through this feeling of "letting go" of theatre, a feeling linked to the other kinds of letting go the scene does—of mourning, of recrimination, of fear—the final moments of The Winter's Tale resemble nothing so much as the scene of relinquishment that concludes The Tempest. In both plays Shakespeare points to a need to move beyond theatre towards some more direct recognition which will have no need of shadows, even if the latter have been the very media by which the imagination has arrived where it is. The theatre emerges at the end of the play as a homeopathic remedy for itself—but as fantasy and purgation negate one another, so both must accordingly be given up as theatricality, and the world inhabited once more unfantasied—for the time being.

VIII

The sense of undoing, of release, is almost overwhelming in the final scene of The Winter's Tale. Imagined most fully in the "depetrification" of the statue, it is also explicitly a verbal process sustained throughout, like saying a spell backwards. There is scarcely a line that does not deliberately tag a counterpart somewhere back in the first part of the play. Cordial for cordial, issue for issue, kiss for kiss, stain for stain, grace for grace, wooing for wooing, warmth for heat; each echo arises to its invocation as a kind of "underword," a ghost word to be laid and replaced by the strength of the scene to which it is summoned. The decision to confront the image of Hermione, and then the further attempt to recover Hermione herself from her being of stone, is a corollary of this process insofar as it reaches "underneath" the structure of likelihoods put in place by the play to the deeper rootedness of its sorrow and rupture, in order to effect an answering repair. At the same time, the scene shapes a gesture of almost direct acknowledgment to the Ovidian material that subtends so much of the earlier action, setting its Ovidian pretexts against one another, so that the myth of Pygmalion's misogyny and its overcoming is made to confront and resolve that of Proserpina's rape, the latter itself a tale of how life and time were split into antithetical halves by an abduction into an underworld realm. As a version of Shakespearean theatre and its vivifying powers, the scene also complements and negates its own internal competitors: Leontes' tragic theatre of calumny, the Bohemian pastoral of the self and its liberties, even the trumpery animal-act of the bear.

This is in short a scene that risks more than perhaps any other in Shakespeare's works: no other play brings the pressure of an entire structure to bear on its conclusion in quite this way. That it succeeds so well with most critics and audiences only makes it the more difficult to account for—since it seems willfully to violate all accepted canons of construction. But then the necessity of risking excess is part of the scene's point also; in this too Shakespeare has a Blake-like energy. The scene has always had powerful and moving encomiasts, but each approach to it enters a risky defile and must carefully work through the turbulent dynamics of a peculiar Scylla and Charybdis: between a credulity that believes too much and a resistance that hardens too fast.

It is in just such a "between" as this that the peculiar and overwhelming effect of the scene develops: within the ambit of powerful transactions between words now and their counterparts then, between the statue and the living body (of both actor and character), between the present fiction and its pressing analogues, between stage and audience. The risk the critic runs is that of the characters—Leontes or Hermione in particular—of negotiating the transition between impression and expression, between silence and speech, between stone and flesh, improperly. The scene is one of general trial and to venture onto its ground is dangerous. Paulina knows
Let me begin with a remark of Leonard Barkin's that "Leontes and Hermione are not independent organisms but a pair of Shakespearean twins, two halves of a single system. The husband treats the wife lovelessly, and she becomes a stony lady." This sense of the couple as entwined, even in separation, we might take to be part of the point of having their "keeper" named Paulina, pointing us back to Shakespeare's Pauline sense of marriage as a "making one flesh"—or one stone. There is indeed a deep interdependence between the imperviousness of Leontes earlier in the play and the present immobility of Hermione's statue. But we should consider carefully the multiple resonances of this mutual stoniness. Barkin points to Hermione's petrification as an image of Leontes' coldness (Cavell would say, of his skepticism), and so it is; but it is also possible to see it as a defensive maneuver in response, and therefore at once an effect or image of what Leontes does and a reply to it. Leontes certainly sees the stone as a moralization of his cruel error, and hence as an image of the connection of their fates: "does not the stone rebuke me / For being more stone than it?" (V.iii.37-8). But for Hermione, the advantage of stone lies in its safety from attack, its impenetrability: within it she can survive, as it were, in hibernation. Hers is the gesture of Galatea discovering—at some later date—the misogyny and distrust of (female) sexuality which led Pygmalion to carve and love her in the first place. There is a further thought within this dialectical circuit: what if stone were also the fate Leontes had himself imagined to protect Hermione from the brutality and hardness of his desire for her (here we are close to Cavell's discussion of Othello)—even perhaps to return that hardness in some way upon him, as the statue is now "piercing to my soul"? If Pygmalion's desire, even as it turned Galatea into a living woman, had turned his love of her to a brutal and implacable hardness, he might have wished to spare her that. Here we glimpse once more Shakespeare's churchyard horrorstory of heterosexual desire: that it should make men hard even as it softens women. This would make of Leontes' own venture towards stone in the same scene at once a quest for Hermione's presence and experience and a homeopathic repetition of his own desire, scanning and testing it for residual blockishness and blindness (we recall the danger lurking still in his first response to Perdita, even as a simulacrum of Hermione). His impulses to kiss the statue and to become like the statue would then be counterparts in the scene's tracing of various modes of his relation to the thought of Hermione in him.

Another way of putting this would be to note that the scene undoes the making of Hermione into an object of cool aesthetic interest that we saw characterized one stage of Leontes' relation to her. Indeed it proceeds carefully backwards from the stance of the aesthete with his evaluative and technical gaze through the collapse or absorption of that distance into the more dynamic and interactive relations of the psychological, and finally the erotic. The scene insists with a fair degree of literalness on the absorption of Leontes—and to a lesser extent those around him—towards the mode of being of the statue, their sharing its stillness as a precondition of its coming to share their life. Perdita is observed "standing like stone with thee" and declares she could "stand by, a looker-on" for twenty years; Leontes' sense of the statue's life turns him to the thought of his own death ("Would I were dead but that methinks already—"); when Paulina offers to awake the image, Leontes declares "No foot shall stir," they must "all stand still," and when she moves he must "Start not" and must be told, like her, when to move and to "present your hand." The ideas of her (potential) motion and their lack of it are intertwined throughout. Only by creating a world of stilled lives can the statue be tempted to share any life.

This gradual, painful approach worked out between Leontes and the statue is not without risk. Kenneth Gross has best described what is at stake in the play's recalling other images of return (and, I would add, of artifice): such images are like ghosts that the play must both conjure and exorcize before any further enchantment or disenchantment of the statue is possible. . . . The general fantasy of return is shared by many spectators; but Shakespeare allows us at least the thought that Leontes with
Hermione could all too easily become like Lear with Cordelia, torn at the end of his tragedy between the deluded knowledge of his daughter's being restored to life and the absolute certainty that she is a corpse.61

Other ghost fates threaten as well, and not only for Leontes: other tales of animated idols press to mind, and may lie behind Paulina's apprehensions about how her conjuration may be understood, if things should go badly.62 Paulina's image of Leontes "marring" the stone lips and "staining" his own suggests a range of partial and improper relations between feeling and representation, lover and object, reader and text. They cannot simply meet: they must first exchange properties, even become metaphors for one another: mutual desire and mutual attentiveness are alike required.63 What does it mean to read an aesthetic object as more than just an occasion for the exercise of one's skill or force in interpretation? What does it mean to respond to a person with fully engaged human attention? What, above all, is the relation between these two questions? (And what is it about our needs as humans that we must ask it?) Paulina's answer is "It is requir'd / You do awake your faith." But faith in what she does not say.

Likewise deliberately evoked is a correspondence between the statue's artifice and Leontes' frozen ceremonial of grief, that "theatre of remorse" we observed before as the ash of tragedy. The similarity is made plain by Camillo:

PAULINA O, patience!
The statue is but newly fix'd; the colour's
Not dry.
CAMILLO My lord, your sorrow was too sore laid on,
Which sixteen winters cannot blow away,
So many summers dry.

(V.iii.14-22) Camillo has perhaps noticed Leontes weeping here, but the odd image of him as painted picked up from Paulina's lines (as if his grief were make-up) also recalls Perdita's earlier objections against "painting" as falsification—even if augmenting a genuine impulse. This brings up the question once more of what fiction or form of representation can best match itself to or answer feeling. Camillo complains, albeit gently, that Leontes, in overdoing it, has only continued to damage himself, but it is enough here that Leontes' wet tears match the statue's undried color to indicate the way the two are approaching one another, mutual images or representations of artifice as a refuge from the pain of change as well as mutual figures of death in life. Art and desire front life and death in a complex dialectic of mutual combination in which each serves as the precondition of its antithesis. The structure has an inevitable temporal dynamic—a necessarily developmental impetus of binding and loosing. Each modifies the others and what one kills, its contrary vivifies.

One way to get at the way this complex motion works is to consider a key pair of terms that run through the scene: "mock" and "like." These seem chosen specifically to suggest at once modes of representation and moods of feeling, and to provide a subtle network of relations between these. Through them the scene exposes and Works through the connection of perception and emotion as explicitly as it can, a connection that goes back at least as far as the problem of Leontes' "crossed eyes" and his imagined trip-wire spider, and that underlies his increasingly hysterical attempts to straitjacket complex ambivalences in the paranoid theatricality of conspiracy theory. Consider the moment of unveiling the statue:

PAULINA As she liv'd peerless,
So her dead likeness, I do well believe,
Excels what ever yet you look'd upon,
Or hand of man hath done; therefore I keep it
Lovely, apart. But here it is; prepare
To see the life as lively mock'd as ever
Still sleep mock'd death. Behold, and say 'tis well.
Hermione like a statue.
I like your silence, it the more shows off
Your wonder; but yet speak.

(V.iii.46 51)64

There is an insistent jingle here among "likeness,"

"look'd," "lovely," "life," "lively," and "like" which links what is "like" to what "likes" according to an ancient and true etymological connection that Shakespeare seems here to be dramatizing. Hermione's "likeness" will revive in Leontes his "liking"—not just his remorse—which in turn will lead on to her "life." A true likeness, one made as here "to the life" is, as Aristotle said of theatrical spectacle, "psychagogic": it attracts the soul. The silent response, the intensity of attention turned to the statue by its viewers, are things Paulina "likes."

And yet bracketed inside this intercourse of likeness with liking is a counterpun in which life is "mock'd": imitated, yet also made fun of as sleep makes fun of or plays games with death (Paulina knows the statue can be awakened). The specific simile here insists on the one hand that aesthetic or mimetic "mocking" of this kind is as much a heightening of "life" as it is a gaming; one might even go further and say a gaming in order to heighten. But it also insists on a power to humiliate or damage the living that resides in artifice (recall Hermione's sense of her trial as a "mock-trial"). Leontes will reinforce this sense of vulnerability or victimization at the hands of the statue twice, and both times the "mockery" is keyed to the statue's ability to challenge ordinary notions of what constitutes "liveliness" and what sort of emotion ought to be directed towards works of art: "The fixure of her eye has motion in't, / As we are mock'd with art" and at last, desperately, "Let no man mock me, / For I will kiss her" (V.iii.67-8; 79-80). With Paulina's warning reply that what Leontes proposes is only a mistaken parody of the contact he seeks (like Pygmalion bedding his ivory), the scene reaches a momentary stalemate. Paulina will allow no further approach, Leontes will not let the curtain fall but stands, as his daughter says, for ever "a looker-on."

Each of these postures of response, we may feel, even this risking of indecorum and humiliation, must be passed through as stages of Leontes' "trial by mockery" before the statue can be invoked to life, according to the crucial condition "If you can behold it." Hermione's return takes place on a middle ground "between" stone and flesh onto which Leontes in particular ventures in love and danger. And the scene compares this transaction between man and stone to the complex mediations of all our forms of address to fictional objects: the emotional investment we make in them, their mode of being through that investment for us, our mode of being through their challenge to us, the claims we make on them and on each other through them, and so forth.

Yet the moment of Hermione's revival remains extraordinary by any measure. Nevill Coghill has drawn attention to the length of the scene as a way of confirming for us her actual stoniness through her lack of motion, so that an audience may be "reconvinced against hope that she is a statue." This strategy is the play's own version of the deferral of Leontes' desire. Coghill demonstrates the point by reprinting the Folio text of the passage, remarking that "only at the end of the long, pausing entreaty, when the suspense of her motionlessness has been continued until it must seem unendurable, is Hermione allowed to move":65

PAULINA Musick; awake her: Strike:
'Tis time: descend: be Stone no more: approach:
Strike all that looke vpon with meruaile: Come:
Ile fill your Graue vp: stirre: nay, come away:
Bequeath to Death your numnesse: (For from him,
Deare Life redeemes you) you perceieue she stirres. . . .

313
The insistent and repetitive character of the lines is well caught by the look of the Folio text. Apart from "'Tis time"—a kind of declarative command—only one utterance before Hermione's stirring is not an imperative. Each seems to punch itself into being against a resistance, a resistance registered in the strange sense of violence and blockage in the lines, as if Paulina's call had somehow to bore through or chisel away layers of deafness to reach its target ear. "Strike," she cries as though directing a blow at the statue, and an echo rebounds off it into her invitation to deliver a return blow that will "Strike all that looke vpon with meruaile," as if the statue should revenge on "the lookers-on" all the trauma of its awakening through their wonder at it. Yet Paulina's very insistence that "'Tis time" overgoes itself, to suggest that it is in the end up to the statue to approach them rather than to be summoned. The spectators invite, would relish, would take pleasure in, nothing so much as suffering the statue's marvelous blow if it only meant their dream of life and motion had come true. Paulina's imperatives are those of entreaty, even prayer; her cry of "Come" is a version of the ancient hymn: "Veni, creator spiritus."

These lines, in their complex mixture of exultation, power, fear, and vulnerability, crystallize from the scene as a whole the typically turbulent metaphoric energy of "wonder" that is the focus of this study. All the elements of wonder reappear here, and much more vividly realized than with Cleomenes and Dion: the sense of inhabiting a borderline "between" knowledge and emotion, of a fearful power both in and beyond the spectator, an acute self-consciousness of the medium of representation which reinforces rather than drains the expectation of enlightenment. Even the recurrent sense of spectral doubles as pressing onto the scene of wonder appears, not only in the twinning of Leontes and Hermione, but also in Paulina's odd phrasing of her warning to Leontes not to "shun her / Until you see her die again, for then / You kill her double" (V.iii. 105-7). And as we have already seen, there is a programmatic exploration throughout of ways in which Leontes and Hermione are alike. Longinus spoke of the strange sense of readers "producing what they had only heard." Here that very sense is taken by the play to correspond to and "justify" the general desire that Hermione's recovery be real. What Paulina calls their (and our) "faith" will produce its object "if you can behold it." It is not enough here to speak of "the power of theatre" or of "art": the impact of the scene grows also from the power of a collective desire for its success which stems from its audience. It answers a general need to test what fiction can be called upon to do in the way of reparative and sustaining work for us; to justify at last, despite the pathos of his own failure, Mamillius' sense that what was needed to deliver himself and his mother safely to one another was some fiction, if only the right one could be found. The dangers of that search, its delicacies, are recalled here through Paulina's sense of her perils, of her responsibility. The one sentence in her invocation which is not a command must be construed as in part an offer, in case of disaster, in case of disaster, to go down to death herself in Hermione's place: "I'll fill your grave up." This beautifully resonant line suggests that Hermione's may have been somehow an open grave all these years—or one just reopened, at great risk. The gap of the gaping grave is now to be closed, its image of sundering to be not merely denied, like that of Polixenes and Leontes with which we began ("Time as long again / Would be fill'd up . . ."), but repaired. In a dialectical reversal, Hermione will die to death, bequeathing him the very "numnesse" that belongs to him. So that the fatal shadow of Dis can at last depart.

It is therefore appropriate that the play's image for the consummation of this repair, and I think its most moving moment (at any rate the one that angles for my eyes) should be a slow, hesitant, astonished clasping of hands closing the gap between two bodies through their organs of most developed, most typically human feeling. And again, according to the scene's therapy of repetitive reversal, recalling that very moment of Leontes' hostility for being made a spectacle before a Hermione who would not "open thy white hand and clap thyself my love." The play deliberately draws attention to this in Paulina's urging that "When she was young you woo'd her; now, in age, / Is she become the suitor." The Folio does not give a question mark here, and this seems to me right. On stage the moment is electrifying: its element of the startling breaks forth through Leontes, our surrogate in touching the impossible, in that expressive "O," as if he had been given a shock: "O, she's warm!" The claims of imagination to deliver the world we wish, and sustain us, if anything can, from death are now specifically ratified by his proclamation: "If this be magic, let it be an art / Lawful as eating."
Yet, as long as we are in the presence of someone called Paulina, we ought to be at least careful of claims about what may and may not be eaten. For though eating *per se* is lawful, this does not imply that all eating is lawful, or even appropriate at all times. In Jacobean England, some kinds of eating were expressly forbidden. Meat in Lent, for instance, was unlawful without special dispensation (as for pregnancy). And so was theatre. Moreover, even if lawful, it is not always a good idea to eat just anything: some things are positively dangerous as foods, and some are dangerous for some people at some times. Proserpina, for instance, might have done better not to have eaten seven pomegranate seeds in the halls of Dis. And though bears may eat people when hungry, people mostly do not—unless they are really bears in disguise, or have names like Tereus and Tamora. Paulina instructs those on stage that they should their "exultation / Partake to every one" as though it were a food like the feast that ends many another comedy. But if fiction is to be our food, we should be discriminating about it, and only eat what is good for us, what is lawful, what sustains. But how shall we know it?

The answer is that we cannot, but that certain signs can make us confident and "awake our faith." One of these is the presence of a certain kind of intuitional and self-conscious surprise at a pertinence beyond the moment, a sudden waiving of the barriers to self-knowledge, what I have been describing throughout this study as an experience of "wonder." In speaking of his psychiatric work with children, Winnicott tells of the "scribble game"—an improvisation in which child and physician alternate making and interpreting scribbles on paper. Sometimes the game would yield out of its own insouciant dynamics of mutual play a moment of enlightenment, of which Winnicott remarks that "the significant moment is that at which the child surprises himself [or] herself. It is not the moment of my clever interpretation that is significant." The emphasis on surprise here seems to me close to the use in Shakespearean drama of wonder as "the significant moment" at which the whole fiction aims through its various divagations, the precipitation out of an experience of play of a moment that addresses the world directly, not only in terms of knowledge about it but in ways that release emotion at once towards it and towards the self in it. Winnicott's surprised children come upon themselves and their stories unexpectedly, excitedly, in the scribble game. Audiences of Hermione's recovery, on stage and off, come upon themselves, though less unexpectedly, in the act of wishing her fervently back into life—and this tells them something about themselves, about their own desires, and about the uses of fictions in recognizing, enacting, and understanding those desires. This is so even for those in the audience who might not wish in this way, who might need, for whatever reason, to resist such a wish, to imagine some other theatre.

These considerations illuminate both why the imagination that needs to find itself in the world among other imaginations should turn to the thought of theatre to screen itself, and why that same thought of theatre must eventually be given up in its turn. As the figure of Father Time explicitly shows with his hour-glass, time is always at once both a flowing and a turning. The Time who says "I turn my glass," and presumably does so, visually embodies both. He even suggests that the flowing might itself prove a turning insofar as the sands of his glass flow back on themselves. His whole speech speaks of a process that, while it moves always forward, both "makes and unfolds error" (as if error were at times a folded thing), and can both create and "slide O'er" a "wide gap." The theatre is implicated in this "branching" process, even in the moment of its self-recognition, since Time will "make stale / The glistering of this present, as my tale / Now seems to it" (IV.i.13-15). Through the set of deep puns on "depart, parting, departure, apart, party to, partner, and, of course, bearing a part" noted by Cavell, the question of coping with Time's partitioning (and parturitioning) flow is linked to the finding of a form of play in response. And this link allows us once more to see that the source of Leontes' theatrical self-awareness in Act I was of a piece with his implication in Time's flow through his growth into desire and with his resistance against the world of generation that spoke of hisemasculating mortality. Against Leontes' theatre of "one self king," the play eventually ripostes another of collective desire for vulnerability after all, for risking the wounds alike of wonder and of love. Truth may be the daughter of Time, but her other parent is Imagination, and their marriage is that of Blake's Prolific and Devourer.
Shakespeare's elaboration of wonder as a "between" state that precipitates recognitions, that marries Time and Imagination, necessarily includes—even begins with—the actors who inhabit and enliven the play's "parts" and who actively adjust the fit between self and role moment by moment in the theatre to answer the flow of "live" performance with a new inflection here, a more sudden movement there. As actors are the ones who take on and interact most deeply with the theatrical fiction, so the final scene is, as has been often noted, charged with the heady self-consciousness of an explicitly "actorly" task: what is the actress playing Hermione doing? Playing a statue? Playing Hermione playing a statue? How long can she hold the pose without breathing, etc? Our skepticism and our pleasure at the pretenses of the theatrical meet each other in pursuing this kind of question, and the result is a tremendous influx of self-conscious excitement, so that we feel our very attentiveness to the scene, even our sense of being "mock'd," becoming part of the developing action.

Kenneth Gross comments: "That the closing scene allows us neither self-evident faith in magic nor the quiet comforts of disenchanted irony is where its real difficulty lies. Finally, the enchantment . . . is in the willfullness of the fiction of disenchantment, the fantasy of the relinquishment of fantasy." The fine balance of that formulation itself reproduces the sense of being "caught between" that the scene so carefully fosters.

Bate remarks of the final scene that "It is not enough to say of the statue scene that nowhere does Shakespeare's art substitute more brilliantly for myth, nowhere is there more powerful testimony to the creative, even redemptive, power of drama, nowhere is there a creative coup more wonderful. For it must also be said that the redemption is only partial, it is neither a reversal of time nor a transcendence into eternity" (pp. 238-9). It seems to me, however, that the wonder so finely caught in the first sentence draws its power precisely from the point made in the second: not its war against time, but its awareness of the temporal in the imaginative, its finely balanced sense of their balance. Fervencies of self aside, it calls on us to see the aspect of surrender inside that imaginative demythologizing Bate calls "the distinctively Shakespearian *species humanitatis*".

The ancient metaphor of the human being as an actor and life as a stage here touches a new elaboration: the making and unmaking, the composition and decomposition of the self in its fictions becomes a process of continual dialectical pulsion and response, like the actor making his performance—not in slavish obedience to the script, but in interpretive and immediate tension with it. The theatre which was a screen for Leontes' darkesses is removed to reveal another theatre. Each in its turn must be acknowledged, and given up. But if we must give up the theatre, we do so only for an interval, before its return.

As our own excitement becomes the "subject" of the final scene, even as it prepares to end itself and leave us to ourselves, so the space "between" stage and audience becomes the site of the scene's imaginative activity, in which the whole community may "participate." No doubt this sort of thing is occurring all the time in the theatre: where else is the action at any time if not between us? But we are not always made so deliberately conscious of the stakes of our "investment" in this way. When Hermione prays: "You gods, look down / And from your sacred vials pour your graces / Upon my daughter's head!" (V.iii.121-3, beautifully undoing as she does so Paulina's agonized cry to Leontes to "Look down / And see what death is doing") there is a sense in which the theatre audience are at once co-petitioners and the powers to whom the petition is being addressed. The audience contemplates the action from within and without, and stands beside older fictions invoked as gods around their latest offspring to offer it, as much as precursors can, deliberate blessing.

This self-conscious invocation of the audience as parties to the outcome is also presumably one point of the return, at the play's end, of the theatrical language first introduced in Leontes' fear of and resistance to the world of generation. Through Leontes' last lines, the actor seems to speak to his fellows of a get-together in the green room, with jokes about dropped cues and missing props, and how good Autolycus was tonight, and how the bear tripped up on his way offstage:

LEONTES Good Paulina,  
Lead us from hence, where we may leisurely  
Each one demand, and answer to his part  
Perform'd in this wide gap of time, since first
We were dissever'd. Hastily lead away.

(V.iii.151-5)

If these last lines call upon both cast and audience to "answer to," and hence to move away from, this theatre, as though to stay in it too long might risk repetification, the lines also insist there must be an "answer" to this theatre somewhere else, that it must take in turn a "part" in some other life. As in *Pericles*, the work of the theatre does not stop at the stage door. It prolongs itself and finds its proper answer in some future turning of Time's glass. And we should note that even inside this imagined off-stage fellowship another, more truly final scene shapes itself, where each hearer will more strictly "answer to his part" as Polixenes once saw himself answering "heaven / Boldly, 'Not guilty'." The eschatological impulse that becomes explicit at the end of *The Tempest* is also present in *The Winter's Tale*, if hidden for now behind the image of our fellowship. The gap between the two marks an interval at once of play, of reflection, and of reflection on play, since what we will be called to answer to will be the kind of part we have played—not only in our lives but in the fictions that fed, and fed on, those lives. Leontes' "wide gap of time" extends back through the two hours' traffic, the sixteen years, and all our lifetimes of "branching," to our collective distance from an ancient sundering and an all-but-forgotten Paradise where "first" we were "Not guilty." Yet though that gap admonishes, it also invites. Between this end and The End the work of poetry must go on unfolding its metamorphic task. Though fiction quails in the final analysis, in today's green room and street and by tomorrow's hearth there is still room for it to branch and bud. Hence even in foreshadowing the end of fiction, the play concedes that that end is not yet, and that the question of how this fiction has answered its part arises for us as a question about the life, death, and afterlife of fictions in the world of generation.

It is not therefore surprising to find that this scene is at once one of Shakespeare's most powerful and characteristic and at the same time one of the most saturated with the presence of other fictions, especially Ovidian ones. Just as the fantasy generating Leontes' nightmare theatre of jealousy is both repeated and overcome, so also a secret register of alternative fictions at the level of composition bodies itself forth as an open allusiveness of acknowledgment and transfiguration. In part the scene's sense of being released from constriction registers the way it both realizes and undoes its indebtedness to earlier fantasies of mortality and animation, demonstrating their corrosive power as motivating fantasies in Leontes, then forcing them to the surface and repealing them. Shakespeare transmutes the myths of both Proserpina and Galatea by confounding and contaminating them into something new. In the recurrent search for the antidote to a fiction that has become petrified and petrifies, Shakespeare looks not to a counterfiction that "confronts" but one that "answers to" and so includes its occasion. The dynamics of psychological and poetic process are analogous to each other rather than recourses from each other, and neither is properly prior. Critics have often marveled at Shakespeare's invention of a newly resonant or "deep" psychological complexity in representing character. *The Winter's Tale* makes clear that that invention and the poetic question of *inventio* are intimately linked, that is that the framing of psychological complexity goes hand in hand with a complex response to the fact of "sources and analogues" as the sites of poetic invention. There is therefore no question of a final, workable distinction between art and life. Where Ovid declares Pygmalion's artistry in creating Galatea one in which "ars adeo latet arte sua"—a formulation that became a Renaissance touchstone—Shakespeare's scene of vivification insists on deliberately displaying its intimate investment in and by works of art.

The dialectic of creative absorption and conversion has important implications for a Shakespearean conception of "tradition." I argued earlier that Shakespeare was essentially conservative in artistic practice insofar as he looked to preserve and adapt from what came to him whatever could continue to serve the needs of the present. This is a specifically "dynamic" conservatism, one that insists on recognizing the Mutabilitie (as Spenser would put it) of social and psychological structures. For such a view, tradition lives and does its sustaining work most of all in the vortex of its rupture and reassembly, in the struggle at once to retain what we have known and loved and to fit it to what we know and love now. In such fires tradition burns—to re-emerge as the phoenix, or as the turtle, or in some yet unknown shape of darkness or glory. It is not a
Homeric or, more to the point, Miltonic battle of giant forms in a celestial and apocalyptic eyrie. The energy
of its self-overcoming is Ovidian. Tradition is like wax before the fire, waiting for the thumb to turn and mold
it again.

It follows further, and last, that we should not be surprised to find Shakespeare's work unfurling a similar
relation of adaptation and inclusive correction to itself. The Winter's Tale seems, almost alone of
Shakespeare's works, to be able in the end to affirm the image of a sexually vigorous and assertive woman,
both in Perdita's explicit longing for Florizel and in the final scene's emphasis on Hermione's longing for her
daughter. Indeed, the tale of the play is in part that of its own desire to rescue and affirm that image from
behind the screen of an anger that repeats the gestures of tragedy. The play's ability to face and face down
some of the fantasy substructures that have informed Shakespearean drama itself is one of its most remarkable
and moving powers. Though Shakespearean wonder arises throughout his work in the context of imagined
sexual generation, of the reproduction of the world (likewise the task of drama), after The Comedy of Errors
the maternal figure who most literally embodies and enacts such regeneration is largely withheld. Adelman
relates this impulse to withhold the maternal figure, to keep her locked in an Abbey, an Ephesian Temple or a
"remov'd house" until the play's dénouement, to a fear of the overwhelming image of a "suffocating mother." I
want here rather to extend the argument to include the dramatic occasion. What implications does the
appearance of this figure have for the relations, on the one hand, between the play and the "matrix" of earlier
fictions from which it springs, and, on the other, between the play and the attendant audience towards which it is
directed? To return to the image of mothers and generation at the end of these plays points to an entire
complex of ideas about the source and direction of imaginative energy.

I noted earlier that Shakespeare's final scenes find in themselves both the ease and the fragility of a "right"
language for desire's success in the world as love. The restless metaphoric energy of Shakespeare's dramatic
language is both heightened and, for a moment, stilled into a silence full of the energy of contact. In the final
scene of The Winter's Tale, this contact is at once erotic as between characters, theatrical as between play and
audience, poetic as when a metaphor finds or makes its world, and what we might call "metapoetic" as when a
fiction joins hands with its fellows. The image of the mother registers origin and connection in more ways
than that of developmental psychology. It emerges as Shakespeare's most charged image for the discovery of
the world, that world that desire touches with a confidence that expresses the faith of an imagining self as it,
we might say, "matriculates" into it. It is through the search for this contact that the notion of "incarnation"
becomes so important for Shakespeare. Through "incarnation" conceptions are made acts, desires are made
bodies, and scripts are made actors. Because the regimes of the imagination and of the bodily world are alike
metamorphic and complex, the work of making them touch is difficult. The recovery of contact acknowledges
the mutual turbulences, even while subliming them.

But we must not give in to the temptation to identify the world into which we matriculate as at once and only
material and maternal. Such an identification has an ancient history, but one finally refused by Shakespeare, if
not by other parts of his culture. The world has its materiality, of course, but it also is composed of the
residue of past words, images, and fictions, just as the imagination that meets it has "taken in" impressions we
call "objects." The process is a mutual conception. To label this side "self and the other side "mother" is to
refuse to acknowledge their interfusion in a "between" space that is both and neither. As Hermione's revival
shows, it is the shared "between" ground that must be ventured onto in order for the petrified world to become
a presence to and of the human.

What Shakespeare offers in the last scene of The Winter's Tale is not the "unearthly" revelation, the "burst /
And th'ear-deaf'ning voice of the oracle" that Cleomenes and Dion experience at the theatre of Apollo.
Shakespeare's theatre of wonder speaks to a mortality renewed in its sense of the Tightness and the vivid
earthwardness of its language and desires. Language and desire meet the world not in the form of a
pronouncement (a scroll or a pair of tablets) but as a human body, vulnerable and marked in time. In
Shakespearean wonder, one hears not so much the great voice calling (as in Milton) as the human tongue
speaking. The strenuous and fatal energies of challenge and competition are converted into aspects of a continuing, fecund dialectic of life and death, art and desire.

Notes

1 I note also that the 1623 Folio gives the phrase as "rais'd the Tempest" (The First Folio of Shakespeare, ed. Charlton Hinman, p. 34), though it is not unusual to find nouns capitalized like this. My sense that we are close to allegorical and metadramatic talk here is also reinforced by what seems a hidden picture of a human in the passage—one with a "head," "charm," and "spirits" who "goes upright." The famous Oedipaf riddle may also be somewhere close by: though it is late in the day, human time still has his two legs and all his charming faculties. In particular this suggests Prospero as designer of the entire enterprise. (Caliban, of course, slouches under his many burdens.)

2 Other title-allusions are, as with Prospero, given to major or principal characters: Helena in All's Well, the Duke in Measure for Measure (V.i.411). More remote cases are Rosalind in the epilogue to As You Like It, the Princess in LLL (V.ii.520), Don Pedro in Much Ado (II.iii.57) and Hortensio at the very end of Shrew.

3 "Mamillius" has no precise meaning (perhaps that is part of the boy's problem), but suggests at once mother, breast, and littleness, as though he were a kind of diminutive or (more strongly) dependent of his mother's body. For an interpretation that makes this relation the central issue of the play, see Janet Adelman, Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 220-38. I read Adelman's account of the play after mine was already drafted, but note several points of similarity between us, especially a shared sense that the work of D. W. Winnicott has much to say to it.


6 My emphasis, but the meter supports it.

7 At the same time, the very literality and solidity of the Leontes who now enters, with his own history and agenda, marks a crucial difference in representational strategy between the Shakespearean mode and that of the allegory that seems imminent yet avoided here. Consider how our reading of the scene would differ if it were to take place in The Faerie Queene. In Shakespeare, an allegorical relation is registered yet overgone by a preference for "personation" or what I have been calling "incarnational" translation. Yet though this difference is crucial for the definition of Shakespearean representation, the play as a whole remains aware of Spenser in a spectral, perhaps sponsoring way. Other contacts include the baby-and-bear conjunction in III.iii, so teasingly reminiscent of Faerie Queene VI. iv, and the location of the final scene in a Spenserian chapel/gallery where a statue comes to life and invokes the gods (cf. Britomart's dream in Isis Church in F. Q. V, yet there the image is not living flesh). Such resemblances suggest a deeper relation between the epic and the dramatic poet than is usually claimed. The most extensive exploration remains W. B. C. Watkins, Shakespeare and Spenser (Princeton University Press, 1950).

8 Cavell, Disowning Knowledge, p. 194.
Oscar Wilde's wry homoerotic joke that a man's tragedy is that he does not become like his mother is queerly apposite here. At this point we should also reveal that a dying Camillo confessed that Mamillius did not die at all, but was transported to the sea-coast of Denmark, where he was adopted as the King's son and re-christened "Hamlet" after him. A scrambled echo of his former name remained nonetheless, and he later had a recurrence of the "old tale": Leontes returned in a dream disguised as the Danish King's ghost to make the same old accusations about his "brother." Mamillius/Hamlet thereupon himself became the man who dwelt by a churchyard and finally accomplished the protracted self-murder he had forgotten how to seek, while using on the "harlot king" Camillo's old poison-cup, which had made the voyage with him in his childhood bundle.

Freud's concept of the "primal scene" of parental copulation might be invoked here, though my reading does not depend on it. Freud's sense of the child as perceiving an act of violence performed by the father brings the two models into particularly close alignment. Freud's interest in this fantasy first appears in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (Standard Edition, vols. IV and V, 1905), though it is not until the "Wolf Man" case study (1918) that the term "primal scene" is specifically applied. The theatrical resonance of the idea of a "scene" is especially relevant to my argument later—note that Freud did not insist that the "scene" should actually have been witnessed, but rather thought it could be compiled phantasmatically through hints and inferences. See also J. Laplanche and J-B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, trans. D. Nicholson-Smith (New York: Norton, 1973) under "Primal Phantasies" pp. 331-3 and "Primal Scene" pp. 335-6.

Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, p. 12. The whole of Winnicott's conception of the transitional nature of "play" is acutely relevant to Shakespeare's dramatic fable, insofar as both are concerned with the vicissitudes and dangers of growth and "development," whose deformation in the play deeply illuminates the relation between sexuality, fantasy, and dramatic mimesis.

On *Othello* from this perspective, see both Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge*, Ch. 3 and Peter Stallybrass, "Patriarchal territories; the body enclosed," in Margaret W. Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan and Nancy Vickers, eds., *Rewriting the Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), pp. 123-42.

This apparent change of subject that may hide a clue to the real direction of the play may be compared with the similar moment in the opening scene of *King Lear*, where Kent responds "Is not this your son, my lord?" to Gloucester's remark of Albany and Cornwall that "curiosity in neither can make choice of either's moi'ty" (I.i.6 8). The "curiosity of nations," as Edmund calls it, in choosing their proper heirs will be precisely the source of Gloucester's problem.

Between Hermia and Helena in *Midsummer Night's Dream* for instance, or Rosalind and Celia in *As You Like It*, and perhaps Marina and Philoten in *Pericles*.

This line might be stressed "... when you were boys" to emphasize the child's presence.

One might compare here Angelo's fudging of the similar issue of whether he or Isabella is to blame for his desires when he speaks of "the strong and swelling evil / Of my conception" (II.iv.1-7; this just after we have seen the pregnant Juliet catechized by the Duke in prison). The tactic is still unfortunately familiar in contemporary legal proceedings on rape and sexual assault.

"Screen" here should be understood in the senses both of concealing ("screen from view") and revealing ("screen a film"). Compare Freud's concept of a "screen memory."

This linking of clothing with wounding rather recalls the discovery of Duncan's body in *Macbeth* (both the embroidered corpse and the grooms' daggers "unmannerly breeched with gore"), and suggests there may be a
further pun on Leontes the boy as "unbreached"—that is not yet wounded with that master-biting dagger.

19 We might also consider whether the identification of father and son here (and the connection of this scene with II.i) suggests that within the adult's discovery of his wife and friend as secret adulterers lies a dim and difficult memory of discovering his own parents as partners in a sexual "crime" that also excluded him. This might well have been Freud's reading, but the play is not quite explicit about it. Of course, Leontes is not quite explicit about his mental processes either.

20 Cavell (Disowning Knowledge, pp. 190-1) sees a similar strategy of "deferred representation" as shaping the final scenes of several of Shakespeare's plays, among them The Winter's Tale.

21 Here we may note an important difference between Leontes' jealousy and that of Othello. Where Othello's torments generate a heightened sense of the sexual appeal of Desdemona, most horribly played out in the "brothel" scene, in Leontes there is no such sense of any residual attraction to his wife. Yet as though a powerful feeling of "heat" were being fiercely imagined somewhere, his thoughts seem to run a great deal on the literal fire with which he will consume Hermione and the bastard child.

22 Stephen Orgel has recently discussed this passage and its difficulties under the heading of "The poetics of incomprehensibility," Shakespeare Quarterly 42:4 (1991), 431-8. Orgel's warnings on the dangers of forcing meanings on the passage or others like it in the play are salutary. I would note however that the fact that this sort of speaking is very frequent in The Winter's Tale is something about which a critic might legitimately frame questions: why would a play deliberately, as it seems, cultivate obscurity as an aspect of its texture? What is the dramatic function of this sense of sense as veiled or layered in too much possibility?

23 Leontes' references to Mamilius as a "kernel" and a "squash" continue the submerged sexuality of his line of thought, especially the latter, aptly glossed in G. B. Harrison's edition (London: Penguin, 1947, p. 131) as a "peapod before the peas have swelled." Cf. Bottom's joke to Peaseblossom: "Commend me to Mistress Squash, your mother, and to Master Peascod [cf. Codpiece] your father" (MND IV.i.186-7).


25 These verbs must remain in quotation marks to indicate that they are not quite mental acts, but nor are they quite "unconscious." They are rather "overlooked" or "ignored." But perhaps the latter is a closer characterization of what is often called "unconscious" thought.

26 The link goes right through the crossed eyes again, since Leontes has now "seen the spider." Hence too the more ghastly pun on the "cordial" poisoncup he wishes to have Polixenes given that will give him "a lasting wink," as if in parodic revenge for his duplicitous carnality. Note that the word "cordial" returns when Leontes looks upon the statue: "For this affliction has a taste as sweet / As any cordial comfort" (V.iii.75-6).

27 A similar point is made by Ruth Nevo, Shakespeare's Other Language (New York: Methuen, 1987), p. 115.

28 That this be not thought merely a sentimentality, I note that the reason Hermione is restored to Leontes is not because of his long repentance, but because he was persuaded not to have Perdita "consumed with fire" in Act II. This persuasion in turn seems to stem from Leontes' desperate need to refuse the image of himself as a man of violence, the same need that lies together with violence at the heart of his intuition about desire.

29 Recent feminist criticism has described Shakespearean drama, and especially the tragedies, as produced by just such a paradigm of scandal and blame, generated out of male anxiety. See, among others, Madeion


31 On the etymology of "theorist" alluded to here, see Chapter One above. It is always possible to cast doubt on such reports, as Howard Felperin has recently attempted to do. Casting doubt is one of the things theatre is for, but also a thing represented here in Leontes himself as autist and skeptic. It seems truer to say that the play here reads the critic than vice versa. But this is a danger we all run. See Felperin, "The deconstruction of presence in The Winter's Tale" in The Uses of the Canon (Oxford University Press, 1990), Ch. 1.

32 It is worth pondering the choice of Apollo as the play's sponsoring deity (that Shakespeare followed Greene in this is neither here nor there: he chose to do so where he need not have). The choice is justified in particular by the play's concern to show Leontes as involved with questions of poetic composition through his deliberate "scripting" of Hermione's infidelity. The change made to Greene in having Leontes deny the truth of the oracle not only heightens the dramatic moment through the blasphemy, but frames a concealed instance of an "agon" of the poets, in which Leontes plays Marsyas to Apollo's oracle. Leontes attempts to outscript the god by calling the divine plot "mere falsehood"—a piece of business, a red herring. As usual, Apollo is quick to punish challenges not only to his divinity, but to his poetic pre-eminence. The god knows an overweening rival when he sees one. The punishment of child-deprivation might even be compared to that of Niobe, who boasted she had excelled Apollo's mother in fecundity—she ended up, of course, frozen and petrified in grief.

33 The link between this play and Hamlet appears again in the curious echo of Paulina's proposing to appear as Hermione's ghost, to "shriek, that even your ears / Should rift to hear me, and the words that follow'd / Should be 'Remember mine.'" (V.i.65-7). The combination of second marriage, mourning, and murder is presumably part of the trigger here, but the connections go deeper, as I have already suggested.

34 As a result of its dependence on recent myth, psychoanalytic criticism of The Winter's Tale has for the most part been forced to import sooner or later into its reading a symbolic transcription of Shakespearean psychological tokens into Freudian or post-Freudian ones. A particular popular instance has been Leontes' "spider in the cup." Some recent critics have translated this into a fearful fantasy of the overwhelming pre-Oedipal mother poisoning the maternal milk, while others have preferred to see the ravenously sexual Oedipal mother of a later stage of development. The basic insight here—developmental ambivalence towards the residues of infantile dependence—is hardly a modern instance, but these particular translations have a decidedly arbitrary feel. The play is, I would argue, deliberately occluding the spider from transcription, and that blockage is what needs to be noted the more so as Leontes thinks he is expounding an image for the acquisition of (infected) knowledge. For this reason, such readings cannot help feeling to me distinctly partial at this point: insofar as they do not explore the contours of a particularly Shakespearean psychic mythology, they can read the historical dimension of Shakespeare's work only imperfectly, and cannot incorporate the question of his theatre and its self-awareness into the psychological dynamic. For my part, it seems to me more likely that the spider is Arachne—who competed with Athena for pre-eminence by weaving a tapestry of divine rapes. Arachne's tapestry figures via Pandos to in Florizel's later catalogue of divine metamorphoses (IV.iv.25-31). See esp, the citations gathered in Adelman, Suffocating Mothers, p. 354, n. 54.

36 Nevo, *Shakespeare's Other Language*, p. 41. For Cavell, see above, n. 20.

37 See Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid*, pp. 230-3. Bate is, of course, not the only commentator to identify the story of Proserpina as relevant to the play: see the next note.

38 See Honigmann, "Secondary sources of The Winter's Tale," in *Philological Quarterly* [hereafter, *PQ*] 34 (1955), 27-38. Ovid is only one of three proposed "sources," and the pervasiveness of traces of Golding especially is not followed out in the brief note. Honigmann is following up a suggestion originally made by W. F. C. Wigston in 1884. Honigmann's complaint that work up until the time of writing "failed to bring the Proserpine-myth into the discussion" no longer applies, as the Ceres Proserpina story has become a regular discussion point. See esp. Carol Thomas Neely, "Women and issue in The Winter's Tale," *PQ* 57 (1978), 181-94 (revised in *Broken Nuptials in Shakespeare's Plays*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985, pp. 198-9); Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers*, p. 360. The tale is now usually cited in discussing the mother-daughter axis of the play, without inquiring into its image of male sexuality or the role of that image in the play, or indeed of the deeper aspects of an Ovidian "source" generally. Yet if one is dealing with questions of "issue" or "origin," it seems important to ask where and how the question of "poetic source" obtrudes.

39 Honigmann ("Secondary sources," p. 37) was the first to suggest the connection between the Sicily of Ceres' curse and the location of Shakespeare's play. It explains Shakespeare's otherwise puzzling reversal of the locales from Greene. Bate incorrectly (*Shakespeare and Ovid*, p. 232n) attributes the word "collop" to Golding's Ceres. That this echo is not a coincidence is suggested by the fact that both Leontes and Jove are asserting their part in their offspring against a challenge: Ceres has just begged that Jove "have not lesser care / Of hir (I pray) because that I hir in my bodie bare." But for Leontes, the challenge comes from himself, and may turn on precisely such questions as lie within Ceres' entreaty. See Golding's translation printed as *Shakespeare's Ovid*, ed. W. H. D. Rouse (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1961), p. 114, 11. 641-2.

40 Following out this suggestion, we might re-envision Oberon as a kind of middle figure between Dis and Leontes—a dark and jealous spirit who wishes to capture and manage female sexual expression. Like Leontes, Oberon wishes to wrest a boy from his spouse, and occupies himself creating images of the monstrosity of her desire ("ounce or cat or bear / pard or boar with bristled hair"). We might also recall Oberon's epithet "King of shadows" (*MND* III.i.347), which closely translates Ovid's "rex . . . silentum" (V.356), and his ancient kinship with Alberich and the Nibelungen tribe of earth-dwellers. Ceres' curse in Golding is also worth scanning with Titania's account of the recent weather in mind (*MND* II.i.88ff):

But bitterly above the rest she banned Sicilie,
In which the mention of her losse she plainly did espie.
And therefore there with cruell hand the
earing ploughes she brake,
And man and beast that tilde the ground to
death in anger strake.
She marrde the seede, and eke forbade the
fieldes to yeelde their frute.
The plenteousnesse of that same Ile of which
there went such brute
Through all the world, lay dead: the corn was
killed in the blade:
Now too much drought, now too much wet
did make it for to fade.
The stars and blasting winds did hurt, the
hungry foules did eat
The corn in grounde: the Tines and Briars did
overgrow the Wheate,
And other wicked weedes the corne
continually annoy,
Which neyther tylth nor toyle of man was able to destroy.

(Shakespeare's Ovid, ed. Rouse, p. 113)

41 The relevant lines in Ovid follow the vain attempt of the pool-nymph Cyane to invoke the proper course of
courtship and to stop Dis. They are among the more horrible pictures of rape in classical literature:

haud ultra tenuit Saturnius iram
terribilesque hortatus equos in gurgitis ima
contortumque valido sceptrum regale lacerto
condidit, icta viam tell us in Tartara fecit
et pronos currus medio cratere recepìi.

(Metam. V.420-4)

translates these lines (11. 525-8) as:

His hastie wrath Saturnus sonne no lenger then could stay.
But chearing up his dreadfull Steedes did smight his royall mace
With violence in the bottom of the Poole in that same place.
The ground streight yeelded to his stroke and made him way to Hell,
And downe the open gap both horse and Chariot headlong fell.

42 Likewise the Paulina who takes the newborn girl to Leontes in loco matris, insisting that "We do not know /
How he may soften at the sight o' th' child" may recall Golding's Ceres, who avows to Jove: "I hither come if
no regard may of the mother be, / Yet let the child hir father move." The episode is not in Greene.

More remotely, the image of Hermione in Antigonus' dream (III.ii), where her eyes become "two spouts,"
resembles in wateriness the fate of Cyane, the nymph who attempts to prevent Dis from abducting Proserpina,
and whose grief at her failure and his abuse of "her fountaines priviledge" causes her to dissolve "so that
nothing now remained whereupon / Ye might take hold, to water all consumed was anon" (11. 542-3). In
Ovid, Cyane seems to stand for the deep, inarticulate grief alike of mother and daughter at the violence of the
rape, as Cyane directly witnesses the blow of Dis' "royall mace." Martin Mueller argues for the additional
presence of some version of the Alcestis myth in the play's final scene ("Hermione's wrinkles, or, Ovid
transformed: an essay on The Winter's Tale," Comparative Drama 5:3 [1971], 226-39). Though a narrative of
descent into death and return is covered both in the Proserpina myth and in the Orphic frame of the Pygmalion
story in Ovid, the (non-Ovidian) Alcestis tale may also be relevant.

43 The Old Shepherd later calls authority "a stubborn bear" (IV.iv.802). For the bear as an Ovidian beast, see
also Bate, Shakespeare and Ovid, pp. 224-7. The inchoate shape of bear-cubs made them especially apt as
metamorphs, of course. I note also that the title pages of the first three editions of Golding's Ovid (STC 18956,
57, and 58, dated respectively 1567, 1575, and 1584) all sport the emblem of a bear muzzled, chained down
and leaning on a dead tree stump. Shakespeare had already associated bearishness with the violence of a man's
desires, both to himself and others, in the Count Orsino ("Bearlet") of Twelfth Night, who begins the play
speaking of himself as hunted (though as "an hart" not a bear) and ends it threatening to kill others out of
frustration. Bear-baiting also figures several times in the play, and an Ovidian context is provided by Orsino-as-Actacon, and perhaps Malvolio-as-Narcissus "practicing behavior to his own shadow." Bristol, "In search of the bear," has more information on bears and bear-lore.

44 Andrew Gurr, "The bear, the statue and hysteria in The Winter's Tale," Shakespeare Quarterly 34 (1983), 420-5 at p. 424; Nevill Coghill, "Six points of stagecraft in The Winter's Tale," Shakespeare Survey 11 (1958), 31-41 at p. 35. Barthes' "hysterical" reader who takes the text as literal truth is the lowest in a hierarchy to be found in Le Plaisir du texte (Paris: Editions Tel Quel, 1973), pp. 99-100. Gurr does not connect the bear and its moment of hysterical "resolution" with the character of Leontes and the tragic theatre of transferred blame which has dominated the preceding acts. It remains also to consider whether taking the stage action for "true" at some level is entirely so primitive a response as Gurr (and Barthes) seem inclined to claim. This is an issue which will be addressed most fully in the closing scene of the play.

45 Bate, Shakespeare and Ovid, pp. 231-2.

46 Colie, Living Art, pp. 274-7.

47 Winnicott, Playing and Reality, p. 13.


49 Adelman, Suffocating. Mothers, pp. 231-2 and 358-60.

50 This is the Folio spelling which suggests "reigns in," "reins in," and "rains in" all at once.

51 The question of "thievery" that emerges with Auto-lycus also connects with the insistent economic language of the play. On Autolycus' Ovidian roots, see Bate, Shakespeare and Ovid, pp. 228-9.

52 The sequence of stories involving Proserpina, Niobe, and Arachne is told in Ovid's Books V and VI, in a framework set of "mortals competing with gods." The set begins with the Piérides' challenge to the Muses, against whom Calliope sings the tale of Proserpina, which victory prompts Minerva to think of Arachne's challenge, whose unhappy destiny fails to instruct her friend Niobe, whose fate in turn reminds her townsman of that of Marsyas, the final and most disastrous example. Not only is Autolycus born in the competition between Mercury and Apollo to impregnate Chione, his mother, but she in turn is killed for boasting against Diana of her motherhood (Metam. Book XI). Pygmalion's decision to sculpt a bride stems from his disgust at the whoredom of the Propoetides, their punishment for refusing to acknowledge Venus (Book X). On the latter, see also Leonard Barkan, "Living sculptures: Ovid, Michelangelo, and The Winter's Tale," ELH 48 (1981), 639-67, esp. p. 644.

53 Barkan ("Living sculptures") suggests that an ele-ment of competition emerges not at the level of authors or authority, but at that of artistic media through the tradition of the paragone or contest among the arts, which Shakespeare incorporates into the end of the play when he compares the incredible narrations of the Gentlemen in V.ii against first the silence of sculpture in Hermione's statue and finally the "living statues" of the theatre when she descends. Barkan points out (p. 663) that "the ultimate destination of the paragone . . . is the rivalry of art and life." Even here, however, competition evaporates into the more complex dialectic of what Barkan calls (p. 664) "the mutual triumph of art and nature." But at this point the competitive language of "triumph" begins to get in the way and might be abandoned in favor of some other relation, such as the complementary or the dialectical.

54 See also the remarks on this point of Mueller, "Her-mione's wrinkles," 236-7.
55 Here once again, Cavell's account of the return of Hermione as the recovery of "the ordinary" against the forces of both cynical skepticism and excessive enchantment is pertinent. I have also found the discussions of "the statuesque" by Barkan ("Living statues") and especially by Kenneth Gross illuminating and suggestive. See Gross, "Moving statues, talking statues" in Raritan 9:2 (1989), 1-25 and expanded in The Dream of the Moving Statue (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992).

56 On the statue scene and the bear scene as counter-parts in self-consciousness, see Gurr, "The bear, the statue and hysteria." This time, however, the challenge offered to the audience is precisely to credit and embrace what Gurr identifies as an "hysterical" reaction: that the action is literally taking place—an actor is no longer pretending to be a statue—and that the faith and pleasure in that trick legitimately stand for deeper repairs of trust and enlivings of story. At this level, the play insists on the reality of its theatricality as a force of truth-telling, and opposes its therapeutic "hysteria" of "faith" to the pathological and misplaced hysteria of Leontes' skepticism.


58 Barkan, The Gods Made Flesh (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 284. See also Cavell's remarks on the couple's relation, on how "For her to return to him is for him to recognize his relation to her; in particular to recognize what his denial of her has done to her, hence to him. So Leontes recognizes the fate of stone to be the consequence of his particular scepticism" (Disowning Knowledge, p. 125). But I wonder whether Hermione's part in the transaction must be as passive as this suggests. What does Leontes' attack mean for her, and how is stone her response to it?

59 Bate's claim that the tale of the Propoetides is "not relevant" to the scene (Shakespeare and Ovid, p. 234) seems to me wrong-headed. That prehistory of misogynist disgust forms a close parallel, which Shakespeare transforms by fusion with the Dis abduction story. Both the fate of the Propoetides and that of Proserpina, incidentally, stem in Ovid from a parallel refusal to acknowledge Venus: "Pallada nonne vides iaculatricemque Dianam / abscessisse mihi? Cereris quoque filia virgo, / si patiemur, erit" (V.375-7).

60 Shakespeare had first represented such an antithesis and interrelation in The Rape of Lucrece, where Tarquin's desire and Lucrece's vulnerability are explicitly linked (though the poem does not suggest any softening of desire in her): "His ear her prayers admits, but his heart granteth / No penetrable entrance to her plaining: / Tears harden lust, though marble wear with raining" (558-60); cf. Lucrece's lament: "For men have marble, women waxen minds, / And therefore are they form'd as marble will" (1240-41), where "they" refers to both men and women, linked by the shaping of a hardened "will" at once noun and verb, mental act and physical implement. Mentation migrates and hardens into the erection itself, and becomes insensible.


62 In the case of Lear it is those around him that Lear accuses of having been turned into "men of stones" by the deadness they confront, as if it exposes or creates a deadness in them. Apart from the "monumental alabaster" that Othello makes of Desdemona, there are also Viola's spectral self who "sat like Patience on a monument" and the "marble-breasted tyrant" Olivia, the Mariana who warrants her truth by offering herself as a "marble monument" in its guarantee (V.i.230-3), the Marina who looks "like Patience gazing on kings' graves," and, in her own monument, the Cleopatra who declares herself "marble-constant" (V.ii.240). Some of these return to life and some do not, but all are images of the survival of female will in its chosen posture beyond the power of onlookers to get at it. That Coriolanus of the crystalline will who advances on Rome like a revenging robot is another, more alarming image of the animate idol. See Barkan, "Living statues," p. 665 n. 2 and Honigmann, "Secondary sources." Gross, The Dream of the Moving Statue, discusses the larger issues in detail. The topos of animation survives into modern fiction of course—my own favorite instance of how
not to wake a statue occurs in C. S. Lewis's *The Magician's Nephew*.

63 I have in mind here W. H. Auden's description of love as an "intensity of attention" which seems to me highly relevant to this scene. It may be worth noting that another forum for such intense attention is that of the inquisitor, which Leontes has already adopted in default of love. Paulina's deliberate "slowing down" of Leontes' desire here, forcing it to attend to the right moment, may be a counterspell to the terrible haste of Dis in the Ovidian story, a hotness of libidinal sight which was nevertheless blind in every other way to its object: "paene simul visa est dilectaque raptaque Diti: / usque adeo est properatus amor" (V.395-6).

64 I have given here the Folio readings of "Louely" and the stage direction. Most modern editors expand the latter and emend the former to "Lonely." Either reading is possible: one emphasizes the power of the statue's "likeness" to stir love—a key thread of the scene; the other prefigures the discovery of life and emotion in the statue itself, since it makes little sense to speak of a statue as *per se* "lonely."

65 Coghill, "Six points," p. 40. Coghill also notes that this passage is "the most heavily punctuated passage I have found in the Folio," which points to the way it makes visually clear its interest in (the difficulty of) getting from one moment to the next, an interest we should compare to Florizel's encomium of Perdita discussed above. (The lines are V.iii.98-103 in Riverside.)

66 This strange sense of alternative or "ghost" figures of other versions of the play being present at its end is found in other final scenes of wonder in Shakespeare. In particular there is the darkening pressure exerted by that "other" and happier Claudio and Hero at the end of *Much Ado about Nothing* in Hero's words upon her unveiling: "And when I liv'd, I was your other wife, / And when you lov'd, you were my other husband" (V.iv.60-1). When the Friar counsels all to "let wonder seem familiar" (1. 70), we may wonder how much his words point to the unexorcised, "familiar" ghosts of a less shadowed matrimony.

67 Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, p. 51, emphasis in original. For particular, often very moving, examples of these sessions, see also Winnicott, *Therapeutic Consultations in Childhood* (New York: Basic Books, 1971).

68 Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge*, p. 200. He continues: "That last phrase, saying that parts are being born, itself suggests the level at which theater... is being investigated in this play; hence suggests why theater is for Shakespeare an *endless* subject of study; and we are notified that no formulation of the ideas of participation and parturition in this play will be complete that fails to account for their connection with theatrical parts[.]"

69 There is a comparable moment of metadramatic fun at the end of *Henry IV, Part One* when (the actor playing) Falstaff makes fun of (the actor playing) Hotspur for obeying the rules about being dead on stage. An audience's recurrent, and enjoyable, cynicism about "dead" actors ("I can see him breathing!") is thereby incorporated into the play's gaming with itself, just as here. Rosalie Colie's remarks on "tragicomedy" as a genre of various "mixings" and of the "between" are also relevant here (*Living Art*, pp. 278-83).

70 "Moving statues," p. 20.

71 A similar double movement out to the immediate audience and up to the gods as a second ring of spectators is explored by Harry Levin for the Player's Speech in *Hamlet* in his *The Question of Hamlet* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), pp. 139-64.

72 As so often, William Empson anticipates this way of putting it in his reflections on the importance to *Hamlet* of the existence of a previous hit play on the same subject. See Empson, *Essays on Shakespeare*, ed. David B. Pirie (Cambridge University Press, 1986), Ch. 3.
A partial but powerful exception to this is the persistent association of Titania with motherhood (and with the mortality that so frequently attends it), so that the scenes with Bottom take on a peculiar blithe confidence and indulgence, with Bottom in part "his Majesty the Baby" in delicious and beguiling fantasy. Only from without, and from the perspective of aristocratic disdain, are these scenes called disgusting. Within them they have an amplitude of mutual enchantment untouched by anxiety that has come to be an index of the Shakespearean dramatic imagination itself. That Oberon regards this with vengeful loathing is important, but not conclusive.

Adelman bases her identification of "fantasies of maternal origin" in part on a review of early modern views of childbirth and nursing that saw "matter" as "Mater." See Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers*, pp. 1-10 and 239-45. And though Shakespeare consistently identified this aspect of the world, what I am calling its "matriculation" of us, as female, there seems no essential or inherent need for that function in fact to be performed only by females.

Stephen Orgel (essay date 1996)


[In this excerpt, Orgel explores the importance of Bohemia to Shakespeare's development of pastoral elements, as well as the play's treatment of the relationship between nature and art.]

Pastoral

To anyone familiar with the tremendous variety and vitality of Renaissance pastoral (as of its Virgilian and Theocritean models), the modern division of the mode into idyllic and realistic visions, the critical dichotomy of 'soft' and 'hard', will seem absurdly reductive. Indeed, the play that established tragicomedy as a serious genre in the Renaissance was itself a pastoral, Guarini's *Il Pastor Fido* (1590, first translated into English anonymously in 1602); and for most of the dramatists of Shakespeare's age, pastoral was the mode in which tragedy and comedy became inseparable. The lives of shepherds, Renaissance pastoral assumes, exhibit within a small compass all the elements of human life—that is why it is worth attending to: not because it is an escapist fantasy about the golden age, but because of its moral and emotional capaciousness.

In *The Winter's Tale* the tragicomic aspects of the mode are epitomized at once in those two touchstones of theatrical perversity, the shipwreck on the seacoast of Bohemia and the bear that devours Antigonus. The bear, indeed, has been shown by Louise Clubb to constitute, in itself, a tragicomic topos in sixteenth-century continental drama, a generic commonplace.¹ As for the Bohemian seacoast, which Shakespeare found in *Pandosto* and retained, it is not an error, but one of the elements stamping the play as a moral fable—like the title itself, it removes the action from the world of literal geographical space as it is removed from historical time.² Despite the fact that Shakespeare plays are not notable for geographical accuracy, the setting has provoked several centuries of complaint and specious explanation. In 1619, Jonson told Drummond of Hawthornden that 'Shakespeare in a play brought in a number of men saying they had suffered shipwreck in Bohemia, where there is no sea near by some 100 miles'.³ Hanmer resolved the problem by declaring the Folio's compositor to be at fault and changing Bohemia to Bithynia. No subsequent editor followed his lead, though both Garrick, for his version of the play, *Florizel and Perdita*, and Charles Kean for his famous production at the Princess's Theatre in 1856, set the pastoral scenes in Bithynia. . .⁴ But Furness observed that since Jonson complained about the play's geography four years before the Folio was printed, the error must have been Shakespeare's. Several critics (one as recently as 1955) have argued that since for brief periods in the thirteenth and early sixteenth centuries Bohemia was part of the Austrian empire, it therefore did have a seacoast—this is rather like arguing that since the 1536 Act of Union Wales has been on the North Sea. But most commentators have been content to explain the error away as Pafford and Schanzer do, by
observing that it is simply adopted from Greene. However, if there is a problem, this merely shifts it from Shakespeare to Greene.

It is, of course, entirely possible that both writers found Bohemia a pleasantly euphonious name (by early 1610 it had the additional merit of its staunch and embattled Protestantism) and considered the facts of geography irrelevant to the fairy-tale world of the story. But the seacoast of Bohemia seems also to have had a special resonance in Jacobean England. The Variorum cites three instances in which references to the Bohemian coast are used to characterize a particularly foolish or ignorant speaker; S. L. Bethell argues on the basis of these that the setting was an old joke, analogous in modern times to references to the Swiss Navy or Wigan Pier, and suggests that if W. S. Gilbert 'presented us with an admiral in the Swiss navy', this would be a good indication to a Savoy audience of 'the degree of reality to be attributed to his plot'. If this is correct, the setting of the pastoral scenes would then be, like Shakespeare's title, an alienating device, and an index to both tone and genre.

In any case, the relevance of seacoasts to Bohemia in the Renaissance imagination is in fact demonstrable: Wenceslaus IV, King of Bohemia (1361-1419), took as his impresa a storm-tossed ship, with the motto Tempestati Parendum ('stormy weather must be prepared for') . . . . I am not suggesting that Greene and Shakespeare were familiar with the ancient King of Bohemia's impresa, but rather that the ruler of this landlocked country found a ship in a storm an appropriate emblem of his condition for moral and ethical reasons, not geographical ones.

Antigonus' vision of Hermione and his encounter with the bear make it clear that pastoral is no more a golden world than the Sicilian court is. It is violent and dangerous, nature at its wildest; it exhibits, moreover, from the outset the same problems of knowledge, judgement and interpretation as the world Antigonus has left. And if faith is required for Leontes' ultimate salvation, it provides no help in Antigonus' case, merely misleading him and demonstrating his naivety. His belief in a providential universe convinces him that since fate has brought him to Bohemia, Perdita must be Polixenes' child; and despite his earlier adamant assertion of Hermione's innocence, he interprets his vision of her 'In pure white robes, / Like very sanctity' (3.3.21-2) to imply her death, and if her death, her guilt as well. He arrives at this conviction not passionately or maliciously, but through reason and faith (under the circumstances, his return to Sicily would scarcely be auspicious). And the bear assures us that nature in this play is no kinder than civilization.

Antigonus' death is another of the play's unrestored losses. He is the faithful servant to an irrational and vindictive master. He has been criticized for obeying Leontes, but however barbarous the King's orders may be, the alternative to obeying them is to see Perdita burnt. He commits himself and the infant to the protection of Providence—naively, no doubt, but that is the point. Paulina essentially writes him off as soon as he leaves (see ), and when, at the play's end, Camillo is offered as a replacement, there is no question of her remaining true to her husband's memory: he is, in the play's terms, a total loss. But the fatal bear is also the pivot on which the play turns from tragic to comic, the index to a radical change not of subject but of tone. 'Though authority be a stubborn bear,' says the Clown late in Act 4, 'yet he is oft led by the nose with gold' (4.4.795-6): by this time there are even ways of dealing with the savagery of authority and bears. Antigonus' death, as the Clown recounts it, becomes a black comedy; the abandoned infant, as the shepherd takes it up, is assumed to be the offspring of 'some stair-work, some trunk-work, some behind-door work' (3.3.71-2)—to be, in fact, exactly what Leontes had claimed—but this is now no impediment to pity, charity, love. Bohemia, as the play develops, is hardly an ideal world, except perhaps for disguised princes and con-men looking for easy marks; but it offers a set of alternatives to the dramatic issues of Sicily, a way of rethinking and re-enacting them.

The most striking of these, in terms of dramaturgy, is the introduction of a narrator, Time personified, as Chorus to Act 4—the tale begun by Mamillius and interrupted by the drama of Leontes now becomes the play. Criticism has on the whole been unhappy with this; Hazlitt considered it (along with Antigonus on the coast of Bohemia) one of the play's 'slips or blemishes'; Quiller-Couch used it as a prime example of the
play's 'flagrant specimens of inferior artistry', and Dover Wilson rescued Shakespeare from it by declaring it the work of a collaborator.

The presentation of a narrator had been, in Pericles, a consciously archaizing device, reviving moral Gower to supply the authority for Shakespeare's only morality play. The expedient had been popular but artistically dubious, according to Ben Jonson, who saw the play exactly as Shakespeare intended, but in the worst way—not as a drama but as 'a mouldy tale, . . . stale / As the shrive's crust, and nasty as his fish'. In The Winter's Tale, Time's narration expresses quite a different kind of moral authority. The speech is unnecessary for the purposes of conveying information; everything we learn from Time is repeated at once in the ensuing dialogue between Camillo and Polixenes. But the move from action to narration is another pivot, turning the drama we have experienced with such immediacy into a tale with a teller who both claims control over the apparently free play of the characters and offers a disturbingly amoral overview:

I that please some, try all; both joy and terror
Of good and bad, that makes and unfolds error . . .

Through the operation of Time both good and bad experience both joy and terror; some are pleased, all are tried; both error and its painful revelation are Time's responsibility. Veritas filia temporis, 'Truth', the aphorism says, 'is the daughter of Time'; but this has ceased to be a comforting commonplace—the only truth revealed is, ironically, 'error'. Nor do human institutions, such as the orderly operation of what we normally understand as time (or, as Capell shrewdly such as the dramatic unities) constrain this suggested, figure, for it is in my power
To o'erthrow law, and in one self-born hour
To plant and o'erwhelm custom.

Like the Chorus in Henry V impugning the power of the stage, reducing the theatre's representations to its physical limitations, Time returns The Winter's Tale to its source, a narrative which declares itself, in its subtitle, The Triumph of Time. The difference, however, is that we have become Time's creatures too.

Nature and Art

Theocritus wrote his idylls from the Alexandrian court for an audience of powerful, educated and sophisticated readers; pastoral is, in its inception, embedded in the courtly. The mode had always been available as a way of talking about that other world of ambition, privilege and power. For George Puttenham, in 1589, its primary character was indirection, 'under the veil of homely persons and in rude speeches to insinuate and glance at greater matters, and such as perchance had not Alexander been safe in any been to have in the disclosed first English other sort'. Alexander Barclay, in the first English eclogues, published in 1515, explains that through his shepherds he delineates 'the miseries of courtiers and courts of all princes in general'. The involvement of court with pastoral was not, moreover, a poetic fiction in Shakespeare's England. Keeping sheep was big business, enclosures had been an increasingly serious economic and political issue for almost a century, and the impulse of pastoral poetry to represent the world of shepherds as pretty and harmless has a political dimension that is quite invisible to us. The idyllic pastoral is predicated on the satiric pastoral—Barclay's shepherds, like Spenser's in The Shepheardes Calender, are as likely to curse their masters as to celebrate their country pleasures. The double edge of the mode is evident in the double vision of Rosalind and Celia, fresh from court, overhearing the shepherd Silvius elegantly complaining about love, and then receiving a straightforward lesson from his colleague Corin in the hard economics of the pastoral life.

The presence of aristocrats in the rustic world, therefore, is of the essence of pastoral. It is also, however, a threat to it, and is sometimes positively destructive: the effects of Florizel's and Polixenes' presence at the
sheep-shearing are, in their way, entirely conventional. When, in Book VI of *The Faerie Queene*, the knight of Courtesy enters the pastoral world in pursuit of the Blatant Beast, he finds the traditional *otium* and love in the person of Pastorella, but he also abandons his knightly quest, intrudes upon and disrupts a dance of rustic deities, and drives away the Graces, the source not only of poetry but of the Courtesy he himself embodies. The classic model for the destructive intrusion of royalty into pastoral is invoked by Perdita herself: the appearance of Dis, King of the Underworld, to carry Proserpina off from the Sicilian field of Enna as she gathers the flowers Perdita catalogues.

Perdita's catalogue has a long history relating to love and death. In Theocritus, the lovesick Polyphemus offers Galatea lilies and poppies, flowers respectively of winter and summer; Adonis' bier is strewn with garlands and blossoms in Bion's elegy, and Moschus calls on roses, anemones, hyacinths, and 'flowers in sad clusters' to mourn for the dead Bion.¹⁵ Virgil, elaborating Polyphemus' offer, has the shepherd Corydon tempt the disdainful youth Alexis with flowers in profusion, precisely enumerated:

for you the nymphs
bring—look!—baskets of lilies; a fair naiad
gathers pale wallflowers and the buds of poppies,
and blends narcissus and the fragrant dill,
then interweaves with cassia and sweet herbs
soft hyacinth and yellow marigold . . .

¹⁶ Renaissance examples abounded (see ), but for English poetry, Shakespeare's catalogue established the norms of the topos, both in its elaboration and detail, and in its extraordinary expressive range.

'O Proserpina, / For the flowers now that frighted thou letst fall / From Dis's wagon . . .': the ensuing list depicts the natural world as engaged in a cosmic love affair, and thereby evokes a nature that is no longer Virgilian but Ovidian. Indeed, the association of the flower catalogue with the rape of Proserpina derives from Ovid. In the *Metamorphoses*, she is gathering only 'violets or white lilies' (5.392), but in the *Fasti*, the list is extensive: her companions picked marigolds, violets, poppies, hyacinth, amaranth, thyme, rosemary, sweet clover, roses, and 'sine nomine flores’—'nameless flowers’, more flowers than can be catalogued; she herself picked crocuses and white lilies (4.435-42). Why is the rape of Proserpina being invoked in the middle of a country sheep-shearing festival? It acknowledges, to begin with, the dangerous aspects of pastoral love affairs, and thereby serves as another version of Polixenes' Edenic myth; but it also reverses it: in this case the interloper is male, the innocence destroyed female. The mythological association of flowers with rape, indeed, is already implicit in the scene in the very persona Florizel has devised for Perdita: he has costumed her as Flora, goddess of flowers (4.4.2-3, 9-10). The costume does more than reflect his name; Flora, according to Ovid, was at first the simple nymph Chloris, beloved of Zephyrus, the west wind. He pursued her, she fled, but he seized her and raped her, and then to make amends filled the earth with flowers and gave her dominion over them—'arbitrium tu, dea, floris habe'.¹⁷ Florizel several times denies that his intentions are anything but honourable; but in the allusive structure of the play, the rape has already been committed twice. Florizel himself, indeed, cites three additional examples as precedents for his own behaviour:

The gods themselves,  
Humbling their deities to love, have taken  
The shapes of beasts upon them. Jupiter  
Became a bull and bellowed; the green Neptune  
A ram and bleated; and the fire-robed god,  
Golden Apollo, a poor humble swain,  
As I seem now.
The scene invokes myths in which male sexuality is characteristically disguised, violent, compulsive, often bestial, but also an essential part of nature; and through it—through acts of sexual violence against women—the world is filled with flowers and poetry.\textsuperscript{18}

The Proserpina story is also a story about time, refining and redefining both the terms of Time's chorus and the very concept of a winter's tale. It is a myth that explains the cycle of seasons: the abduction of Ceres' daughter, like the loss of innocence in Eden, is responsible for the fact that winter exists at all, that the 'perpetual spring and harvest' of Spenser's Garden of Adonis, or the eternal round of growing and reaping that Ceres promises Ferdinand and Miranda, can be no more than a poetic fiction.\textsuperscript{19} But the cycle also includes a time of restoration and reconciliation, with the annual return of Proserpina to her home in Sicily. If Shakespeare took the Proserpina story as an underlying fable for the play, rather than as a mere local allusion, it would explain why he switched the locations he found in \textit{Pandosto}, so that Perdita's return, as 'Welcome hither, / As is the spring to th'earth' (5.1.150-1), would be to Sicily, not to Bohemia, and would thus be true to the myth.\textsuperscript{20}

Nature, as Perdita presides over it, excludes 'the fairest flowers o'th season . . . carnations and streaked gillyvors, / Which some call nature's bastards'; as cultivated flowers, they do not grow naturally in her garden, 'and I care not / To get slips of them' (4.4.81-5). The term 'bastard' was used for hybrids; it also meant 'counterfeit', a sense which colours the botanical usage (ironically, the child who is prejudicially called 'natural' provides the prejudicial epithet for the art that usurps nature). In her resolute resistance to bastards, Perdita doubtless shows herself to be her father's daughter, but her brief debate with Polixenes on the uses of art extends beyond the play and is informed by topoi reaching back to antiquity. Kermode in his introduction to the Arden \textit{Tempest} gives an excellent overview of the matter, citing parallel passages from Florio's Montaigne and Puttenham's \textit{Arte of English Poesie} expressing Perdita's and Polixenes' positions respectively, and observes that the latter commonplace can be found as far back as Democritus.\textsuperscript{21} Polixenes' view, that the hybridizer's art is learned from nature and acts as its agent to improve it, is countered by Perdita's, that anything that interferes with nature will necessarily corrupt it. The 'bastard' flower, she implies, is thus correctly characterized, an index to our own corruption as it is the creation of our illicit pleasure. This, in fact, constitutes her ultimate moral position: her objection to the 'art' is not to its practice (she agrees that 'the art itself is nature') but to the impulse motivating it, which is to produce a more attractive flower,

\begin{verbatim}
No more than, were I painted, I would wish
This youth should say 'twere well, and only therefore
Desire to breed by me.
\end{verbatim}

The ironies inhabiting this brief exchange are obvious: the invocation of the art that mimics nature, Giulio Romano's lifelike sculpture, is essential to the play's resolution, the embodiment of restoration, forgiveness, grace; and marrying 'A gentler scion to the wildest stock' (1. 93) is precisely what Florizel proposes in marrying Perdita, and what Polixenes adamantly forbids. But the ironies are, in human terms, rather less telling than criticism has found them; our opinions, even philosophical ones, are not invariably consistent—if this is a failing, it is a very ordinary one—and what we believe to be right for flowers we need not necessarily believe to be right for our children. It is the violence of Polixenes' response to his son's rustic fiancée that is surprising, not its failure to coincide with his botanical observations.

\textbf{Notes}
'The Tragicomic Bear', *Comparative Literature Studies*, 9 (1972), 17-30. Other particularly useful discussions of the bear are Dale B. J. Randall, "'This is the Chase": or the Further Pursuit of Shakespeare's Bear', *Shakespeare Jahrbuch*, 121 (1985), pp. 89-95, which calls attention to Horace's complaint, in *Epistles* II.1.185-6, against audiences who 'call in the middle of a play for a bear or for boxers'; Dennis Biggins's "'Exit Pursued by a Beare": A Problem in *The Winter's Tale*', *ShQ* 13 (1962), pp. 3 ff.; and Michael Bristol's 'In Search of the Bear', *ShQ* 42 (1991), pp. 145-67, which places the bear in the context of both Renaissance folklore and seasonal economics. Daryl Palmer relates the bear to Hermione's invocation of her imperial Russian father, pointing out that the Russian emperor best known to Shakespeare's age was Ivan IV ('the Terrible', d. 1584), who murdered his son and, according to Purchas, amused himself 'with letting bears loose in throngs of people': 'Jacobean Muscovites: Winter, Tyranny and Knowledge in *The Winter's Tale*', *ShQ* 46 (1995), 323-39.

2 In *Pandosto* the kingdoms are reversed; Pandosto is King of Bohemia and Egistus King of Sicilia. But Bohemia still has a seacoast: Egistus 'provided a navy of ships and sailed into Bohemia to visit his old friend and companion' (see Appendix B, p. 235). For a speculation on the reason for the reversal, see below, pp. 45-6.


4 For the printed version of *Florizel and Perdita*, Garrick returned the play to Bohemia.


6 Nevill Coghill calls the bear 'a dramaturgical hinge, a moment of planned structural antithesis', 'Six Points of Stage-craft in *The Winter's Tale*', *Sh. Survey*, 11 (1958), p. 35.


8 New Shakespeare *Winter's Tale*, pp. xxv, 159.


10 Cited in the *Variorum*, p. 156.


12 *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), i. 18; the text is modernized.


14 *As You Like It* 2.4. The pioneering discussion of the relation between pastoral and the Elizabethan wool industry is Louis Adrian Montrose's 'Eliza, Queene of the shepheardes', *ELR* 10 (1980), 153-82.


16 Eclogue 2, 45-50; the translation is by the editor, and appears in *Poetry* 116 (1970), 353-5.

17 *Fasti*, 5.212
Paul Alpers sees Florizel's pastoral guise, and more specifically his Ovidian allusions, as an antidote to the destructive hyperbole of the opening scenes, a redemptive and liberating mode of idealization: 'After the anguish of Leontes' Sicily, where fantasies of bestial sex and the wearing of horns poison the imagination . . . Florizel . . . provides an alternative to a courtly habit of hyperbolic asseveration that is implicated in the tragedy of the first three acts' (What Is Pastoral?, forthcoming).

See Faerie Queene 3.6.42; Tempest 4.1.114-15.

E. A. J. Honigmann calls attention to the play's Ovidian background, and includes a similar speculation on the reversal of the locations, in 'Secondary Source of The Winter's Tale', Philological Quarterly, 34.4 (1955), pp. 27-38.

The Tempest (1954), pp. xxxv-xxxvi; Pafford argues that the importance of the debate has been greatly overstated, but nevertheless gives extensive quotations from the sources cited by Kermode. Both discussions are indebted to Harold S. Wilson, 'Nature and Art in The Winter's Tale', Shakespeare Association Bulletin, 18 (1943), pp. 114-20. See the note on 4.4.87-103.

The Winter's Tale (Vol. 45): Characterization

Barbara A. Mowat (essay date 1991)


[In the essay that follows, originally presented at the Shakespeare Association of America in 1991, Mowat explores act four, scene three of The Winter's Tale—where Autolycus is introduced—as a dramatic moment in which the surface context and its "infracontexts" create a number of tensions that establish Autolycus as a rogue character.]

As I look at a particular intertextual moment in The Winter's Tale (the scene in which we meet Autolycus), I begin by assuming that the first printing of the play in the 1623 Shakespeare First Folio is a "text"—that is, dialogue initially crafted as a script for performance but nevertheless preserved for us as printed symbols, inked pages. I also assume that this moment of Autolycus's appearance came into existence within a field of printed texts to which it was contextually related. By describing and thus delimiting the moment's context as "printed," I do not deny it other contexts; rather, I argue that among the many contexts—social, cultural, variously semiotic—implicated in Shakespeare's text, one of the more significant is that massive field of discourse that issued from printing houses.

Not that the boundary between printed discourse and surrounding discourses is fixed or impermeable. Indeed, as we trace the interweavings of printed texts within Shakespeare's Winter's Tale, we trace at the same time the social and moral worlds represented in those texts, and we hear the debates in which the texts engaged. There is merit, though, in focussing attention as unwaveringly as possible on printed discursive systems. Such careful focussing forces us to acknowledge the constructedness of even supposed eye-witness accounts and heightens our awareness of the ideological freight carried by both the most fanciful of mythological tales and the most laconic of statutes and chronicles.

The word text in my title, then, refers primarily to the Folio words that preserve and transmit The Winter's Tale 4.3 and secondarily to printed discourse in general. The word infracontext I borrow from Claes Schaar, whose work in intertextual theory I find particularly helpful vis-à-vis Shakespeare. Schaar suggests that the
works of certain poets can best be described as vertical context systems; in these works, within and beneath, as it were, the surface context are embedded infracontexts that "constitute a matrix, a bed or mould which serves as the base for the surface context" and which, when recognized, expand and stratify meaning. The surface context functions as signal, sometimes in an overt or covert allusion, sometimes as a mere reminiscence or faint echo. Once the reader or listener recognizes the infracontexts and "recognition turns to understanding, the signal . . . and [the] infracontexts coalesce"; in some cases, the surface context is, in effect, annotated by the infracontext; in other cases, the meaning of the surface context is expanded through a vaguer merging as the infracontexts "rub off on the surface context. Schaar's construct is a variant of familiar intertextual models from Bakhtin through Kristeva to Riffaterre. It differs from other intertextual models in that it bases itself "on distinctive, mostly verbal similarities between surface and infracontexts" and in that it focusses on a given intertextual moment as "a closely connected semantic whole, a functional entity" whose meaning is expanded and enriched by its infracontexts.

In these pages I argue that The Winter's Tale 4.3 is a dramatic moment in which the surface context and its infracontexts create a wonderfully complex contextual universe, one that, like so much of Shakespeare's work, constitutes a special variant of Schaar's vertical context system. Beneath the moment's surface context are distinct sets of infracontexts, some of which supplement and intensify each other, while others set up sharply contrasting associations and patterns. These conflicting infracontexts generate intensely complex meanings as, to quote Schaar, "irreconcilable worlds and value systems are pitted against each other."

The Winter's Tale as a whole is, of course, an interesting intertextual transformation of Robert Greene's Pandosto. Woven into and transforming Greene's story of jealousy, attempted incest, and suicide are Ovidian, Apuleian, and Euripidean incidents and motifs that lift the play out of Greene's sordid and prosaic pages and into an almost mythic world of metamorphoses: of shepherdesses into princesses, of raging tyrants into repentant fathers, of statues into living women. Act 4, scene 3, has no parallel in Pandosto. It opens with the entrance of a new character who introduces himself to the audience as a thief and explains how he got the name Autolycus. A second character, the son of the Old Shepherd, enters, trying to calculate the money that this year's shearing will bring in; unable to do it "without counters," he abandons the effort and instead begins to read aloud his shopping list for the coming sheepshearing festival: sugar, currants, rice, saffron, mace, nutmegs, ginger, "four pound of prunes, and as many of raisins o' the sun." Autolycus, to lure this "prize" into his trap, lies down and cries out for help, claiming that he has been robbed and beaten. As the shepherd charitably lifts him up, offering him money and offering to take him to shelter, Autolycus cleans out the shepherd's purse. They part, the shepherd going, he thinks, to buy spices for the feast, and Autolycus making plans to attend the festival himself, where, he says, he will turn the shearers into sheep for his own fleecing.

The signals in this scene that have alerted previous scholars to two of the scene's infracontexts are Autolycus's name and the general configuration of the trick he plays on his victim. "My father named me Autolycus," he tells us, "who, being, as I am, littered under Mercury, was likewise a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles." This single sentence compresses several Greek-mythological pieces of text (most of them reprised in Ovid's Metamorphoses) that tell the story of the master thief Autolycus, son of the god Mercury. While Shakespeare's Autolycus is "littered under Mercury" in the sense, one presumes, that he was born when the planet Mercury was in the ascendant, his namesake was actually sired by the god Mercury, inheriting from his father the magic power to transform stolen booty into new, unrecognizable forms. As Ovid writes (in Golding's 1567 translation), the maiden Chyone

\[\ldots\] bare by Mercurye
A sonne that hight Awtolychus, who provde a wyly pye
And such a fellow as in theft and filching had no peere.
He was his fathers owne sonne right: he could mennes eyes so bleere
As for to make the black things whyght, and whyght thinges black appeere.
Shakespeare's Autolycus does his namesake proud. He, too, is "a wyly pye" who "in theft and filching" has no peer. His link to Mercury—the trickster god, god of thieves, lord of roads, known primarily for his "subtle cunning"—gives Shakespeare's Autolycus a quasi-mythological status, casting a kind of glamor on his thieving. One finds a parallel glamorizing of the thief in the second infracontext that has been cited by scholars, a story in Robert Greene's Second Part of Conny-Catching, one of five such books written by Greene in 1591-92 that describe con men (or, as he calls them, conny-catchers); Greene's announced purpose is to display the evil doings of conny-catchers and alert honest citizens to their tricks. Among Greene's tales of clever crooks versus innocent gulls is that of a wary farmer unknowingly stalked by conny-catchers. As he walks the inner regions of St. Paul's, the farmer refuses to take his hand off his "well lined purse." The hero/villain of this tale is a master deceiver—"one of the crue," writes Greene, "that for his skill might haue bene Doctorat in his misterie." Having tried a series of ploys to get the wealthy farmer to remove his hand from his purse, the thief disguises himself as a gentleman and falls down as if ill at the farmer's feet, begging the farmer to help him; as the farmer "stept to him, helde him in his armes, rubd him & chaft him," the farmer's purse is neatly removed. This tale, "A kinde conceit of a Foist performed in Paules," is generally accepted as underlying the Autolycus gulling-incident.

The tale of the wary farmer and the clever pickpocket is a London story, set in the middle aisle of St. Paul's. The Winter's Tale sets its parallel incident in the country and has its con man fall down beside what, within the fiction of the play, is a country road. This seemingly minor shift in the story's location begins the process of bringing into play sharply conflicting infracontexts. As I have already suggested, the mythological context and the conny-catching context, though they take us into radically different discourses, do not themselves markedly differ in the stance taken toward Autolycus the thief. Both contexts convey a more-than-sneaking admiration for the trickster. It is not such a long step from Ovidian commentary on the subtle cunning of Mercury, god of thieves, and on his son Autolycus as a "wyly pye," to Greene's statement that his pickpocket "for his skill might haue bene Doctorat in his misterie." However, when Greene's young gentleman is taken from London and put in rags and made to cry out for help from beside a roadway, a signal is given that opens another, immensely complicating set of infracontexts in which Autolycus is far from glamorized. When, in his seeming distress, the ragged Autolycus is succored by a stranger passing along the road, what is replayed is the familiar story of the Good Samaritan—except that in Shakespeare's version of the story, the part of the man set upon by thieves, stripped, beaten and left by the side of the road, is enacted by Autolycus, the thief, and the charitable Samaritan is presented as a gullible fool taken in by outward signs of victimization and suffering.

This complicated dramatic moment represents with remarkable economy the essence of a century-long struggle among and within texts as to how individuals and states should respond to those in distress. In the biblical text, Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan to illustrate what is meant by "loving one's neighbor." Loving one's neighbor means aiding anyone in distress. But, beginning in texts in the late fifteenth century, one finds the question posed again and again: how can one know whether apparent distress is genuine? In Brandt's Ship of Fools, in "Cocke Lorelles Bote," and in the Liber Vagatorum—all published around 1500 and all drawing, to a greater or lesser extent, on an advisory issued by the Senate of Basel around 1475—we read about healthy "beggers who sit at the church doors . . . with sore and broken legs . . . [tying] a leg up or besmear[ing] an arm with salves . . . and all the while as little ails him as other men"; we read about beggars who pretend to suffer from epilepsy, falling down "with a piece of soap in their mouths, whereby the foam rises as big as a fist"; we read about beggars who apply corrosives to their skin or who leave their clothes at the hostelry and sit down against the churches naked, and shiver terribly before the people that they may think they are suffering from great cold. They prick themselves with nettle-seed and other things, whereby they are made to shake. Some say they have been robbed by wicked men;
some that they have lain ill and for this reason were compelled to sell their clothes. Some say they have been stolen from them; but all this is only that people should give them more clothes, [which] they sell . . . and spend a whoring and gambling.  

When the Liber Vagatorum—from which the above quotations are taken—went into its nineteenth printing in 1528, it included a preface by Martin Luther, who wrote that "the . . . true meaning of the book . . . is . . . that princes, lords, counsellors of state, and everybody should be prudent, and cautious in dealing with beggars, and learn that, whereas people [who] will not give and help honest paupers and needy neighbors, as ordained by God, . . . give . . . ten times as much to Vagabonds. . . . I have myself of late years been cheated and befooled by such tramps and liars more than I wish to confess."  

The theme of the evil perpetrated by what I call "the counterfeit distressed" continues throughout the century. In Robert Copland's Hye way to the Spyttell house, written in the 1530s, the truly poor and infirm are shown as left to die in the cold while those merely pretending to be poor and sick receive charity: 

Some beggarly churls . . . .
walk to each market and fair
And to all places where folk do repair,
By day on stilts or stooping on crutches
And so dissimule as false loitering flowches,
With bloody clouts all about their leg,
And plasters on their skin when they go beg.
Some counterfeit lepry, and other some
Put soap in their mouth to make it scum,
And fall down as Saint Cornelys' evil.
These deceits they use worse than any devil;
And when they be in their own company,
They be as whole as either you or I.

The tricks purportedly used by healthy beggars to prey upon the pity of charitable individuals appear in text after text as warnings to gullible Christians: from the Liber Vagatorum and the Ship of Fools to Copland, from Copland to Awdeley (in 1561) and thence to Harman (in 1567), and from Harman verbatim into Dekker's 1608 Bellman of London. Nor does it stop there: Robert Burton, who, in his copy of the Bellman of London, traces Dekker's liftings from Harman, includes in his 1621 Anatomy of Melancholy a discussion of beggars who "counterfeit severall diseases, . . . dismember, make themselves blind, lame, to have a more plausible cause to beg, and lose their limmes to recover their present wants."  

But it was not only individuals who were represented as concerned about how to be charitable but not gullible. English statutes, annals, and chronicles beginning in the second half of the sixteenth century represent the state as aware of the need to distinguish the distressed from the counterfeit distressed so that those who genuinely need help can be relieved. Earlier in the century, English statutes and royal proclamations attack vagabonds and sturdy beggars (i.e., beggars who are healthy enough to work) not on the grounds that they fraudulently receive aid that rightfully belongs to the legitimately distressed but rather because, as a statute passed in 1547 put it, "Idelness and vagabundry is the mother and roote of all theftes Robberyes and all evill actes and other mischiefe." Although the 1547 statute does not address the question of how the state should take care of the truly distressed when the realm is purportedly filled with "a multitude of people given to" idleness and begging, chronicles represent the state as becoming aware of this issue by mid-century.
For example, in Grafton's 1569 *Chronicle* (from which it was picked up by later chroniclers) we read that in 1553, the last year of Edward VI's reign, Bishop Ridley preached a sermon on poverty and the urgent need for charity that so moved the king that he had Ridley set up a council to find a solution to the problem of how to relieve the needy. The council began its work by classifying the poor into three major categories and recommended that two of the three (those legitimately in need) should receive charity, and that those in the third category, "the thriftless poor" (i.e., "the riotous that consumeth all," "the vagabond that will abide in no place," and "the idle person, as the strumpet and other"), should be sent to workhouses. 18

A statute passed in the fifth year of Elizabeth's reign suggests that Edward's plan did not solve the state's problem. "To thintent," it begins, "that idell and loytering persons and valiant [i.e., healthy] Beggers may be avoyded, and thimpotent, feble, and lame, which are the Poore in very dede, should bee hereafter relieved and well provided for: Bee it enacted . . ."—and the statute goes on to order that the truly distressed should be taken care of by local governments while the healthy unemployed poor should be publicly whipped and put to work. 19 Statutes from the fourteenth and thirty-ninth years of Elizabeth's reign and from the first and seventh years of James I's reign make clear that the state's response to the truly distressed and to the counterfeit distressed were represented as a problem throughout the period, up to the very year in which *The Winter's Tale* was probably written. 20

When Autolycus pretends to be in need of aid, then, and when he caps that pretense by robbing the man who ministers to him, he incarnates a figure presented in a host of texts as an evil disrupter of the commonwealth. Autolycus himself calls attention to this ominous infracontext of pamphlets, statutes, and chronicles when, in his dialogue with the shepherd, he labels his current knavish profession as that of "rogue." Pretending to describe the thief who robbed him, Autolycus says: "I knew [Autolycus] once a servant of the Prince. . . . He hath been since an ape-bearer, then a process-server . . ., and, having flown over many knavish professions, he settled only in rogue." "A rogue," of course, is what Autolycus is called in the Folio dramatis personae list. Shakespeare had used this word in earlier plays in some of its looser senses, but in *The Winter's Tale* 4.3 it seems technical, as if it were the name of a "knavish profession."

The word did, in fact, have such a specific, legal meaning. The word *rogue* entered the English language—in print, at least—in 1561, with John Awdeley's *Fraternity of Vagabonds*. 21 There, *rogue* is the name given a particular kind of vagabond, a beggar who uses as his excuse for being on the road the tale that he is seeking a kinsman. Thomas Harman, who, in 1567, expanded Awdeley's small book into the more substantial *A caueat or waring for common cursetors vulgarely called Vagabones*, gives a much fuller character sketch:

> A Roge is neither so stoute or hardy as the vpright man. Many of them will go fayntly and look piteously when they see [or] meete any person, hauing a kercher, as white as my shooes, tyed about their head, with a short staffe in their hand, haltinge, although they nede not, requiring almes of such as they meete, or to what house they shal com. But you may easely perceiue by their colour that thei cary both health and hipocrisie about them, whereby they get gaine, when others want that cannot fayne and dissemble. Others therebee that walke sturdely about the countrey, and faineth to seke a brother or kinsman of his, dwelling within som part of the shire. . . . These also wyll pick and steale. . . . 22

Harman's *Caueat* puts the rogue primarily among the counterfeit distressed, one of the twenty-three kinds of vagabonds and beggars Harman claims to have himself met.

The word *rogue* spread quickly after Harman's very popular book was published in 1567. 23 As the word spread and was taken up into legal terminology, it lost much of the meaning that Awdeley and Harman had given it and became a more general term used to name the healthy unemployed poor. Most significantly, in the statute against vagabonds passed and published in 1572 (14 Eliz. c.5), a rogue is legally defined as a healthy person who has neither land, nor master, nor a legitimate trade or source of income. In that same
statute, the phrase "Beggars, Vagabonds, and Idle Persons"—a phrase that had appeared with slight variations in comparable statutes back to the time of Richard II—now becomes, for the first time, "Rogues, Vagabonds, and sturdy Beggars," and thus it appears in every statute for punishment of the unemployed poor throughout the reign of Elizabeth and into the reign of King James. From the 1572 statute the word rogue passed immediately into Stow's 1573 Summarye of the Chronicles and from there directly into Holinshed's 1577 Chronicles—and even into the Chronicles' index.

We learn from the statutes and the chronicles that, for the crime of having neither land nor master nor legitimate source of income, the rogue received various punishments: from 1572 to 1597, he or she was stripped to the waist, whipped until bloody, and had a hole burned through the gristle of the right ear; from 1597 to 1604, he or she was merely whipped until bloody, then sent back to his or her place of birth and put to work. In 1604, in James's first parliament, the 1597 statute was declared ineffective for that the said Rogues hauinge no marke upon them . . . may . . . retire themselves into some other parts of this Realme where they are not knowne, and soo escape the due punishmente . . .: For remedie whereof be it ordained and enacted, That such Rogues . . . shall . . . be branded in the lefte Shoulder with an hot burning Iron . . ., with a greate Romane R upon the Iron. . . [so] that the letter R be seene and remaine for a perpetuali marke upon such Rogue during his or her life.

The fierceness of attack—both physical and rhetorical—on the unemployed destitute is usually linked in the chronicles, statutes, and pamphlets to the biblical injunction against idleness. God had ordered man to labor; anyone who did not labor did not deserve to live. As Sir John Cheke wrote in 1549, people think of drones, caterpillars, and vermin as noisome beasts in the commonwealth. But what, he asks, is an idle person?

According to Cheke (and to many others writing throughout the century), unemployed persons simply hated work, leaving labour, which they like not, and following idlenes, which they should not. For every man is easely and naturally brought, from labor to ease, . . . from diligence to slouthfulness. . . . [V]aliaunte beggers play in tounes, and yet complaine of neede, whose [beggar's] staffe if it be once hoat in their hande, or sluggishnes bred in their bosome, thei wil neuer be allured to labour againe, contenting them selues better with idle beggary, then with honest and profitable labour.

William Harrison's "Description of England," printed as an introduction to Holinshed's 1577 and 1587 Chronicles, includes a section entitled "Of Provision Made for the Poor." Echoing the commonplace that many are idle because they hate to work—they "straie and wander about, as creatures abhorring all labour and euerie honest exercise," he writes—Harrison lashes out at the unemployed poor with a vigor comparable to Cheke's:

[the idle] are all theeues and caterpillers in the commonwealth and by the word of God not permitted to eat, sith they do but licke the sweat from the true laborers browes & bereue the godlie poore of that which is due unto them . . ., consuming the charitie of well disposed people . . . after a most wicked & detestable maner.
But Harrison, in describing the numbers of rogues and beggars in the commonwealth, asks a question of the situation that places Autolycus and his shepherd victim in a different light. Noting that "[i]dle beggers are such either through other mens occasion, or through their owne default," he writes that,

By other mens occasion (as one waie for example) when some couetous man . . . espieng a further commoditie in their commons, holds, and tenures, doth find such means as thereby to wipe manie out of their occupiengs and turne the same unto his priuate gaines.

In the margin of Harrison's text appears this statement: "A thing often seene." The text then continues: "Hereupon it followeth, that . . . the greater part [of those so dispossessed] commonlie hauing nothinge to staie vpon . . . do either proue idle beggers, or else continue starke theeues till the gallows do eat them vp." The marginal comment on this sentence reads: "At whose hands shall the bloud of these men be required?"

This small questioning of who is to blame for the numbers of unemployed poor who haunt the English streets and countryside summons up a host of texts that present the story of the vagrant from quite a different perspective than that shown in the statutes against vagabonds or in the moralizings by Harman and Cheke and all the others who attack the idle poor. The other side of the story, as Harrison so briefly suggests, is that many are unemployed because their lands or jobs have been taken away from them, a point that is made in statutes "for the maintenance of husbandrie and tillage" throughout the century and in numerous pamphlets and tracts that plead to various English monarchs on behalf of the dispossessed. Nowhere is this side of the story told more poignantly than in More's *Utopia*. There the point is made that England is overrun by thieves, not because thieves enjoy stealing (as one of the characters in *Utopia* claims) but because people have lost their livings: serving men out of work, returned soldiers, evicted farm laborers thrown out of work when farms are sold—these are the men and women frantic for food and driven to begging and stealing: "they that be thus destytute of seruice, other [i.e., either] starue for honger, or manfullye playe the theaues. For what wolde yow haue them to do?" Hythloday asks. "I pray you," he goes on to ask, "what other thing do you [Englishmen do, but] . . . make [people into] theues and then punish them?" That which sets England apart from other nations, Hythloday says, is the way English sheep are responsible for such problems. These supposedly peaceful animals "consume, destroy, and deuoure hole fieldes, howses, and cities." Noblemen, gentlemen, and abbots, he explains, "leawe no grounde for tyllage, [but] enclose all in pastures: they throw downe houses; they plucke downe townes, and leaue nothing stondyne." One greedy sheep owner may inclose many thousand acres of grounde together . . . [while] the husbandmen be . . . compelled to sell all; by one meanes . . . or by other, . . . by howke or crooke they must nedes departe awaye, pore, sylie [i.e., simple], wretched soules, men, women, husbandes, wyves, fatherles chyldren, widdowes, woful mothers, with their yonge babes . . . Awaye they trudge . . . out of their . . . howses, fyndying no places to rest in . . . And when they haue wanderynge about some spent [all that they have], what can they then els do but steale, . . . or else go about beggyng? And yet then also they be caste in prison as vagaboundes, because they go aboute and worke not: whom no man will set a worke, though they neuer so willingly offer them selfes thereto.

This yet darker side of vagrant life in England, with its textually familiar picture of wealthy, covetous men who buy up land for pasturage and in the process dispossess thousands of people, shadows the scene in *The Winter's Tale* at which we are looking, a meeting between a rogue and a wealthy owner of sheep. Their vocations can hardly be seen as coincidental: it is not alone in More's *Utopia* that the sheep owner is blamed for the plight of vagrants and thieves. Nor can it be a coincidence that the shepherd enters calculating the amount of money that will come in from this year's shearing—more than £140, a goodly sum at that time—and that he then lists the expensive delicacies that he is off to buy. In the previous scene, we were told that this shepherd and his father had "beyond the imagination of [their] neighbors . . . grown into an unspeakable estate." (4.2.39-40). We know that the money that purchased that estate was the money found
with the baby Perdita sixteen years before (3.3.116-20), but the shepherd's calculation of the money coming in this year merely from the wool of fifteen hundred of their sheep tells us that, as More and others make clear—and as is wonderfully exemplified by the fortunes of the sheep-raising family of Spencers (by 1610 having achieved a baronetcy and the reputation of having the most money of any family in England)—the wealth from their sheep-herding estate will bring in annually more and more wealth. In contrast, Autolycus's downward descent from serving man of the prince to the profession of rogue echoes the progress catalogued by More and many others describing the background of England's thieves. Autolycus is thus reminiscent of one of More's wretched souls who steal because "what would you have them do?"

But here the struggle between infracontexts becomes intense. Autolycus may incarnate the unemployed vagrant, a figure represented as either scandalously evil or truly pitiable. But Autolycus is given songs and dialogue that signal contexts in which he is neither evil nor pitiable. Like the vagabond poets of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, he claims to love his life of wandering: he enters singing songs that echo both the well-known medieval "Confessions of a Vagabond," in which the wandering life is celebrated, as well as goliardic rejoicings in spring and in casual sexual encounters. This lyric infracontext immensely complicates the emotive and ideological stance of the scene. Further, Autolycus's catalog of the history of his progress from one knavish profession to another signals yet another complicating infracontext, that of sixteenth-century picaresque tales that recount the adventures of the antihero who moves from profession to profession, celebrating himself and being celebrated by others for his quick wit and ability to survive.

The vagabond songs and the dialogue's picaresque tonality supplement and intensify the infracontexts mentioned at the outset—the mythological texts that make Autolycus a trickster in the likeness of Mercury and the conny-catching tales that point up his cleverness vis-à-vis the foolish gull. One set of infracontexts, then, makes of the dramatic moment a variously nuanced celebration of the cunning of the trickster. Another set makes the moment instead an enactment of frightening social conflicts. When Claes Schaar briefly discusses this kind of complicated variant of his vertical context system, he notes that, in texts like this, "complex significance is very clearly to the fore" and "meaning is movable, shifting radically as different infracontexts are brought into focus." The semantic result, he writes, is "quite different as we 'tilt' the text one way or the other." In The Winter's Tale 4.3, if we tilt the text toward Autolycus the trickster, the moment becomes resonant with the mythology of the trickster archetype, and Autolycus can be seen as a stand-in for the artist himself, endowed with Mercury's gifts of eloquence and illusion-making, a kind of earlier-day Felix Krull. If we tilt the text toward Autolycus the rogue, mentally branding his left shoulder with a great Roman R, the moment speaks more of social and economic struggle, of counterfeiting, of acting, if you will, as Autolycus first licks the sweat off the true laborer's brow and then exits to change his costume for his next actorly role.

Over the centuries, The Winter's Tale 4.3 has been read primarily as tilted toward the trickster infracontexts, and Autolycus has been seen as a great comic creation, a figure in which to delight. In 1611, the tilt—at least for Simon Forman—was instead toward Autolycus the rogue. As Forman wrote, after having seen the play at the Globe:

Remember also the Rog that cam in all tottered like coll pixci. and howe he feyned him sicke & to haue bin Robbed of all that he had and howe he cosoned the por man of all his money. . . . beware of trustinge feined beggars or fawninge fellouss.

Forman's use of the terms "rog," "feyned him sicke" and "feined beggars" foregrounds the moment's economic and social infracontexts; his reference to the play's wealthy shepherd as "the por man" and his warning to "beware of trustinge . . . fawninge fellouss" place Forman himself on the side of those who, like Martin Luther, felt threatened by such impostors. Forman's description of Autolycus as coming in "all tottered [i.e., tattered] like coll pixci" suggests that Forman had picked up (from the costuming, it would seem) an infracontext with links to the mythological (a coll-pixie was a mischievous supernatural being that lured
people astray, into pixie paths and bogs), but, for Forman, even the mythological infracontext tilts the meaning of Autolycus toward the ominous.

Today, the word *rogue* has lost its darker pejorative resonance, shepherds are no longer viewed as a primary enemy of the downtrodden, and one suspects that few readers or auditors pick up the allusion to Autolycus's namesake. For today's audience, these contexts, then, are mostly "absent structures," to borrow Umberto Eco's phrase, infracontexts that "remain inaudible like . . . voice[s] out of earshot." As with so many moments in Shakespeare, though, once the voices are heard, the moment becomes tantalizing in its complexity. Thus, although Shakespeare turned printed texts not directly into other printed texts but into air, into scripts for the ephemeral breath of the stage, I would add his name to those of such poets as Dante, Milton, and Eliot, artists whose poetic effects are "powerful and dynamic [in part because they are] based . . . on . . . complex meanings emerging along vertical axes." To read Shakespeare intertextually, as I've tried to show, is to recover those complex meanings, to recognize "powerful and dynamic" poetic and dramatic effects, and to exchange the amusing surface context of *The Winter's Tale* 4.3 for a supercharged contextual world.

**Notes**

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Shakespeare Association of America in Vancouver, March 1991. I am grateful to the Newberry and the Huntington Libraries for research support.


5 *The xv. Bookes of P. Ouidius Naso, entytuled Metamorphosis, translated oute of Latin into English meeter* by Arthur Golding (London: Willyam Seres, 1567), bk. 11, 11. 359-63. Lewis Theobald, in his edition of *The Winter's Tale*, writes that "The Allusion is, unquestionably, to this Passage in Ovid. . . . The true Autolycus was the Son of Mercury; our fictitious one, born under his Planet; the first a Copy of his Father; the other, suppos'd to derive his Qualities from natal Predominance." *The Works of Shakespeare*, 1733, 3:116, n. 23.


Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, in his introduction to the New Cambridge *Winter's Tale*, 1931, seems to have been the first scholar to note the parallel: "let anyone turn to Greene's *Second Part of Conny-catching* (1592), he will find the trick played by Autolycus on the Clown so exactly described as to leave no doubt that poor Greene was again drawn upon." Kenneth Muir, in *The Sources of Shakespeare's Plays* (1977), writes that "Autolycus . . . might have stepped out of one of the pamphlets of Harman, Greene, or Dekker, exposing the inequities of the criminal underworld. Several of his tricks do in fact come from Greene's coney-catching pamphlets," one of which "describes . . . Autolycus' . . . robbing of the shepherd's son" (275-76).

The parable is found in The Gospel of Saint Luke 10.25-37. This parable, according to the 1539 *Book of Common Prayer*, was to be read in church each thirteenth Sunday after Trinity.

Jesus tells "a certain expounder of the law" (Geneva translation) that, in order to inherit eternal life, he must "love thy Lord God with all thine heart . . ., & thy neighbour as thy self." When the lawyer "said unto Jesus, Who is then my neighbour? . . . Jesus answered, and said, A certeine man went down from Ierusalem to Ierico, and fell among theues, and they robbed him of his rayment, and wounded him, & departed, leauing him halfe dead." "A certeine Priest" and then "a Leuite" pass by the wounded man while "a certeine Samaritan . . . had compassion on him and went to him, & bounde vp his woundes, and powred in oyle and wine, and put him on his owne beast, and brought him to an ynne, and made prouision for him. And on the morowe when he departed, he toke out two pence [marginal note: which was about 9 pence of sterling money], and gaue them to the hoste, and said unto him, Take care of him, and whatsoeuer thou spendest more, when I come againe, I wil recompense thee." Jesus then asks the lawyer, "Which now of these thre, thinkest thou, was neighbour vnto him that fell among the theues?" "And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him: Go, and do thou lykewyse." In the Geneva Bible (from which this is quoted) the marginal gloss on Jesus's final sentence reads: "Helpe him that hath nede of thee although thou knowe him not."


The relationship among these books is not clear, in part because it has been impossible to determine when "Cocke Lorelles Bote" and *Liber Vagatorum* were first printed. All are dependent, directly or indirectly, on the advisory about beggars and vagrants issued by the Senate of Basel sometime in the fifteenth century. This advisory was transcribed, probably in 1475, by Johannes Knebel, then chaplain of the Cathedral of Basel. Because Brandt published *Narrenschiff* in 1494 when he was living in Basel, and because many details in *Narrenschiff* come from the advisory, D. B. Thomas has surmised that Knebel drew Brandt's attention to the advisory (*The Book of Vagabonds*, 11). "Cocke Lorelles Bote" seems to have been inspired either by *Narrenschiff or Shyp of folys*. The *Liber Vagatorum* depends on the Basel advisory for both substance and form; much of it is taken verbatim from the advisory, which is available to us in volume 1 of Heinrich Schreiber's *Taschenbuch für Geschichte und Alterthum in Suddeutschland* (Freiburg, 1839), 330-43.


Ibid., 63-65.


"1 Edw. VI.c.3. "An Acte for the Punishment of Vagabondes and for the Relief of the poore and impotent Persons." *Statutes of the Realm . . . from Original Records and Authentic Manuscripts*, 9 vols. (1801-1822), vol. 4, pt. 1, p. 5. This particular statute, sometimes called the "slavery act," set as punishment for any unemployed person who refused to work that he or she be declared a vagabond, branded on the chest with a burning iron in the shape of the letter V, and made a slave for two years; the statute was soon repealed on the grounds that the punishment was so severe that few would enforce it—though as A. L. Beier notes, "the first proposal of the 'Considerations delivered to the Parliament' of 1559 was the revival of the slavery act of 1547 against vagrants." "Vagrants and the Social Order in Elizabethan England," *Past and Present*, 64 (1974): 3-29, esp. 27.


For Awdeley and Harman, see note 15.


For the argument that Harman's lost original version and the (expanded) earliest extant version were both published in 1567, see F. J. Furnival, preface to Viles and Furnival, *Fraternitye of Vacabondes*, iv.

25 John Stow includes in his account of the year 1572 the following summary of that year's Parliament:

"In this Parliamente, for so much as the whole Realme of England was exceedingly pestered with Roges, vagaboundes & sturdye beggers . . . it was enacted that all persons above the age of 14 yeares, being taken begging, vagrant, & wandring disorderly, should be apprehended, whipped, and burnt through the gristle of the right ear, with a hot Iron of one inche compasse. . . ."

In the margin appear the words "Roges burnt through the ear." (A summarye of the Chronicles of England from the first comminge of the Brute into this Land, unto this present year of Christ, 1573 [London: Thomas Marshe, 1573], fol. 430.)

Holinhshed's 1577 Chronicles (fol. 1862) reproduces this passage verbatim, and lists in the index [sig. K4v, 1st column, 13th entry] "Roges appoynted to be burnt through the eare. 1862.2". Raphael Holinshed, The laste volume of the Chronicles of England, Scotlannde, and Irelande (London: 1577.) The passage appears in The Third volume of Chronicles . . . first compiled by Raphael Holinshed . . . now newlie . . . augmented and continued. . . to the yeare 1586 (London: 1587), 1228. The 1587 index adds as an entry the word "Vagabonds" and cross-references "Roges" and "Vagabonds."


27 The hurt of Sedition, how grieuous it is to a Commune welth (1549), sig. E5v. This work was included as an "Admonition" from Sir John Cheke in Holinhshed's 1577 Chronicles, 1688-89 [1689 is incorrectly numbered 1869], and in Holinhshed's 1587 Chronicles, 1042-55.

28 Cheke, sigs. E4v-E5.


31 Ibid.

32 See, e.g., Simon Fish, A Supplication for the Beggers (ca. 1529) and A Supplication of the Poore Commons (1546), in Four Supplications, ed. J. M. Cowper, pp. 1-18, 59-92. See also Robert Crowley who, in 1550, addressed the wealthy as follows:

If you charge them wyth disobedience, you were firste disobedient. For without a law to beare you, yea contrarie to the law which forbiddeth al maner of oppression & extortion, & that more is contrarie to conscience . . . ye enclosed from the pore their due commones, leavied greater fines then heretofore have been leavied, put them from the liberties . . . that they held by custome, & reised their rents. . . . if you had loved your contrei, would you not have prevented the great destruction that chanced by the reason of your unsaciable desire? . . . How you have obeyed the lawes in rakinge together of fermes, purchaising and prolynyng for
Crowley again, in his *An information and Peticion agaynst the oppressours of the pore Commons of this Realme*, writes to the wealthy:

Beholde, you engrossers of fermes and teynements, beholde, I saye, the terrible threatnynges of God, whose wrath you can not escape. The voyce of the pore (whom you haue with money thruste out of house and whome) is well accepted in the eares of the Lord. . . . Knowe then that he hath not cauled you to the welthe and glorie of this worlde, but hath charged you wyth the greate and rude multitude. And if any of them perishe thorowe your defaute, know then for certentye, that the bloode of them shall be required at your handes. If the impotent creatures perish for lacke of necessaries, you are the murderer, for you have thyer enheritaunce and do minister vnto them. If the sturdy fall to stealeyng, robbying, & reueynge, then are you the causers thereof, for you dygge in, enclose, and wythold frome the earth out of whych they should dygge and plowe theyr lyueynge. (J. M. Cowper, ed., *Select Works of Robert Crowley*, 151-76, esp. 161-64.)


34 Ibid., sigs. C6V-C8.

35 See, eg., Certayne causes gathered together wherein is shewed together the decaye of England, only by the great multitnde of shepe, to the utter decay of houshold keping. . . . (1550-53), a petition addressed to Edward VI's council:

We saye, as reason doeth leade us, that shepe & shepemasters doeth cause skantyte of corne [;]. . . where tillage was wont to be, nowe is it stored with greate vumberment of shepe. . . . [As people are thrown off the land,] whether shall then they go? foorth from shyre to shyre, and to be scattered thus abrode, within the Kynges maeietyes Realme, where it shall please Almighty God; and for lack of maisters, by compulsion dryuen, some of them to begge, and some to steale.

. . . thre hundred thousand persons were wont to have meate, drinke, and rayment, uprysing and down lying, paying skot and lot to God & to the Kyng. And now they haue nothynge, but goeth about in England from dore to dore, and axe theyr almose for Goddes sake. And because they will not begge, some of them doeth steale, and then they be hanged, and thus the Realm doeth decay. . . .


37 See, e.g., the following stanza of the most popular of all the goliardic lyrics, the "Vagabond's Confession," by the "Archipoeta" in *Vagabond Verse: Secular Latin Poems of the Middle Ages*, trans. Edwin W. Zeydel (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 61):
Down the highway broad I walk,
Like a youth in mind,
Implicate myself in vice,
Virtue stays behind,
Avid for the world's delight
More than for salvation,
Dead in soul, I care but for
Body's exultation.


39 Schaar, The Full-Voie'd Quire Below, 27.

40 For Mercury as god of eloquence, see Walter F. Otto, The Homeric Gods (note 6, above); for Thomas Mann's Felix Krull as the trickster/artist, see Donald Nelson, Portrait of the Artist as Hermes. A Study of Myth and Psychology in Thomas Mann's Felix Krull (University of North Carolina Press, 1971), and Alter, Rogue's Progress, 126-29.

41 This record of the performance of The Winter's Tale at the Globe on 15 May 1611 is found in Forman's manuscript The Bocke of Plaies and Notes thereof per formans for Common Pollicie. The record is printed by J. N. P. Pafford in his Arden edition of The Winter's Tale, xxi-xxii.

42 Pafford notes that "coll pixci (i.e., Colle- or Colt-pixie)" is "a hobgoblin, particularly in the form of a ragged (tattered) colt which leads horses astray into bogs, etc." (xxi). In Nimphidia: The Court of Fayrie, (published in Battaile of Agincourt, 1627, 117-34), Michael Drayton conflates the "colt-pixie" with Hobgoblin or Puck:

This Puck seemes but a dreaming dolt,
Stil walking like a ragged Colt,
And oft out of a Bush doth bolt,
Of purpose to deceive us.
And leading us makes us to stray,
Long Winters nights out of the way,
And when we stick in mire and clay,
Hob doth with laughter leave us.

(Stanza xxxvii)

43 Umberto Eco, La Struttura Assente (Milan, 1968; cited by Schaar, 17); Schaar, 17.

44 Schaar, 24.

The Winter's Tale (Vol. 45): Dreams

Ruth Nevo (essay date 1987)
In the following essay, Nevo contends that, while the traditional dramatic unities are flouted in The Winter's Tale, fantasy shapes the drama's two interrelated plots around a pair of dreams, "where one represents a terror inelegucitably realized and the other a restitutive wish-fulfillment."

Death, as we all know, is not something to be looked at in the face.

(J.-B. Pontalis)

In The Winter's Tale the once mandatory dramatic "unities"—time, place, action and motivation tumble to the ground like a house of cards. Constructed out of two antithetical parts, in two different geographical locations, it is halved in the centre by a "wide gap of time" and propelled into action by an unmotivated outburst of ruinous rage. Among other notorious oddities, such as the bear-infested but nonexistent sea-coast of Bohemia, there is a memorable rogue who accompanies the second half of the play in a way which has defeated most attempts at interpretation. These are no longer regarded as preposterous, as lapses, crudities or absurdities. The Winter's Tale is safely ensconced among the masterpieces. Yet perplexities and uneasinesses remain.

Let me make a bold foray into the thicket of The Winter's Tale. If I were asked to formulate in one short sentence the gist of what The Winter's Tale is "about" I would say the following: In The Winter's Tale a child is lost, and a lost child is found: between these extremities The Winter's Tale runs its course. And I would add that the deeply embedded inner tale is Mamillius', a "sad tale" of "sprites and goblins" and of "a man" who "dwelt by a churchyard" (II.i.25-30), which has only a beginning, and is for Hermione's ear alone.

My attempt in the following pages is to reconstruct the fantasy which, I believe, animates and unifies the play, from which it derives its power to move us, and which determines and shapes its manifest drama. The fantasy has its roots in the deepest, most archaic, and most painful of our human experiences; yet, at the same time its expression by means of formal invention and mimetic verisimilitude, its orchestration of manifold means of dramatic representation and of dramatic utterance is particularly elaborate and rich. I believe that a rereading of The Winter's Tale receptive to the resonances of deep-level fantasy can take us beyond the traditional explanatory themes which are invoked as organizers and arbiters of meaning—the seasons of great creating nature, for instance, or the miracles of a benign providence—to uncover the sources of the play's emotional power. It can also take us beyond (or at least put into brackets) the orthodox psychoanalytic explications of Leontes' sudden onset of delusional jealousy.

In its own time the play was a masterpiece, in a new and popular mode. The particular version of pastoral called tragicomedia (or, as it was sometimes called, comitragoedia) had become over the two decades preceding the composition of The Winter's Tale, one of the central projects in the Renaissance literary itinerary. It had bred, among other taxonomic peculiarities, a Latin closet drama of 1612-14 by Mario Bettini subtitled Hilarotragoedia Satyropastoralis which, besides out-Heroding Polonius, offered a smorgasbord of situations, character types, figures, topoi, and devices from the Renaissance repertory. It also developed a legitimate hybrid genre called commedia grave which was a conjunction of features from Cinthio's tragedia de lieto fin and from Arcadian comedy. Its declared intent was the mingling of hornpipes and funerals which Sidney had found so objectionable. Thus the compounding, conflating and juxtaposing of incompatible plots had become fashionable in late sixteenth-century Italy, intent upon a mannerist subversion of neoclassical rules, and an aesthetic of paradox and indeterminacy. That Shakespeare's art was affected by such trends is not in question. One recalls, among other anachronisms—English Whitsun pastoral rubbing shoulders with Greek oracles, for instance—the odd presence of Giulio Romano, Raphael's mannerist successor, at the court of Leontes, or at least within reach of Paulina's commission. As Rosalie Colie reminds us, "The Winter's Tale is
an astonishingly timely play, seen against continental preoccupations" (1974, 265). That there is a craftsman's pride in the violence with which the two halves of the play are split apart, and the cunning with which they are spliced together, as if the controlling structures of tragedy and comedy were pitted against each other and locked in mortal combat, is perhaps indicated by the third gentleman's description of Paulina in the scene of reunions: "But O! the noble combat that 'twixt joy and sorrow was fought in Paulina! She had one eye declin'd for the loss of her husband, another elevated that the oracle was fulfill'd" (V.ii.72-6). The Winter's Tale, with its twinning of genres and generations, its gap (or compression) of time, its triumphantly double resolution and its bogus miracle is a contemporary tour de force. Pauline thus described, is a bizarre emblem of the play's duality, possibly a covert plea for the audience's admiration.

How are we to respond to this hybrid form? Are we merely to applaud a triumph of conscious virtuosity? We cannot easily say whether the tragedy is embedded in the comedy or vice versa. Is Leontes' destructive aberration a wintry episode in an ongoing unending story of growth and renewal? Or is the family good fortune a happy contingency in an ongoing unending Schopenhauerian story of loss and grief? Which of these is the The Winter's Tale? "A sad tale's best for winter" (II.i.25) Mamillius tells his mother and, since he is one of the play's two casualties, his view has a certain cogency; but does he point to part or whole? The Winter's Tale, fissured by its oppositions of time, place, tempo, mood, style, mode and genre is bound by innumerable linkages and mirrorings; yet in it tragedy will not absorb or synthesize comedy, nor comedy tragedy.

The gentleman who reports on the joyful reunion between Leontes and Polixenes makes this very point, and is unable to read the signs: "There was speech in their dumbness, language in their very gesture; they look'd as they had heard of a world ransom'd, or one destroy'd" (V.ii.13-15).

The two halves of The Winter's Tale present us with a tragic structure powerfully compressed, and a recognizably familiar New Comedy in the pastoral mode which defers, but finally extends and deepens the anagnorisis. The final Act enacts a double resolution: the conflicts of both plots are defused by one and the same recognition—the discovery of the foundling Perdita—an admirable instance of the "well-tied knot" to which the writers of tragicomedies aspired, and a wish-fulfillment of the most tormenting of all human desires—to undo irreversible error.

The second part of the play, then, redeems the first, but it is also obsessively repetitious of the first, as if it were haunted by the same ghosts and goblins. New life is born in the first part and cast out to sea; new young love is born in the second, and cast out to sea, and in each case by "wintry" passions, Leontes' and Polixenes', doubles in their tyrannical ferocity as they were in their boyhood twinship. Antigonus saves an unacknowledged daughter from her father in the first part, Camillo an unrecognized son from his father in the second. The second part replays, reiterates the first in manifold ways. The triangle of the first part—Leontes, Hermione, Polixenes—is twice realigned, with intermingled variations, in the second: Leontes accuses his wife of relations with his old friend, and comes between them; or, if you will, the old friend comes between the couple. The old friend accuses his son of relations with Leontes' daughter, and comes between them; or, if you will, Hermione's daughter comes between father and son. Finally Leontes, momentarily tempted to come between his own daughter and the friend's son, sanctions their union. As James Edward Siemon puts it:

Each of the two halves of the play has a wrathful king; innocent victims; a princess slandered; a servant who serves his master's highest interests by betraying him; a kingdom without an heir or threatened with the loss of its heir; a voyage over a stormy sea; a providential revelation . . . each part has at its center two men and a woman: two "brothers" and a queen of Sicilia; father and son and a princess of Sicilia. There can be little doubt that the second part of the play represents a conscious variation on the themes and plot motives of the first. (1974, 13)
How do we respond to these obsessive doublings? The recurrences bind the contrasting structures, but they bind with a difference—as the suturing of a wound draws attention to the wound. They suggest the unstable asymmetry of a triad struggling, again and again, to right itself. The grip over our minds exerted by *The Winter's Tale* is beyond the cunning of connoisseurship or virtuosity. The play is not only a *tour de force* in contemporary dramaturgy; it is a *tour de force* in the theatre of reverie, which, . . . is the mode of Shakespearean romance. There is therefore another kind of cunning which I would wish to invoke in an account of *The Winter's Tale*: that of the most cunning of interpreters, and of his subject matter.

In his "Revision of the Theory of Dreams," collected in *New Introductory Lectures*, Freud writes:

> Franz Alexander (1925) has shown in a study on pairs of dreams that it not infrequently happens that two dreams in one night share the carrying-out of the dream's task by producing a wish-fulfilment in two stages if they are taken together, though each dream separately would not effect that result. Suppose, for instance, that the dream-wish had as its content some illicit action in regard to a particular person. Then in the first dream the person will appear undisguised, but the action will be only timidly hinted at. The second dream will behave differently. The action will be named without disguise, but the person will either be made unrecognizable or replaced by someone indifferent. This, you will admit, gives one an impression of actual cunning. Another and similar relation between the two members of a pair of dreams is found where one represents a punishment and the other the sinful wish-fulfilment. It amounts to this: "if one accepts the punishment for it, one can go on to allow oneself the forbidden thing." (1933, 56)

These remarks are extremely suggestive, though cast in terms too minatory and judgemental to be quite applicable to the eudaemonic ends of Shakespearean comedy. Freud's hypothetical case of a pair of dreams does not exactly fit the carriage of fantasy in Shakespeare's pair of interrelated plots, but his comment suggests a structural model with which to go to work. With *The Winter's Tale* in mind one would add a sentence to his: "Another and similar relation between two members of a pair of dreams is found where one represents a terror ineluctably realized and the other a restitutive wish-fulfillment." This, I shall argue, helps us to chart the trajectory of fantasy in *The Winter's Tale* and enables us to account for and respond to its particular force.

The text obtrudes its contradictory double nature from the very beginning. The prologue scene imparts preliminary information about the two kings' friendship, but the exchange of courtesies between Camillo and Archidamus is riddled by ambiguities—a palimpsest whose ulterior meanings subvert or nullify the decorous overt intention. "If you shall chance, Camillo, to visit Bohemia, on the like occasion whereon my services are now on foot, you shall see (as I have said) great difference betwixt our Bohemia and your Sicilia" (I.i. 1-4); "We will give you sleepy-drinks, that your senses (unintelligent of our insufficience) may, though they cannot praise us, as little accuse us" (13-16); "You pay a great deal too dear for what's given freely" (17-8); Sicilia and Bohemia "were train'd together in their childhoods; and there rooted betwixt them then such an affection, which cannot choose but branch now" (22-4). Benignly horticultural, the branch—metaphor for flourishing growth—is itself also a metaphor for parting and division; and the image, rebuslike, conceals (or does not conceal) the ubiquitous Elizabethan cuckold's horns. The euphuistic description of the two kings' friendship contains its own antithesis: "they have seem'd to be together, though absent; shook hands, as over a vast; and embrac'd as it were from the ends of oppos'd winds" (29-33). It is totally reversible, indeterminately an affirmation of their togetherness when apart, or their estrangement even when together. These double, or treble, entendres in which the two possibilities, the idyllic and the catastrophic, coexist reflect the larger structure of the play and of Leontes' dilemma. The rhetoric of courtesy slyly rehearses it seems, the entire ensuing drama.
In the grand opening scene too, Polixenes' "Nine changes of the wat'ry star" (I.ii.1) refers ostensibly to the
duration of his absence from Bohemia. But the presence on stage of Leontes' pregnant queen ineluctably fills,
so to speak, the semantic space, and magnetizes, or sexualizes, in consequence the entire subsequent text:
"Without a burthen," "filled up," "standing in rich place," "what may chance/Or breed," "to tire your royalty"
to weary you? to wear your robes? to prey upon you?). If the unconscious is structured like a language, in
Lacan's famous apothegm, this language certainly seems to be structured like an unconscious, in which the
benign and the threatening are held in contradictory suspension. What are we to make of this unruly text
which seems to be constructing its own counterplot in defiance of any narrative logic? For on the face of it, in
the prologue the courtiers are merely exchanging prefatory courtesies. In Act I, scene ii Polixenes is politely
refusing his friend's pressing hospitality. Equivocation in the dialogue with Leontes must surely undermine
the speaker's own purpose, for Polixenes would be unlikely to be interested in insinuating into his host's mind
suspicions of a liaison with the latter's wife, should there have been any such. Does Leontes hear what we
hear? Does he hear what we are not supposed, as it were, to hear? Or are we privy to a communication neither
of the protagonists hear?

William H. Matchett provides an ingenious answer:

The language, no less than Hermione, is pregnant. Hermione, we are by now convinced, is
accustomed to using more warmth with Polixenes. It is true that we must later discover that
we were wrong, that this was all innocent, but Shakespeare's dramatic method here is first to
mislead us in order to hasten the process of misleading Leontes. He has in fact misled us
twice; first in scene i by preparing us for innocent friendship and now in scene ii by
presenting an image of guilt where there is in fact innocence. (1969, 96, and passim)

Matchett fails to explain, however, why it is the manifest meaning, the "innocent" meaning that is operative in
the prologue scene whereas in scene ii he claims priority for the innuendo—the "guilty" meaning. By line 77
Polixenes' "Temptations have since been born to's," ostensibly an elegiac lament for the passing of childhood
innocence, we hear, Matchett is persuaded, "a sophisticated understatement shared with Hermione and the
audience behind Leontes' back" (97), and by this time "we would be wondering when Leontes will face what
is going on." Similarly, Hermione's

Th'offenses we have made you do we'll answer,
If you first sinn'd with us

(I.ii.83-4)

is not, according to Matchett, to be read as a confidant disavowal but, with the accent upon "first," as a sly
confession. Shakespeare's "masterful manipulation," in Matchett's reading, causes us to become suspicious
long before Leontes does. We should feel, he says, not that Leontes is too rapidly jealous, but that he has been
very slow about it. And the point? If we ourselves have been led to mistake innocence for guilt, how can we
entirely blame Leontes?

M. Mahood, who preceded Matchett in the study of the ambiguities, disagrees:

It is possible, of course, to read long-standing suspicion into all Leontes' speeches to
Polixenes and Hermione, from the first appearance of the three characters. But this impairs
the dramatic contrast between the happiness and harmony of the three characters when
Polixenes has agreed to stay, and Leontes' subsequent outburst of passion ("Too hot, too
hot"). . . . a sudden outburst of normally suppressed feelings, which struggle for their release
in savage wordplay." ((1957) 1971, 348)
However, she, intent upon evidence of a wise Shakespearean tolerance of inexplicable human frailty, does not explain why there should have been such an outburst. Both these astute Empsonians construe univocally, in terms of their differing interpretative purposes, the entire string of comments with which Leontes punctuates his wife's persuasion of Polixenes, although at any point in the series ("Tongue-tied, our Queen? (27), "Well said, Hermione" (33), "Is he won yet?" (86), and "At my request he would not./Hermione, my dearest, thou never spok'st/To better purpose" (87-9)) either a generous and gracious innocence or a dissimulated but tormenting suspicion might be what is signified.

Let us attempt to relocate Leontes within the linguistic web of this scene. The undertones in Polixenes' "nine changes" speech cannot, with any dramatic feasibility, incriminate Polixenes, but they can be heard by Leontes with certain triggering effects. The mere reference to the number nine, Freud noted, "whatever its connection, directs our attention to the phantasy of pregnancy" ("A Seventeenth Century Demonological Neurosis" (1923) SE.XIX,93). This is a useful reminder, for if we read the resonances of the "nine months" speech as pointing towards Leontes' fantasy rather than as incriminating Polixenes, we then are enabled to perceive that a certain anxiety attends the fact, in itself, of his wife's condition. Polixenes has left his throne without a burden, he says. For Leontes "burden" may well evoke the thought of that with which his own throne is "filled up." In the ambivalence of "to tire your royalty," the hint of succession is subverted by the simultaneous hint of usurpation. If Leontes is reading himself in Polixenes' text, then "like a cipher standing in rich place" (L.ii.6-7) succinctly suggests the nothingness, the emptiness of exclusion from a once experienced plenitude. Our third ear, moreover, catches a disturbing note in both Hermione's exchanges with her husband. It is not perhaps Hermione's most felicitous move to offer to allow Leontes to overstay as long as a whole month in Bohemia should the occasion arise, and with the assurance: "yet, good deed, Leontes,/I love thee not a jar o'th'clock behind/What lady she her lord" (42-4). Any lady? Whatever lady you care to mention? It is an oddly noncommittal claim, surely, but worse is to follow:

What? have I twice said well? When was't before? . . .
But once before I spoke to th'purpose? when?
Nay, let me hav't; I long.

(89-101)

This is spoken jestingly, of course, but it is not unknown for jests to be used to camouflage resentments. Neither Leontes' description of the "three crabbed months" which soured themselves to death before Hermione's "I am yours forever" was uttered, nor his pointed reference to his dagger, muzzled "Lest it should bite its master, and so prove,/As ornament oft does, too dangerous" (157-8) do much to mitigate the impression we might receive of a couple in considerable marital stress, if not positive crisis.

It is in this context that Polixenes describes a nostalgic fantasy of perfect unity, when he and Leontes were as "twinn'd lambs, that did frisk i'th'sun,/And bleat the one at th'other" exchanging "innocence for innocence" (67-9). The yearning is for the timeless—"Two lads that thought . . . to be boy eternal" (63-65)—and, significantly, the speechless: for a moment, known in infancy and long since lost, of undifferentiated oneness with another being. Hermione, jesting, provokes the insertion into the scene of the mutations, the deprivations, of time—"By this we gather/You have tripp'd since" (75-6). Polixenes' reply is fervent:

O my most sacred lady,
Temptations have since then been born to's: for
In those unfledg'd days was my wife a girl;
Your precious self had then not cross'd the eyes
Of my young playfellow

(76-9)
hers is flippant:

Grace to boot!
Of this make no conclusion, lest you say
Your queen and I are devils. Yet go on,
Th'offenses we have made you do we'll answer,
If you first sinn'd with us.

(80-4)

and Leontes' entire string of comments, as we have seen, is opaquely ambiguous until his explicit. "Too hot, too hot!" (108):

I have tremor cordis on me; my heart dances,
But not for joy; not joy. This entertainment
May a free face put on, derive a liberty
From heartiness, from bounty, fertile bosom,
And well become the agent; 't may, I grant.
But to be paddling palms and pinching fingers,
As now they are, and making practic'd smiles
As in a looking glass; and then to sigh, as 'twere
The mort o'th'deer—O, that is entertainment
My bosom likes not, nor my brows.
Mamillius, Art thou my boy? . . .
How now, you wanton calf, Art thou my calf?

(110-20, 126)

Leontes' torment is felt and uttered first as a problem of doubt, of what he can know, be sure of, in respect of his wife's fidelity, and subsequently as conviction of her sexual betrayal, but the question of adultery, we are enabled to perceive, is a mask, or a defence against a breach in his certainty which lies far deeper, in infantile fears of isolation, separation and abandonment. Leontes has been (visibly) separated, isolated, by the tête-à-tête between Hermione and Polixenes, especially by the intimacies of the twinned lambs exchange; but he has already been separated or isolated by Hermione's new intimacy with her unborn child. That it is by the archaic rage of a sibling rivalry for an undivided mother that he is overthrown is perhaps confirmed later by the ferocious violence with which he would consign the babe (and its mother) to the flames, in Act II, scene iii, would see it "commit[ted] to the fire" (96); "I'll ha'thee burned" (114); "Better burn it now" (156).

It is the ancient loss, I believe the play tells us, that lies at the root of Leontes' seizure. There is, we are told, in every delusion a grain of truth. Hermione does betray Leontes, with her children, and it is the repetition of that maternal betrayal which is displaced upon the supposed adulterers, doubly determined figures in the primal drama. If we take a cue from psychoanalytic theory it is in such primal drama that all tragedy is rooted, and from its unassuaged pain that theatre-going draws its appeal. Leontes himself sets up the structure of a fantasied primal scene, in which he is the excluded third, spying, watching, testing, angling—"I am angling now. /Though you perceive me not how I give line. . . . How she holds up the neb, the bill to him!"
(I.ii.180-3)—trapping Hermione in a double bind: "How thou lov'st us, show in our brother's welcome" (174). If she is cold she will appear an uncompliant and disobedient wife; if warm, a self-betraying adulteress; she cannot win, nor does he wish her to win, for beneath the available postures of patriarchal male jealousy ("Should all despair /That have revolted wives, the tenth of mankind /Would hang themselves" (188-200) and "Go play, boy, play. Thy mother plays, and I /Play too, but so disgrac'd a part, whose issue /Will hiss me to my grave; contempt and clamor /Will be my knell" (187-9)) lies the threat that is the greater because it is
unknown. "Gone already" (185) on the face of it refers to the speed with which Hermione and Polixenes vanish together into the garden, but its resonance surely comes from an absence long ago experienced.

Ostensibly Leontes' questioning of Mamillius' likeness to himself expresses a worry about his paternity of the boy, but if this were really so, surely the answer would not be so insistently affirmative. What does he seek as he gazes into the face of his son, his "sweet villain," flesh of his flesh? It is a "copy" of his own—they are "almost as like as eggs" (note the image of symbiotic enclosure and totality) though it is false women who say so (122-36, passim). It is the paternity, after all, of the second child, not of Mamillius, that has been, if it has, placed in doubt. It is that imminent interloper who has reawakened the archaic loss, the archaic grief and rage, has made Leontes, at this moment, a replaced, or supplanted child, reliving the anguish of the mother's betrayal.

Dissimulating his agitation Leontes avows the "folly" of his "tenderness" for Mamillius:

Looking on the lines
Of my boy's face, methoughts I did recoil
Twenty-three years, and saw myself unbreech'd,
In my green velvet coat . . .
How like (methought) I then was to this kernel,
This squash, this gentleman. Mine honest friend,
Will you take eggs for money?

(153-61)

We recall "We are almost as like as eggs" a few moments before, so that it is possible to interpret the question as a pained recognition of the illusoriness (as against the reality of money) of the unity-in-identity, the existential certainty that he had longed to find, if not in the mother, then at least in the mirror of his son's "welkin eye" (136). Then he turns to Polixenes with a question for his "brother": "Are you so fond of your young prince as we/Do seem to be of ours?" (163-4); and receives the expected tenderly affectionate reply:

If at home, sir,
He's all my exercise, my mirth, my matter;
Now my sworn friend, and then mine enemy;
My parasite, my soldier, statesman, all.
He makes a July's day short as December,
And with his varying childhood, cures in me
Thoughts that would thick my blood.

(165-71)

It is worth pausing a moment over that reply. Why would one wish a long summer day to be as short as a winter one? On the face of it Polixenes is describing childish games—he is a father who enjoys playing cowboys and Indians or cops and robbers with his young son—but can we ignore the subversive connotations of "enemy," of "parasite," above all of the strange inversion of July and December? The game itself acts out subliminal hostilities. Thoughts that would thick the blood are indeed soothed, stilled, by the charm of a child but the child is also a threat, a supplanter, a usurper. The face that is his own will one day efface his own. Leontes hears what we hear and replies, "So stands this squire officed with me" (172-3). The strange double message of Polixenes reflects, then, an emotion shared by these two twinned figures, and enables us to take a further step in the understanding of Leontes.
Leontes’ passionate cleaving to the boy is rooted in identification—they are both ousted rivals for the mother’s love—but it is also traversed by the deeper, unrecognized source of dread. He sees himself in Mamillius: the child in himself, his double (154-5), but he also sees his successor, and his death. Later, we recall, he cannot bear Paulina’s insistence upon the new-born baby’s resemblance to himself.

It becomes of the greatest interest to follow the course of Leontes’ struggle against the upsurge of a turbulence which threatens to overthrow him, his half-aware struggle to maintain a foothold in reality:

Come, sir page . . .
Most dear’st, my collop! Can thy dam?—may’t be?
Affection! thy intention stabs the centre.
Thou dost make possible things not so held
Communicat’st with dreams (how can this be?),
With what’s unreal thou co-active art,
And fellow’st nothing. Then ’tis very credent
Thou mayst co-join with something, and thou dost
(And that beyond commission), and I find it
(And that to the infection of my brains
And hard’ning of my brows).

(135-46)

This speech has been much commented upon. I think we can best understand it as exhibiting the moment of the switch-over in Leontes’ thinking from the rational procedures of reality testing to the autistic, associational imagery of the primary processes, the imagery produced by the self’s inner needs and dreads. It is his last bulwark. Henceforth ratiocination itself will be flooded by fantasy, saturated by an influx of representations welling up from the depths of the mind, eluding all attempts at repression. If "affection" is glossed, as it often is, to refer to Hermione’s alleged aberrant passion, which stabs to the very center of Leontes’ (or the world’s) being, the rest of the speech becomes extremely obscure; but suppose we read it as a rearguard action, so to speak, half in sight, half in blindness, of a mind on the very brink of a self-induced, defensive delusion? "Affection" then is his own jealousy, which, seeking confirmation in reality has found, "communicat[ing] with dreams . . . with what’s unreal," only that which feeds its flames. What if these intuitions do indeed stab the center, the bull’s eye? The acknowledged power of fantasy to find a bush a bear now presents itself as doubly forceful confirmation of its divinatory powers when the bush really is a bear! Caught in these toils this Shakespearean snowman experiences the

intricate evasions of as,
In things seen and unseen, created from nothingness . . .
The heavens, the hells, the worlds, the longed for lands

and totally embraces the fiction which protects him, with the possessive masculine postures available to him in his society, from the deeper vulnerability, the unrecognized source of dread. Hence, in the flood of obscene images which follows, birth and copulation, entry and exit are scarcely to be distinguished.

Gone already!
Inch-thick, knee-deep, o’er head and ears a
forked one! . . .
And many a man there is (even at this present, 
Now, while I speak this) holds his wife by th'arm, 
That little thinks she has been sluic'd in's absence, 
And his pond fish'd by his next neighbor—by 
Sir Smile, his neighbor. Nay, there's comfort in't, 
Whiles other men have gates, and those gates open'd, 
As mine, against their will. . . . 
Be it concluded, 
No barricado for a belly. Know't, 
It will let in and out the enemy, 
With bag and baggage.

(I.ii.185-206, passim)

Earlier, in the exchange with Mamillius on the need to be "neat" the threat of the primary process image-language of dream is still under control, though the pressure of its metaphors to subsume reality is formidably great:

Come, captain, 
We must be neat; not neat, but cleanly, captain: 
And yet the steer, the heifer, and the calf 
Are all call'd neat.—Still virginalling 
Upon his palm? How now, you wanton calf, 
Art thou my calf? . . . 
Thou want'st a rough pash and the shoots that I have 
To be full like me

(122-9)

Now his world is a bestiary: "How she holds up the neb! the bill to him!" (183). Now Leontes is entirely at the mercy of his fantasy, as if the whole lexis is alive with pointing fingers, or with poisoned arrows. Every world of Camillo in the dialogue between them at once inflames his imagination and provides proof positive for his conviction: "You had much ado to make his anchor hold/When you cast out it still came home" (213-14); "Satisfy/Th'entreaties of your mistress? Satisfy?/Let that suffice" (233-5; my italics). Hermione is a "hobbyhorse . . . rank as any flax-wench" (276-7); were her liver as infected as her life, "she would not live/The running of one glass" (304-6). In his persuasion of Camillo fantasy positively parades itself, ostentatiously, as reality-testing, but reality is no longer separable from image:

Is whispering nothing? 
Is leaning cheek to cheek? is meeting noses? 
Kissing with inside lip? stopping the career 
Of laughter with a sigh . . . 
horsing foot on foot? 
Skulking in corners? wishing clocks more swift? 
Hours, minutes? noon, midnight? and all eyes 
Blind with the pin and web but theirs . . . 
Is this nothing? 
Why then the world and all that's in't is nothing, 
The covering sky is nothing, Bohemia nothing, 
My wife is nothing, nor nothing have these nothings, 
If this be nothing.
Rhetorically, the figure he employs is an apodiosis, the indignant rejection of an argument as impertinent or absurdly false (Lanham, 1968, 13), but the ratiocinative appeal to items of evidence virtually conjures an act of intercourse into being. The body imagery, progressing from cheeks, noses, inside lip, horsing foot on foot, to the metaphorically sexual pin and web, and the "covering" sky, exacerbates an inflamed imagination, verbally creates the coupling that he imagines watching, that we imagine watching with him.

This "everything" with which Leontes now fills his dreadfully experienced nothingness (we recall "a cipher standing in rich place" (6-7)) denudes and impoverishes him, diminishes his very being—he is a "pinch'd thing" (51)—while it fills him with a sexual revulsion which the rhetoric of rational argumentation, again, to Camillo, ignites, rather than defuses. The metaphor of a soiled name collapses into the literality of a soiled bed, repulsive, loathsome:

Dost think I am so muddy, so unsettled,
To appoint myself in this vexation, sully
The purity and whiteness of my sheets
(Which to preserve is sleep, which being spotted
Is goads, thorns, nettles, tails of wasps)

Antigonus, whose rhetoric of denial echoes and aggravates his master's—if Hermione is "honor-flawed" he will "geld" his daughters (II.i.145, 147)—is rebuked for lacking just such enflamed—enlightened!—"seeing" as "communicat'st with dreams, with what's unreal": "You smell this business with a sense as cold/As is a dead man's nose; but I do see't, and feel't" (151-2). Leontes has seen the spider in the cup, and "cracks his gorge, his sides/With violent hefts" (44-5), vomiting what he drinks.

What the play has exhibited is the process of self-entrapment whereby a deeply confused, insecure and unhappy man enmeshes himself in the web that he spins to defend himself from thoughts that lie too deep for knowledge. The force and vividness with which primary process imagery invades the mind and speech of Leontes make him an astonishingly realistic, individualized figure. We can be lured into reacting to "him" as not merely realistic, but virtually real. Yet he is a fabrication, an epiphenomenon of the text. "What does Leontes want?" we ask, inducting ourselves into an invented mind as we simultaneously watch the manner of its invention. "What does Leontes want?" is thus, strictly speaking, a rhetorical question. What Leontes, or any textual personage wants is what we ourselves could conceivably want were our world constructed out of the same set of displaced signifiers. What Leontes wants is what we discover to be comformable, as we adjust empathetic introspection to the text's evocations, its figures, its twists and turns, its insistences, its peculiarities, with a meaningful scheme of things. Clues to that meaningful scheme of things we find wherever we can—in the language that we share with the Shakespearean personae, in the language that we no longer share with the Shakespearean personae, but that has to be reexplicated, in the language of symbols which is a remarkably tenacious subdivision of the shared language.

Spider venom, folklore informs us, is effective only if seen when the cup is drained. Leontes' metaphor for the curse of knowledge comes from this source. Spiders, psychoanalytic lore informs us, unconsciously symbolize devouring mother imagos; but in whose unconscious? Leontes'? Shakespeare's? The reader's? The fact that just that metaphor occurs at this point is surely interesting, and I offer it as a test case for the usefulness of the portmanteau notion of a textual unconscious, which, in terms of the Lacanian ellipse, includes the circuit from author to reader via the fictional persona who is no more than a synecdoche—a part standing for the whole of the textual transaction.
Our understanding of the fixation which will give Leontes no peace until it has compelled him to its own recognition is further advanced in the next phase of the play. Act II opens with Hermione, nearing her time and understandably bothered by her lively young son. "Take the boy to you; he so troubles me, Tis past enduring," she says (II.i.1). Her ladies, and the precocious Mamillius, who, we note, doesn't want to be treated "as if I were a baby still" (5), amuse themselves happily enough with reciprocal teasing, but there has been a rejection; and whatever wounded feelings we may impute to Mamillius can hardly be said to be mollified by the first lady's deliberate provocation "we shall/Present our services to a fine new prince/One of these days," says the First Lady, "and then you'll wanton with us, If we would have you" (16-19). The episode ends with renewed intimacy, out of earshot of the "cricket" ladies, between Mamillius and his mother, now recovered. A momentary maternal rejection, a provocation to sibling jealousy, a child's game effort to master fear with a story—this utterly ordinary little nursery scene has effectively reminded us of the griefs and losses that haunt the minds of children like the very sprites and goblins in Mamillius' tale; and it throws a melancholy light upon Leontes' breakdown.

What Leontes sees is the intimate communion of mother and son, Hermione and the boy with the mother-like name, from which he in his isolation is excluded, as he believed he was at the beginning, as Mamillius has just been. There is certainly no sport in his savage "Give me the boy. I am glad you did not nurse him . . . Away with him! and let her sport herself/With that she's big with" (56-9, passim). Leontes is now a man driven by an unassuagable rage, defended only by the revengeful jealousy to which he clings, which he will not relinquish and from which he will not emerge until he has cast out. his new-born infant to well-nigh certain destruction, received the news of Mamillius' death and, in effect, hounded Hermione to hers.

It is the news of Mamillius' death that brings him to his senses, releases him from the grip of the fantasy which the sexual jealousy masks. The key to that deepest level fantasy is to be found in Leontes' reiterated "nothing" in the speech quoted above. What the speech contends is that the evidence of Hermione's infidelity is so palpable as to be impossible to ignore. Its rhetorical form is the setting out of an impossible postulate: if whispering, etc. is nothing, then nothing is anything; but the ulterior meaning of these frenetically iterated "nothings" is best understood as a rhetorical barricade against the admission of that which "has already been experienced"—I take the phrase from D.W. Winnicott's account of the "fear of breakdown" (1974, 104). "There are moments," he writes, "when a patient needs to be told that the breakdown, a fear of which destroys his or her life, has always already been." It is something the ego is unable to encompass because it is unthinkable: "a fear of the original agony which caused the defence . . . a fact that is carried round hidden away in the unconscious." Leontes' sense of nothingness, of emptiness, of annihilation is exactly that state which "cannot be remembered except by being experienced for the first time now." What we cannot remember we are forced to repeat, as we know. The death of the child who is Leontes', who is Leontes, following the abandonment of the other child that he feared, is thus the terror, the unthinkable agony, which is experienced "for the first time now."

Winnicott's insight illuminates to perfection the plight of Leontes, the backward drift which the tragic part of The Winter's Tale articulates. The nightmare of the child's death realizes the terror of a child's death which has already been, which has always already been, for Leontes as for Everyman. It is because that dread resonates with our own most primal fears that we yield with such pleasure to the counterfantasy of the pastoral in Act IV, the transition to which, however, must first engage our attention.

The central scene of Act III, and of the play, is the great scene of the trial in which Leontes arraigns his Queen in a travesty of the justice he invokes. The scene shows Leontes totally isolated, and imprisoned, in his wounded narcissism. She is dignified, noble, abused as wife, as mother, as daughter ("The Emperor of Russia was my father. O, that he were alive, and here beholding/His daughter's trial" (III.ii.119-20)) by this unleashed male aggression. He is omnipotent, punitive, persecutory; she defenceless, deprived of her children, dragged from her prison childbed. "Sir," she says,
You speak a language that I understand not.
My life stands in the level of your dreams,
Which I'll lay down.

(80-2)

One of the remarkable features of *The Winter's Tale* is the degree of unaware awareness with which its characters are endowed. We have already heard Leontes struggling, half-knowingly, with his own conflicting modes of cognition. Now his scathingly scornful reply, ironically affirming what it denies, causes one to shudder at the identity of rhetorical denial with its unconscious counterpart:

Your actions are my dreams.
You had a bastard by Polixenes,
And I but dreamt it.

(82-4)

In terms of formal tragedy the scene enacts both reversal and recognition. Its action is the inevitable issues of choices already made—the culmination of error—and results in the ironically irreversible fatality which marks the midpoints of Shakespeare's tragic structures. Hermione, blameless, is condemned, but the oracle justifies her. The oracle is read but its message defied. Mamillius' death—immediate nemesis—is announced, Hermione collapses and to the now heartstruck Leontes is brought the news of her death. Leontes is led away to his sorrows, but we do not witness his terrible remorse. The play, as we know, will swerve away from tragic closure into the luxury of a dream of undoing, but the passage from nightmare to dream is mediated by another death.

Since *Measure for Measure* Shakespeare has bettered his instruction in the art of tragi-comic conjunction. In *Measure for Measure* the genre shift occurs abruptly, at the height of the crisis of Act III, with an unprecedented change of style, diction and mode. In *The Winter's Tale*, Act III, the Act which at once opens the breach between its two localities and bridges them, obtrudes its intermediary function, achieving a remarkable chiastic interlocking, both formal and symbolic. Act III consists of three scenes symmetrically divided to form a triptych. The two flanking scenes suggest the two antagonistic drives which tragicomedy commingles, each representing a landscape of the mind appropriate to the two opposed halves of the play. For Cleomenes and Dion on their way back from the oracle the climate is "delicate, the air most sweet,/Fertile the isle" (III.i.1-2); the sacrifice was "ceremonious, solemn, and unearthly" (7), their journey "rare, pleasant, speedy" (14). This scenic symbolism suggests the landscape of a mind whole and at peace. In extreme contrast with the benign and sensuous serenity of this *locus amoenus*, a maternal body, is the "savage clamor" (III.iii.56) of the Bohemian coast where Antigonus lands with his charge. Scene iii recounts the fate of the "poor souls" aboard Antigonus' ship, and of Antigonus himself, against a seascape ruinous, disintegrated and chaotic: "I am not to say it is a sea, for it is now the sky; betwixt the firmament and it you cannot thrust a bodkin's point. . . . how it chafes, how it rages . . . now the ship boring the moon with her mainmast, and anon swallow'd with yeast and froth, as you'd thrust a cork into a hogshead. And then for the land-service, to see how the bear tore out his shoulder bone, how he cried to me for help . . . how the sea flap-dragon'd it . . . how the poor souls roar'd, and the sea mock'd them; and how the poor gentleman roar'd, and the bear mock'd him, both roaring louder than the sea or weather. . . . I have not wink'd since I saw these sights. The men are not yet cold under water, nor the bear half din'd on the gentleman" (87-106, passim). The clown's imagery grotesquely mingles pity and terror, records dismemberment with a cannibalistic detachment, condenses orgasm and death-throe. Where the temperate climate of Cleomenes evokes a longed-for restitution still to come, this chaotic seascape figures the break-down already undergone.
The ambassadors to the oracle in scene i, certain of Hermione's innocence, anticipated rescue and remedy, yet catastrophe occurred; the Bohemian shepherd who rescues the abandoned babe has no doubt about ill-doing: "Though I am not bookish, yet I can read waiting-gentlewoman in the scape. This has been some stair-work, some trunk-work, some behind-doorwork," he says (72, 73), yet he is the agent of deliverance. The babe is rescued and the treasure found, to the haunting rhythm of the shepherd's "thou met'st with things dying, I with things new-born" (113-14), as the play moves into its remedial phase, accompanied by the pitiful and pitying figure of Hermione in Antigonus' strange vision.

Antigonus' gruesome death and his vision have puzzled many commentators. "Shakespeare's solution," says Tillyard, referring to the problem of transition from the tragic to the pastoral, "is to drive the tortured world of Leontes and Hermione to a ridiculous extreme in Antigonus' vision. In so doing he really puts an end to it" ((1938), in Kermode (1938, 78)). There is nothing ridiculous, I submit, in Antigonus' powerful soliloquy as he deposits the babe on the Bohemian shore. It is a premonition of his own death—he will never see his wife again—and the account of an hallucination. It records an experience truly uncanny:

I have heard (but not believed) the spirits o'th'dead
May walk again. If such thing be, thy mother
Appear'd to me last night; for ne'er was dream
So like a waking. To me comes a creature,
Sometimes her head on one side, some another—
I never saw a vessel of like sorrow,
So fill'd, and so becoming

(III.iii.16-22)

Antigonus himself is in doubt about the status of his vision, uncertain whether he has dreamed a dream or seen a ghost. He settles, with somewhat anachronist Protestant scepticism, for the ghost theory—"for this once, yea superstitiously" (40)—he believes that "this was so, and no slumber" (39). We may recognize hallucination (for which there was as yet no word available in Shakespeare's vocabulary) but what, we must ask, is its function in the drama.

In accordance with the principles of splitting and replication in dramatic (and dream) representation when psychic burdens become too heavy to be borne, Antigonus, I suggest, is a part of the Leontes persona. Counterpart to Paulina, who is an externalized conscience to Leontes throughout, he is the latter's destructive, ambivalent will in the abandonment of the babe. He has already echoed Leontes' violent, reflex misogyny (he would "geld" his daughters should Hermione prove false, we recall). The oscillation in his view of women as either ideal or animal represents the ferocious need of the frail masculine ego for a feminine ideal which will defend it against Oedipal anxieties. He has born the brunt of Leontes' projective accusation regarding his emasculated dependency upon his "Dame Partlet." The apparition he experiences is an angelic suffering figure, who was nevertheless, he is persuaded, guilty, and therefore justly punished. Leontes' secret sharer, he thus reflects the violent psychic split which was his master's; and suffers his retributory death as scapegoat for the latter's guilt. If his vision represents, in already fading retrospect, the precedent split in Leontes, Antigonus' behavior prefigures the reparative renewal of tenderness, of compassion—"Blossom, speed thee well" (III.iii.46) which will take the place of the flaying self-punishment Leontes embraces at the end of the trial scene. A similar transition is adumbrated by Paulina when, following her

O thou tyrant . . .
A thousand knees,
Ten thousand years together, naked, fasting,
Upon a barren mountain, and still winter
In storm perpetual, could not move the gods
To look that way thou wert

(III.ii.207-14)

she is moved to pity him.

In both the tragic Shakespearean form and the comic, the penultimate Act plays with remedy. In tragedy possible remedies (like the return of Cordelia in Lear) are, so to speak, offered, only to be snatched away, terribly, by the onward momentum of the consequences of previous fatal errors. In comedy remedy, the absent identity, or person, or information required to solve the errors and conflicts which in the play's center come to an impasse is found, or begins to be found. In The Winter's Tale this is indeed the case, except that disaster, for Leontes, has already happened, and that this "remedy," the finding and eventual recovery of Perdita, is given an entire expanded, separate comic plot of its own, which, however, reproduces, as it were, compulsively, the plot which fathers it.

The play's structure of duplications allows for complex reevaluations, as samenesses and differences are simultaneously taken in. As has been pointed out, the second part reiterates the first. It repeats the story of rupturing, envious jealousy, of fear of usurpation, with Polixenes doubling for Leontes, Florizel for his father Polixenes, and Perdita for her mother Hermione. Polixenes' disavowal of his previous approval of the marriage of "a gentler scion to the wildest stock" (IV.iv.93) when his own posterity is at issue is as violent as the flare-up in Leontes of a possessive and dispossessed rage. Polixenes' ferocity is partly conventional—expected in a New Comedy senex—as is Florizel's unfilial indifference: "One being dead," he says, "I shall have more than you can dream of yet" (387-8); and in reply to the question whether he has a father, and whether his father knows of his betrothal, his cavalier reply is: "I have; but what of him? . . . He neither does, nor shall" (392-3). Partly, at least, the generational conflict serves as a recurrence and confirmation of the usurpation theme in the first part of the play.

Yet, as indeed the play informed us in its first lines: "If you shall chance, Camillo, to visit Bohemia, on the like occasion whereon my services are now on foot, you shall see (as I have said) great difference betwixt our Bohemia and your Sicilia" (I.i.1-4). The Winter's Tale realizes its dream of a second chance in Bohemia, through its second generation, as well as its second genre. New life means new possibilities, new comprehensions, new solutions. In Bohemia, the generational conflict is acted out overtly, in its own terms and without dissimulation. The desires of the young lovers in Bohemia are not undermined by the grip of archaic fears, by the drift back into the claustral recesses of the mind: "I was not much afeard," says Perdita, despite the dire threats of Polixenes,

for once or twice
I was about to speak, and tell him plainly
The self-same sun that shines upon his court
Hides not his visage from our cottage, but
Looks on alike.

(IV.iv.443-6)

And Florizel is "but sorry, not afeard" (463) as he renounces "succession" to be "heir to [his] affection" (480-1).

The green world in The Winter's Tale is a return, not of an unreconstructed childhood but to a childhood—a fantasied (benign) childhood, where fathers are good shepherds, and children unthreatened, and therefore unafraid—restitutive, rather than exorcist in its emotional effect. The sprites and goblins of Mamillius' sad tale have been exorcized, violently, in the first part of the play. In the wide gap of time, off stage, expiation is
undergone by the absent Leontes, mourning his losses. What the play's dreaming tells us is that expiation, self-condemnation, is not enough. If consciousness is not irradiated by a knowledge of what could constitute a transcendence both of isolation and of fusion, a harmony of needs, mutual recognition, freely expressed desire, no reparation, or rehabilitation, or renewal will take place. It is this possibility of a different outcome that the pastoral fantasy of Florizel and Perdita, most eudaemonic of Shakespeare's green worlds, opens up. Nobody, perhaps, puts it better than the shepherd:

He says he loves my daughter.
I think so too; for never gaz'd the moon
Upon the water as he'll stand and read
As 'twere my daughter's eyes.

(171-4)

What Perdita says with flowers undoes courtly duplicity without foregoing courtesy, as she tactfully adjusts her floral offerings to her guests, or rather to the age her guests would like to think they belong to, while nevertheless stubbornly maintaining her position regarding gillyvors. The flowers mesh into a Renaissance debate about art and nature (read: culture and heredity) which is relevant to the question of a Queen of curds and cream, but they are richly symbolic in other ways too. They mediate the passage from winter to spring by themselves moving, so to speak, backwards through the seasons: Perdita begins with the offering of rosemary and rue which last through the winter, attempts to mollify Polixenes' response to the gift of wintry flowers with an emphasis on the present autumn season, "not yet on summer's death, nor on the birth/Of trembling winter" (80-1), negotiates the gillyvors hurdle triumphantly with the lavender, mint, savory, marjoram and marigold "of middle summer" (107) and only then turns to Florizel with the famous lyrical invocation of the flowers of the spring, and of Persephone. Perdita's mythopoeia conjugates erotic awakening with seasonal rebirth, moving from the virgin branches, Proserpina's fallen flowers, the daffodils that take the winds of March with beauty, the dim, sweet eyelids of Juno, Cytherea's breath, the pathos of primroses "that die unmarried ere they can behold/Bright Phoebus in his strength," to the frankly phallic "bold oxsips" and "crown imperial" (118-26) and the final routing of Thanatos:

No, like a bank for Love to lie and play on;
Not like a corse; or if, not to be buried,
But quick and in my arms.

(130-2)

The separate Perdita story is a chapter in the Greek romance narrative of long-lost children, family vicissitudes and family reunions, but it is also a recognizable Terentian comedy with all the formulaic constituents: a foundling, a casket to provide identification when required, a high-born lover in disguise on account of parental disapproval, the fortunate disclosure not only of a desirable identity for the girl, but positively of her own lost parents, and the restoration of amity both within and between the families concerned. It even has a tricky servant to negotiate the errors, mishaps, and mistaken identities of the comic plot in which young lovers outwit or evade parental disapproval. But has it?

Autolycus has been Florizel's servant, we learn, but is no longer, though we are not told why he is "out of service" (IV.iii.14). He is now in business on his own but nevertheless it is he who exchanges clothes with Florizel so that his may provide the prince with a further disguise for his escape with Perdita from the wrath of Polixenes. Later, removing another piece of disguise, his peddler's beard, for the purpose, he becomes ambassador from Perdita's shepherd father to Polixenes to whom the bundle is to be shown, thus proving the shepherd adoptive father only and so saving him from retribution for his adopted daughter's fatal charms. This is a con, however, and instead of conducting the shepherd-with-bundle to Polixenes' court, he conducts him to
his former master's escape ship, wondering, reprobate that he is, how it is that Fortune insists upon tempting him into "honesty" do what he will. (IV.iv.831). These machinations of Autolycus in fact delay the discovery of the bundle's contents, so that the secret remains undiscovered until the shepherd carries his fardel to Polixenes himself (now also in Sicilia), and is catapulted into the status of "gentleman born" (V.ii.127) as a reward. It turns out, therefore, that Autolycus, who prides himself upon the possession of an open ear, a quick eye, a nimble hand and a good rogue's nose for the smelling out of opportunities for advancement has allowed himself to be deprived of an obvious bonus. Ebullient as ever, he resigns himself to the set-back: "But 'tis all one to me; for had I been the finder-out of this secret, it would not have relish'd among my other discredits" (V.ii.121). In the role of tricky servant, it seems, Autolycus does not shine, but he has other resources for making a living, learned partly from the distinguished company of sharp-witted vagabonds who were beginning to populate the literature of the picaresque, and partly from his Ovidian genealogy. Ovidian Autolycus (in Golding's translation "a wyly pye" without peer for filching and theft) was, it will be recalled, the son of no other than Mercury/Hermes.

Hermes, hardly out of his cradle, was already stealing the oxen of Apollo, who was appeased however, by the child's skill at the lyre (which he invented by stretching strings across a tortoise shell). Messenger, herald, conductor of souls between the worlds of the living and the dead, protector of travelers, whose signposts and landmarks were named for him, worshipped by shepherds in his native Arcadia, god of trading, good luck and gambling, of divination (he invented sign-systems), of eloquence, cunning and fraud; and of dream. Shakespeare's cony-catching rogue (his only lowlife foolish-wise clown with a Greek name), a reembodiment of this versatile god, is a wonderful composite of the mercurial and the picaresque, of failure and recovery. Born under the appropriate star, "litter'd under Mercury" as he puts it (IV.iii.25), he is a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles, a singer of lowlife catches about daffodils and doxies, in which the "red blood reigns in (reins in? rains in?) the winter's pale" (4); a titillator of preposterous fancies about usurers' wives brought to bed of twenty money-bags at once (263). Never at a loss, he has been ape-bearer, process-server, puppeteer, impersonator, gambler, whoremaster; he pinches sheets hanging out to dry (and anything else that comes in handy); he peddles tawdry trinkets and bawdy broadsheet ballads with such hypnotic success that all "senses stuck in ears: you might have pinched a placket, it was senseless; 'twas nothing to geld a codpiece of a purse" (IV.iv.610-11); and the last we see of him bodes ill for his latest patron, or victim—his old acquaintance the shepherd, newly come into a fortune. He, "having flown over many knavish professions . . . settled only in rogue" (IV.iii.98-100), but his coup de théâtre in The Winter's Tale is to con the clown by enacting the part of his own victim, in order to rob him of the money for the raisins and currants, prunes, pear-pies, rice, nutmeg and ginger for the feast.

Trickster, cutpurse, masquerader, shape-changer—what do we make of this strangely gratuitous, outlaw character, so apt for his part, yet without, it would seem, a part?

We know that he pleases us; that he marks the transition from winter to spring and from dire consequences for actions to lucky improvisations and escapes. He provides what is desired, reputable or disreputable, markets fancies, images, caters to and exemplifies the instinctual and uninhibited appetites. What he feels like doing he does, with the cunning of disguise and dissimulation and a total disregard for regulatory conscience. So we see in him a pleasure principle, laxity and relaxation, and welcome his conduct of us from the repressive world of Sicilian punishments to the compensatory wish-fulfillment of Bohemia. Yet he is a thief. What is a thief doing in Shangri-La? Possibly he is there for the same reason as is Polixenes' rage. In the dream they are harmless and judgment is suspended, but their presence reminds us that harmless surfaces conceal explosive depths.

Critics, reading the play and read by it, have recorded contradictory responses in interesting ways. He is a harbinger of spring, says Northrop Frye, "imaginary cuckoo where Leontes is imaginary cuckold" ((1963) 1971, 333). Traversi, more sentimental, finds in him an "affirmation of the warm, living 'blood' of youth
against the jealousy and care-laden envy of age”; his song represents the "tender, reborn heart of the year"; his vitality saves the play from abstraction (1965, 136-7). For Tillyard, on the other hand, he is delinquent but "prophylactic,” "his delinquencies keep the earthly paradise sufficiently earthly" ((1938) in Kermode, 1938, 84). For Lawlor too, he "offsets any unrealities of pastoral” ((1962) in Palmer, 1971, 300). One might add that the ballads he purveys to the village girls are not without a certain polyphonic relation to the fancies Leontes has entertained. One tells of a monstrous birth, how "a usurer's wife was brought to bed of twenty money-bags at a burden”; another of a fish-woman "turned into a cold fish for she would not exchange flesh with one that loved her" (IV.iv.263, 279). Most comprehensive perhaps is Joan Hartwig's formulation: "Autolycus absorbs some of the disordering aspects of Leontes' disturbed imagination. . . contain[s] disorder through comic inconsequence" (1978, 101). In sum: Autolycus is a figure of libido, unruly, lawless and volatile, uninhibited, cunning, subversive. Harmless, even benign sometimes, however reluctantly, he offers a semilegitimized illicit enjoyment; but there is a self, and a wolf also, in his name.

He is a pervasive presence in the wishful Bohemian scenes, but he is demoted in Sicily, where he must seek preferment under the patronage of the new "true gentlemen" clowns (V.ii.162). Act V deserts the pastoral fantasy to return to the world. There Leontes' restoration is figured, not by dream, but by the art of drama.

The statue scene is the culminating moment of the play. It is carefully prepared for by a cumulative series of encounters, all but the first reported, in order, I suggest, not to detract from the climax, but also to establish the latter's peculiar difference.

A mode of transference takes place in these encounters. The old traumas are reactivated, lived through again, the old wrongs done "stir afresh" within Leontes (V.i.148-9): the death of Hermione: "She I kill'd? I did so; but thou strik'st me/Sorely, to say I did. It is as bitter/Upon thy tongue as in my thought" (16-9); the childhood twinship:

Were I but twenty-one,
Your father's image is so hit in you,
(His very air) that I should call you brother,
As I did him, and speak of something wildly
By us performed before

(126-30)

the loss of his children: "O! alas/I lost a couple that 'twixt heaven and earth/Might thus have stood, begetting wonder" (131-3); the threat to a "gracious couple" through betrayal.

The old desires too. Leontes' instant attraction to Perdita (in the source story resulting in actual incest), which requires Paulina's stern monitoring to deflect, is touching because of the daughter's resemblance to her mother, but it is again threatening. If then Leontes desired a lost mother, and now desires, though unknowingly, his daughter, he is not yet out of the wood. Yet, remembering Autolycus, are we not to see that this piecing together of a dismembered whole—a family, a mind—depends upon the resurgence of desire which is itself beneficent. The reunions are not merely a return of the oppressive past, a nostalgia. The children are as "welcome hither, as is the spring to th'earth" (151-2):

What might I have been,
Might I a son and daughter now have look'd on,
Such goodly things as you!

(176-8)
These recognition scenes are as yet partial. Leontes first recognizes Polixenes’ son in the encounter with the young lovers; then Perdita's identity is discovered in the meeting between all three and Polixenes. This second scene narrates the finding of the King's daughter with all the oratorical art the third gentleman can muster:

Sorrow wept to take leave of them, for their joy waded in tears. . . . Our king, being ready to leap out of himself for joy of his found daughter, as if that joy were now become a loss, cries, 'O, thy mother, thy mother!'; then asks Bohemia forgiveness, then embraces his son-in-law; then again worries he his daughter with clipping her. Now he thanks the old shepherd. . . . I never heard of such another encounter, which James report to follow it, and undoes description to do it (V.ii.45-62, passim)

and the whole series is parodied by the counterpoint drollery of the clown's version of these wondrously moving events:

For the King's son took me by the hand and call'd me brother; and then the two kings call'd my father brother; and then the Prince, my brother, and the Princess, my sister, call'd my father father; and so we wept; and there was the first gentlemanlike tears that ever we shed. (140-5)

Only then is the culmination of these reunions brought about in the final scene. Shakespeare's self-reflexive art in the earlier comedies had constantly called attention to itself by means of metadramatic comment and epilogue: we recall Theseus' "The best in this kind are but shadows," and Puck's riposte, "If we shadows have offended." Now we are offered a tour de force in the kind, under the sign of Paulina's wildly anachronistic "rare Italian master," and the trompe-l'oeil of illusionist art.

Guilio Romano, "who, had he himself eternity and could put breath into his work, would beguile Nature of her custom, so perfectly he is her ape" (92-100) is the creator of Hermione's "statue," the instrument of Paulina's bogus miracle, and, artist as con-man, the genius loci of the play's closing phase, as Autolycus was of its wishful dream.

Guilio Romano was a famous mannerist artist of the sixteenth century. In Vasari's Lives his Latin epitaph is as follows: "Jupiter saw sculptured and painted statues breathe and earthly buildings made equal to those in heaven by the skill of Giulio Romano" (see ). There are good reasons, therefore, for Paulina's (or Shakespeare's) choice, though the entire reference to Romano, has been found pointless. "We do not need his kind of art," says Northrop Frye, "when we have the real Hermione . . . neither he nor the kind of realism he represents seems to be very central to the play itself (1963, 113). But, I submit, it is central. Because the bogus miracle is a mask for the remedial therapy of Paulina.

The magical effect is made possible by the concealment from the audience of the fact that Hermione is alive. Such concealment is rare in Shakespeare, and its effect is to pull the audience perforce into the experience, making it "real" in a distinctive way: we really see what Leontes sees. The point I am making is that it is a mirror-image of Romano's illusionist skill. Romano's craft made statues so real-seeming that they seemed real persons. Paulina has made a real person so statuesque as to seem a statue. There is of course, no miracle at all. Hermione, never dead, is not resurrected, but what we are shown—Leontes' transport of mingled anguish and joy at its lifelikeness, and then its descent from the pedestal—feels as miraculous, and mysterious, as a return from death or as a birth. We are truly deluded, momentarily, with Leontes. Leontes anticipated a frozen image from the past—"not so much wrinkled, nothing/So aged as this seems" (V.iii.28-9)—with which, perhaps, to prolong and memorialize his stony remorse, to perpetuate nostalgia. This moment creates an illusion of resurrection for Hermione, for Leontes, which is a true coup de théâtre, a triumph of the illusionist's art. But the fictive resurrection of Hermione effects a real resurrection in Leontes. Fantasy is transformed into reality as the lost is found. The enchanting moment carries us beyond illusion or deception. It is an embodiment of
return—the always unimaginable, the always imagined desire.

When Hermione steps down from the pedestal she is not only a wifely, but a maternal presence. Though she embraces him first, her first words are for her daughter. She is the agent of his rebirth, of his enfranchisement from the sprites and goblins that haunted him when he was death-possessed, seeing only the skull beneath the skin. It is surely not fortuitous, but a wheel come full circle, when Leontes remembers her "as tender/As infancy" (26-7) and has recourse to an image of primal need, of primal containment and content to express the fullness of his joy "If this be magic, let it be an art/Lawful as eating" (110-1). It is an odd simile, taken at face value. Yet how powerfully resonant it becomes when it can be seen in the chain of signifiers which allow us to reconstruct the untold story of The Winter's Tale. Consider the primal oral fantasies which erupted in the tragic phase of the play: the spider-poisoned cup which made Leontes "crack his gorge . . . with violent hefts" (II.i.44-5); the "bespiced" cup which will give his enemy "a lasting wink" (I.ii.316-17); Hermione's provocative "cram's with praise, and make's/As fat as tame things" (I.ii.91-2). Voracious bears and devouring seas accompany the catastrophe. In Bohemia Perdita is "queen of curds and cream" (IV.iv.160), Autolycus steals the money for the festive delicacies which the clown evocatively enumerates, and in his grotesque ballad the usurer's wife "longs to eat adders' heads and toads carbonadoed" (264). Now at last, in Leontes' "lawful as eating," is hunger legitimized, and, no longer signifying a fantasy of incorporation, but a real communion, stilled; family likeness can speak of regeneration, not usurpation, and the existence of others, separate from the shadow play of one's own mind, be acknowledged.

The sprites and goblins are dispersed, but they haunt still, as does, surely, the ghost of Mamillius. The image of gap (Old Norse yawn; a hole or opening made by breaking or parting; a breach) with which The Winter's Tale would end the text of its temporal narrative evade closure, evoking not only the fierce disruptions we have witnessed, but beyond these the painful trauma of birth itself, with its continuing, ineluctable, besetting anxieties:11

Good Paulina,
Lead us from hence, where we may leisurely
Each one demand and answer to his part
Performed in this wide gap of time since first
We were dissevered.

(V.iii.151)

Notes


2 Nevill Coghill, "Six Points of Stage-Craft in The Winter's Tale," Sh.Survey (1958) introduced his defence of the play with the statement: "It is a critical commonplace that The Winter's Tale is an ill-made play: its very editors deride it" (31). How far the balance had been redressed by 1978 may be judged by Charles Frey's judgement in "Tragic Structure in The Winter's Tale": "The Winter's Tale carries its often painful but always instructive burden extremely well" (Kay and Jacobs, 1978, 124).


4 Psychoanalytically minded critics have pounced upon the "twinned lambs" speech as upon a treasure trove for explication. J.I.M. Stewart, Character and Motive in Shakespeare (1948) was the first to find a displaced return of repressed homosexuality in Leontes' obsessional outburst, and W.H. Auden ("The Alienated City,"
Encounter, 1961) was convinced that "Leontes is a classic case of paranoid sexual jealousy due to repressed homosexual feelings" (11). Stephen Reid, *The Winter's Tale* (American Imago 27 (1970)) and Murray Schwartz, "Leontes' Jealousy in The Winter's Tale" (American Imago 30 (1973)) and "The Winter's Tale: Loss and Transformation" (American Imago 32 (1975)), proceed from Freud's formula for defensive projection ("I do not love him. She does") to further analytical variations on the theme of delusional jealousy. These critics provide a clinical diagnosis for a sudden seizure like Leontes'; what they do not do is to provide an entry into the play. They lead out of the drama, not into it. Their phantasmagoric choreography of Kleinean projections and introjections is unlikely to be available to readers and audiences, even those most closely attuned to the vagaries of primary process; and they produce a distinct impression of overkill. There is a danger in overexplication; the danger, as J-B. Pontalis aptly puts it in a corrective essay, "of strangling the eloquence of oneiric life" ("Dream as an Object," *Int. Rev. of Psychoanalysis*, 1974, 1).


6 See the Arden edn, (London, Methuen, 1963) for extended commentary on the speech. Older commentary extends to three pages (27-30) in the Variorum.


8 David Willbern, "Shakespeare's Nothing" (Schwartz and Kahn, 1980) gives an illuminating exposition of the imagery of Shakespeare's "dialectic of nothing and all" (252). See also Antoinette Dauber, "This Great Gap of Time," *Hebrew University Studies in Literature and the Arts*, 11,2 (1983) for an excellent reading of the play along similar lines.

9 See Freud, "Revision of Dream Theory," *New Introductory Lectures* (1933) 53.

10 OED gives 1604 for the first usage of the term; the sense was "to deceive or blind." The word occurs nowhere in Shakespeare.

11 I am much indebted to discussion with Stanley Cavell for insight into this manifestation of the textual unconscious.

Kay Stockholder (essay date 1987)


[In the essay that follows, Stockholder considers the sexual conflict of The Winter's Tale to be resolved by dream-visions.]

In *Macbeth* Shakespeare expressed the psychic and sexual dynamic of a mature and fully heterosexual relationship through public action that expressed metaphorically the protagonist's private state. In that play *Macbeth* associates the sexual centre of his mature relationship with a vision of evil and corruption that destroys the relationship and the harmony of the familial state that contains it.

*The Winter's Tale* more directly than *Macbeth* explicitly concerns itself with family relations and with distorted sexual passions that warp them. In this play, however, the consequent political disorder does not
overshadow the family relations. As though in compensation for this greater directness, like the earlier romances it is more emotionally distant. The whole play is not permeated by the force of the protagonist's fantasy; rather the course of Leontes' passion for the most part is sketched rather than fully elaborated, so that we, like the figures with which he populates his world, observe him from a distance. And while his compulsive passions shape the lives of the other characters, they do not permeate the language of those characters with multiplying ironies that radiate from a dark centre. Leontes isolates himself in the dark world of his mind, and keeps others as observers outside his orbit rather than drawing them into it, as do Othello or Macbeth. As dreamer, therefore, Leontes has isolated his own figure as a strategy to preserve idealized surroundings that can rescue him from the passions to which he gives licence.

Within that safety Leontes boldly defines himself as king, husband, and father. In Hermione he has generated a stronger version of the good woman than have other protagonists. He allows her to be mother as well as wife, endows her with adult dignity and articulateness rather than virginal virtues, and he refrains from generating an Iago on whom to project his self-hatred and self-blame. At the same time, remote from himself initially, he generates an alternate self-image, clothed in nostalgia, of a presexual innocence that suggests the conflict shortly to become overt. Camillo and Archidamus surround the early affection between Leontes and Polixenes with idyllic romance that is opposed to and invulnerable to any 'matter or malice' of the present. Archidamus links that golden past with the present by juxtaposing it to Leontes' son, Mamillius, when after confirming the abiding love between Leontes and Polixenes he adds, 'You have an unspeakable comfort of your young prince Mamillius' (I.i.34-5). The configuration suggests that Polixenes represents Leontes' effort to retreat from mature sexuality into nostalgia for a simpler past, an attempt that later, ironically, revives the infantile roots of the sexual conflict it was intended to suppress.²

The erotic colouring of the two kings' early relationship appears when Archidamus describes how through the years they have exchanged gifts, sent 'loving embassies,' and 'though absent; shook hands, as over a vast; and embraced, as it were, from the ends of opposed winds' (I.i.28-32). Polixenes adds a sensuous note in saying, 'We were as twinn'd lambs that did frisk i' th' sun, / And bleat the one at th' other' (I.ii.67-8). Leontes clothes his homoerotic impulses in the vision of childhood purity, and opposes that prelapsarian purity to the world of women. He equates heterosexuality with the Fall, and by implication with all consequent evil and corruption, when Polixenes says that had they remained in their childhood world they 'should have answer'd heaven / Boldly "not guilty," the imposition clear'd / Hereditary ours' (I.ii.69-74). To Hermione's surmise that they must have 'tripped since,' he responds by associating prelapsarian innocence with ignorance of women, particularly of wives, when he says 'In those unfledg'd days was my wife a girl; / Your precious self had then not cross'd the eyes / Of my young play-fellow' (I.ii.78-80). Hermione's objection spells out the implication: 'Of this make no conclusion, lest you say / Your queen and I are devils' (I.ii.81-2), especially since even as she says those words Leontes is already in the process of transforming her into a devil. Leontes sees even sexuality legitimized within marriage as the source of sin and corruption in contrast to a vaguely erotic male childhood companionship.²

Leontes compensates for his hidden association of women with evil by idealizing Hermione. This psychological strategy makes him like a person whose marriage appears to others ideal, but whose perfect-seeming wife makes him feel rebuked for his unacknowledged dark imagination of women, isolated, unloved, and empty within the image of familial bliss. Leontes expresses such dissatisfaction in calling into his present, 'over a vast,' feelings that he associates with past happiness, only to find, once he materializes Polixenes, that he has opened the hornets' nest from which his feeling of emptiness and nostalgia was designed to protect him.

The relation between the sexual conflict hidden in Leontes' nostalgia and his mature sexuality appears in the strained urgency with which he persuades his friend to stay, and Polixenes' equally unexplained urgency to depart. It appears as well in the fusion of Polixenes' visit with the onset of Leontes' jealousy. When Leontes ignores Polixenes' protest that to hinder his return home 'were (in your love) a whip to me' (I.ii.25), he seems
jealous of his friend's obligations that take him away; at the same time his desire to be rid of him appears in
Polixenes' determination to leave. The lack of naturalistic explanation for the urgency of either figure
emphasizes the psychological significance for Leontes of his almost equal desires to keep Polixenes, and the
associated idyllic childhood, present, and to avoid the revival of infantile conflicts hidden beneath and
expressed in the nostalgic aura. Though not explicitly sexual, the intense love between the two men, placed in
the past but carried to the present by association with Mamillius, functions as an alternative to Leontes' relationship to Hermione.

In Hermione's successful petition Leontes expresses his desire to keep Polixenes at hand, while he handles the
implicit dangers by imagining the two together. Leontes' unease with his wife's sexuality appears when he
casts himself in the role of a rejected lover while his wife flirts with his friend. Leontes says that she has for
the second time 'said well,' the first time being when 'three crabbed months had sour'd themselves to death, / Ere I could make thee open thy white hand / And clap thyself my love' (I.ii. 102-4). When Hermione gives
that white hand to Polixenes and engages him in talk of their past, Leontes achieves the configuration from
which can emerge all in his emotional life that violates his self-image. The intensity acquires the quality of a
dream within a dream, as Leontes observes their retreating figures and murmurs 'too hot, too hot.'

During the trial scene Hermione says, 'You speak a language that I understand not: / My life stands in the
level of your dreams, / Which I'll lay down' (III.ii.80-2). A distanced level of Leontes' awareness, externalized
in the plot, maintains an innocent Hermione, while most of his consciousness succumbs to the explosion of
feeling expressed in his sudden jealousy. Like Othello, he maintains the split image of the woman, the good
and the bad, in two levels of consciousness rather than in two figures. In the plot configuration he keeps
Hermione ideally innocent, while his own figure is overwhelmed by a vision of women as besmirched and
betraying. Though less naturalistic, this event is comparable to the decisive psychic moments of other plays.
The content of Leontes' experience is most like Othello's, but the quality of it is like Macbeth's, except that
Macbeth experiences an altered state of consciousness, whereas Leontes denies, even while he betrays
knowledge of, his state of mind when he says, 'Your actions are my dreams. / You had a bastard by Polixenes,
/ And I but dream'd it!' (III.ii.82-4). In another very convoluted passage, Leontes reflects on the relationship
between dream and reality, seeming in the process to attribute greater reality to dream:

Affection! thy intention stabs the centre:
Thou dost make possible things not so held,
Communicat'st with dreams;—how can this be?—
With what's unreal thou coactive art,
And fellow'st nothing: then, 'tis very credent
Thou may'st co-join with something; and thou dost,
(And that beyond commission) and I find it,
(And that to the infection of my brains
And hard'ning of my brows).

(I.ii. 138-46)

Whether Leontes refers to Hermione's dream of affection, which then finds a real object, or to his own
affection for her that has generated his dream of her infidelity, the passage indicates a brief moment of
struggle before he detaches himself from his sense of ordinary reality and allows his compulsive passion to
overwhelm his consciousness.

Leontes has been flirting on the edges of his inner dream from the moment he asked Hermione to persuade
Polixenes to stay, as though wanting an opportunity to bring to the surface, to 'co-join with something' what
his unknown passions were already generating. Before committing himself totally to his compulsions he, like
Othello, makes one effort to keep his dream from becoming nightmare: 'This entertainment / May a free face
put on, derive a liberty / From heartiness, from bounty, fertile bosom, / And well become the agent: 't may, I grant'(I.ii.113-114). Like Macbeth, he foresees the loss entailed in satisfying his darker desires when he counters Camillo's efforts to dissuade him by opposing to uncommon desires an inadequate common sense. Leontes thinks he could not be so 'muddy' as to sully

The purity and whiteness of my sheets,
(Which to preserve is sleep, which being spotted
Is goads, thorns, nettles, tails of wasps)
Give scandal to the blood o’ th’ prince, my son,
(Who I do think is mine and love as mine)
Without ripe moving to’t?

(I.ii.321-32)

Leontes cannot forgo his new image of Hermione for two reasons. First, even though he says that Hermione's actions are his dreams, he cannot conceive how he might desire what he fears. Second, the image of a sullied Hermione and betraying friend frees him from the painful contrast between himself and a radiant Hermione. His fantasy allows him to externalize in her the self-hatred that previously festered inside him. Hermione must be guilty, because if she is not, then he is.

Having substituted Polixenes for his own figure, Leontes vents his image of sexuality in language like Iago's when he sees Polixenes and Hermione 'paddling palms and pinching fingers,' and reflects that there is many a man 'That little thinks she has been sluiced in's absence / And his pond fished by his next neighbor' (I.ii.192-5). Women, as false 'as o'er-dy'd blacks, as wind, as waters' bring disease—'were my wife's liver / Infected as her life' (I.ii.304-5)—that both infects men's sexuality and turns them into objects of ridicule.

While Lear expressed the process of his diseased imagination by casting himself in progressively more infantile roles, Leontes in a more detached way undergoes a similar process signified by his changing views of his own children. His already established identification with Mamillius becomes firmer when he sees him, and by implication himself, as a product of the foul adult sexuality he imagines between Hermione and Polixenes. As he and his son talk of childhood innocence, Leontes seeks detachment from the image of himself as child when, with pretended playfulness, he questions his paternity, asking Mamillius, 'Art thou my boy?' and observing that he has 'smutch'd [his] nose.' As Lear uses the smells of hell to describe women's gentitals when he says 'there is the sulphurous pit: burning, scalding, stench, consumption,' so Leontes sees in the dirt on his son's nose traces of sexuality needful for conception. It brings to his mind images of bestiality, which he translates into images of cuckoldry by concentrating on horned animals, 'the steer, the heifer and the calf,' when he punningly tells Mamillius that he must be 'neat.' While he sees Hermione 'still virginailing / Upon his palm!' Mamillius, as a 'wanton calf,' becomes a metaphor for and sign of Leontes' belief that his wanton wife has given him cuckold's horns. The previously innocent-seeming animal imagery that described himself and Polixenes as 'twinn'd lambs that did frisk i' th' sun' now clearly is tarnished by sexuality, and he attempts to repudiate this now disturbing image by breaking his identification with the child, discounting the physical resemblance that, he says, women affirm.

Leontes' retreat from and advance towards his son reproduce the ambivalent movements he made towards Polixenes. Each time he draws Mamillius to him, the proximity intensifies his repulsion and turns his endearments into rejections. He calls Mamillius 'sweet villain! / Most dear'st! my collop!' then reflects, 'Can thy dam?' The image of Hermione as a 'dam' joins Hermione and his son, both male and female sexuality, within animal-like lowness. But being identified with his son, Leontes expresses his own sexuality in his images of Mamillius, and gives the lie to the prelapsarian innocence he had wanted as an alternative to mature heterosexuality. This process becomes clearer when he explains his distraction to Hermione by saying that 'this kernel, this squash, this gentleman' reminded him of himself as a child 'unbreech'd, / In my green velvet
coat; my dagger muzzled / Lest it should bite its master, and so prove, / As ornaments oft do, too dangerous' (I.i.155–8). In the process of repudiating it, he deepens his identification with his son within a recollection of childhood that has changed colour. The muzzled dagger suggests the erotically violent passions that were hidden in the idyllic memories, which now, having been unmuzzled, are biting their master. He makes a last effort to keep the image of childhood innocence uncontaminated when he says 'Give me this boy: / I am glad you did not nurse him: / Though he does bear some signs of me, yet you / Have too much blood in him' (II.i.55–7). But he is unsuccessful, and at his command Mamillius disappears and, unlike his sister, is not resurrected, suggesting that Leontes decisively has repressed the homosexuality he associates with his childhood.3

Like Lear, he moves from an image of himself as a boy to one of himself as an infant, when Paulina brings his baby daughter, whom he with less obvious ambivalence but also less finality, obliterates. Enraged at the child for representing her mother's unreliable sexuality, he enacts Lady Macbeth's image when he says, 'The bastard brains with these my proper hands / Shall I dash out. Go, take it to the fire' (II.iii.139–40). Along with the child, he repudiates his wife's sexuality, which generates children, and himself as a trusting infant at a maternal breast.

But eliminating with these figures his childlike feelings from his consciousness increases rather than diminishes their power to colour his perception of his entire world. Within the overriding safety of his fairytale world in which an ideally good Hermione is empowered to punish and cancel the consequences of his attempted crimes, he indulges what now becomes a fully paranoid vision that justifies his rage. Seeing all his court in a conspiracy of silent mockery, he associates Polixenes' and Hermione's supposed sexual betrayal with political conspiracy. He enters a self-enclosed and self-confirming system which uses all contrary evidence as grist for its mill.

The distance between Leontes' passion and the idealized world kept present by other figures appears in the unique way in which this play's most powerful image lacks resonance elsewhere in this text, but in other plays epitomizes both male and female sexuality with betrayal, cruelty, cannibalism, and death. Leontes, caught in his paranoid vortex and reflecting on the pain he incurs from his 'true opinion,' says,

There may be in the cup 
A spider steep'd, and one may drink, depart, 
And yet partake no venom, (for his knowledge 
Is not infected); but if one present 
Th' abhor'd ingredient to his eye, make known 
How he hath drunk, he cracks his gorge, his sides, 
With violent hefts. I have drunk, and seen the spider.

(II.i.36–45)

The spider in the cup is an image of the way in which Leontes' conception of sexuality poisons his imagination of social and creature pleasures. The immediate context associates the spider with Hermione's supposed infidelity, and by extension to her sexuality, which Leontes has already described in images of disease and bestiality. He now adds to these an image of women, like spiders, deceitfully luring men into beautiful-seeming nets, like the snare from which Antony momentarily escapes, in order to poison and devour them. But the implicit net image is also suitable for Leontes' entanglement in his paranoid fantasy spun out of his own imagination. He both places himself outside of the image, and implies a secret recognition of his own complicity by attributing to his own knowledge the power to render the spider poisonous. He experiences with sharply focused intensity the nausea that has been suggested by previous images. If one sees Leontes' experience of the spider in relation to the nausea Hamlet felt before he directed Yorick's skull into 'my lady's chamber,' then Leontes confronts in the spider an image of the snare-producing womb that transforms men to
While on one level of consciousness Leontes allows his imagination full licence to project itself onto the figures with which he populates his world, on another level, as said before, he keeps at a distance from himself a reversed image in which a good world can release him from his evil impulses. This split consciousness is expressed most dramatically in the trial scene. His own figure expresses his impregnable fantasy system and the impossibility of a solution to the polarity in which it has entangled him, while in the other figures he clings to a vision of a world that will save him from himself. Both sides of his desire, and the self-confirming mechanism of his fantasy, appear in his deafness to Hermione's clarion assertion of her innocence. When the oracle most uncharacteristically and unambiguously affirms Hermione's guiltlessness he says, 'There is no truth at all i' th' Oracle; / The sessions shall proceed: this is mere falsehood' (III.ii.140-1). It is as though Leontes says of himself that even if the gods themselves should speak, which they never do, their intervention could not release him from the snare of his passions. As was the case with Macbeth, only by being enacted can the power of those passions be depleted. Therefore it is not the oracle but news of Mamillius' and Hermione's deaths that dissipate his compulsive desires. Having obliterated from consciousness both child and adult versions of male and female figures, he experiences himself as awakening from dreamlike compulsions. He defines himself now as in isolation and remorse, but on the periphery of his consciousness he has already set in motion the figures who, by punishing him, will revoke the seemingly irrevocable consequences of his action to provide a dream of a love consummated otherwise than in death.

However, the process by which Leontes tries to persuade himself of the reality of fairy-tales reveals the same network of fears and desires from which he seeks rescue. Leontes' split consciousness generates two worlds. In Sicilia he replaces Hermione with Paulina, to whom he in his own figure becomes a submissive and punished child. In the overtly fairy-tale realm of Bohemia Perdita replaces Hermione as idealized female. There, the storm that destroys the ship and drowns the men, and the bear that devours Antigonus are the displaced and removed remnants of Leontes' rage and jealous passion. Like Lear's, his storm, which wears itself out on Bohemia's shores, functions as an externalized image of his inner upheaval, and the bear, humorous in the stage direction, retains its force when the clown relates how it devours Antigonus' shoulder bone and is about to consume the rest of him. The bear is a distanced image of Leontes' fears, but also frees Paulina of a husband so that she can become a quasi-maternal figure for him.

In opposition to those forces represented by the storm and the bear, Leontes generates and excludes his own contaminating figure from a quasi-magical world in which a providentially benign nature and beneficent coincidence cancel ordinary causality amid elements of realism that remain oddly juxtaposed to images of the transcendently improbable. In this way Leontes refuses to admit the impossibility of the event he needs to effect his cure. Signs of his uneasy attempt to join the fairy-tale vision, in which impediments to love are external to the lovers, to a probable world appear in several ways, but are first notable in Autolycus, whose single plot function, one that could have been accomplished in other ways, is to expedite the process which proves Perdita's true parentage. Dramatically, however, his comic debasement of the otherwise golden world prevents a full polarization of Sicilia and Bohemia that would completely divorce from each other the realms of tragic consequence and comic resolution. Autolycus' presence in Bohemia asserts the possibility of lives being brought to redeeming resolution through accidental and unlikely but real instruments. Autolycus himself comments on the irony of his having unwittingly brought about the reconciliation between children and parents, when only the thought of profit can console him for the loss of his trickster pleasures. He is a kind of Puck without a master, or one whose master is concealed in the force of benign accident that, when it assumes the lineaments of Prospero, will turn him into Ariel. As well, as the comic rogue, Autolycus further links the pastoral Bohemia to the more probable Sicilia, which contains in Paulina another quasi-trickster figure.

The other element in Bohemia by which Leontes reveals his disbelief in the restoration he generates appears in the logical problems that are involved in the portrayal of Polixenes' anger at Florizel for wanting to marry a
peasant girl, an episode that echoes his own anger at Hermione. The incompatibility of probable causality with idealized fantasy appears when Polixenes, despite previously having observed of Perdita that 'nothing she does or seems / But smacks of something greater than herself, / Too noble for this place' (IV.iv.157-9), threatens Perdita with death and Florizel with disininheritance should they persist in their love. Though Perdita's beauty, which makes her the 'queen of curds and cream' (IV.iv.161), and her charming boldness in asserting that "The selfsame sun that shines upon his court / Hides not his visage from our cottage" (IV.iv.475-6), cast Polixenes in an unsympathetic light, the social appropriateness of his anger is confirmed by Florizel's secrecy. He is illogically blamed for his unavoidable ignorance that Perdita is an appropriate choice for his son.

This disparity of levels produces a false analogy that shows Leontes' dream of restoration to be at cross-purposes to his own unacknowledged conception of reality. Our knowledge that Polixenes' anger is inappropriate to the 'true' circumstances creates a parallel between him and Leontes, for both figures discern evil where there is none. The overt point of the parallel is that true value or virtue is hidden beneath appearances, its perception requiring, as Paulina tells Leontes, an awakening of faith. The implied argument is that as Leontes should have known Hermione's worth, so Polixenes should have known Perdita's. But Leontes undermines the argument, for as we have seen, he gives himself no excuse to suspect Hermione other than the normal flirtatiousness of men and women. But he gives Polixenes good reason to object to his son's behaviour and so deviously expresses his unbelief in the resolution he generates through the distanced images of himself and of Hermione in the figures of Florizel and Perdita.

In this way the play indulges the romantic fantasy that true love can transcend all social obstacles and heal all spiritual wounds, while at the same time guaranteeing that this particular true love violates no social propriety. The romantic vision of an ideally loving couple as the source of transcendent spiritual value gains an easy, not to say false, victory over an illusory opposition in the magical world of Bohemia. Polixenes' socially justified outrage is made to seem inappropriate to the magical spirit that can save baby princesses on the seashore.

While Leontes tries to realize in distant Bohemia his idealized images of lovers free from destructive emotions, in Sicilia he submits himself to the punitive parental figure he has generated in Paulina.7 His unease appears in the discrepancy between her depiction as a comic shrew, by which he restrains the frightening dimensions associated with similarly powerful female figures in other plays, and the gravity of the context. This mixed tone surrounding Paulina's portrayal is significant in relation to Hermione. Having allowed within his horizon a powerful woman, Leontes has tried to disperse her power over him by thinking her sullied, and to obliterate her maternal force by depriving her of children. He then avoids the love-death paradigm by collapsing into a passive and childlike submission to an alternate and semi-comic maternal figure, taming in the comically tinged Paulina the more awesome dimensions he has attributed to Hermione, and replacing in his own person the child-figures he has eliminated. Within the protected magical aura at the periphery of his consciousness represented by Bohemia, he allows himself, on condition of thinking it punishment, the passive gratification of becoming a version of Lear. In Paulina's not-so-kind nursery he finds a comic compromise between those nurseries that Cordelia and Goneril and Regan might provide on which to lay his head.8

Under the guise of submission to the process of spiritual regeneration, Leontes satisfies his desire for maternal nurturing. That nurturing, however, retains sexual overtones, and thereby betrays his association of sexuality with incest, because of the concealed identification of the now maternal Paulina with Hermione, and it acquires masochistic dimensions from being placed in a context that fuses it with punishment. Paulina's identification with Hermione appears most strongly in relation to the punitive force of both figures. In order to keep Leontes in constant self-castigation, Paulina accuses him of Hermione's murder while reminding him of her unparalleled virtues. With painful pleasure he co-operates by acknowledging his guilt and adding, 'but thou strik'st me / Sorely, to say I did: it is as bitter / Upon thy tongue as in my thought. Now, good now, / Say so but seldom' (V.i.17-20). Paulina's figure merges with an image of Hermione as a punishing ghost when, after having timidly suggested that he might remarry, Leontes agrees with Paulina that if he married 'one worse, / And better us'd,' Hermione's offended ghost 'would incense me / To murder her I married' (V.i.61-2).
The new wife and the ghostly Hermione become a single image that punishes him by reinforcing his guilt. With his guilt comes his rage, so that he kills again in a cycle of guilt that increases through his efforts to deny it, just as he intensified the image of himself as a child by trying to destroy it. Paulina both identifies herself with the ghostly Hermione and emphasizes her punitive fury when she says that if she were the ghost, she would 'bid you mark / Her eye, and tell me for what dull part in't / You chose her: then I'd shriek, that even your ears / Should rift to hear me; and the words that follow'd / Should be, "Remember mine'" (V.i.63-7).

Understandably, Leontes capitulates: 'I'll have no wife, Paulina.'

Having eliminated the homosexual alternative with Mamillius' death, Leontes has left only two versions of the same image—a vision of himself in a childlike celibacy that conceals frightening masochistic impulses, and one of mature sexuality in which women become avenging mothers. To escape these and to retrieve his identity as husband and father, he defines Paulina's maternal power as magically restorative, and calls on the machinery he has kept all along in the wings.

In Paulina he fuses the maternal punitive power, shades of the bad mother, with the beneficent good mother as she stage-manages the return of the lost. When Paulina makes Leontes promise not to remarry until 'Your first queen's again in breath,' Perdita is about to reappear in fulfilment of the oracles' prediction that 'the king shall live without an heir, if that which is lost be not found' (III.ii.134-6). Though we do not as yet know that Hermione will also reappear, the seeming impossibility of her doing so is brought into relationship with the violation of probability already coming to pass in Perdita's reappearance. The images of Perdita and Hermione begin to merge with each other, and both become associated with a semi-magical quality associated with Paulina. A more mature version of Rosalind, Paulina has mysterious power both to spirit Hermione away for sixteen years and orchestrate her resurrection along with Perdita's. Like her person, Paulina's strategies hover between an inadequately explained naturalistic realm and an incomplete magical one.

Within this uneasy union of naturalistic emotions and magical resolution Leontes clothes the complex incestuous feelings for mothers and daughters in the aura of spiritual redemption. As said earlier, Leontes associates Perdita with the passive and vulnerable self that he rejected in the process of recoiling from the image of woman as mother. At the cost of their sexuality, Lear and Pericles tried to purify their image of the young female by separating her from the fearsome maternal image and from themselves. Leontes reveals the fundamental identity of mother and daughter images in the way the images of Perdita and Hermione overlie each other. Both the interdependence and coincidental timing of their return and verbal associations identify them. The third gentleman tells how Leontes said 'O, thy mother, thy mother!' when he looks on his daughter, and of how 'the majesty of the creature in resemblance of the mother, the affection of nobleness which nature shows above her breeding, and many other evidences proclaim her with all certainty, to be the king's daughter' (V.ii.35-41). To reclaim the daughter is to reclaim the mother, but since Leontes envisions a sexual reunion with the woman as wife, the incestuous basis of his feelings for his daughter are revealed in the identification of the two, which emphasizes Hermione's maternal function. Though Leontes consciously feels that his having submitted to punishment has freed him from the destructive desires that caused him to lose Hermione and Perdita, both the punishment and the restoration show, in greater concealment and in different tones, the same configurations that they were designed to obliterate. Only fairy-tale and magical forms can represent his restoration because there is nothing in the imagery to suggest an inner transformation of his desires, which alone would eliminate his need for both punitive and restorative mothers.

The concluding episodes of The Winter's Tale replace the tortured sexuality of the first part with an ideological fairy-tale. Leontes is reunited with Hermione, Florizel and Perdita become the magically ideal heterosexual pair whose flawless but unexplored love will reunite the two divided kingdoms, and by implication the division in Leontes' soul. The suggestion of sexual masochism involved in Leontes' submission to Paulina is replaced by a more or less Christian ideology, for Hermione's 'resurrection' implies that if one accepts one's guilt and embraces punishment, suffering will not only change one's psychic and emotional structure but will also obliterate the consequences of evil. The play recognizes the dream-vision...
quality of its resolution, but it turns that recognition into another kind of ideology. The comparisons between the stage action and old tales, which increase in frequency as the play draws to its close, suggest that old tales—by implication the play itself—carry into life an ideology of redemption that can compensate for life's failures. Also, the self-reflexive references to the action, particularly in connection with Hermione's revival, as being like that in a play imply that the work of art can come to life and obliterate the distinction between dream-vision and reality. There is a curious double motion. On the one hand the end of the play shows life becoming art—an old tale, a play, a statue—and in so doing obscures the unresolved conflicts depicted on a naturalistic plane. But on the other hand, as though uneasy at that evasion, the play attempts also to assert that art, the statue, can re-enter the realm of life to become flesh.  

Shakespeare abandoned that attempt in *The Tempest*. At the same time as he reversed the power relation between man and woman, giving Paulina's magical power to a more than paternal Prospero, he also gave up the effort to envision an unambiguously good and powerful female, and moved fully into the magical realm, abandoning naturalistic causality. However, in *The Tempest* the structure and detail of the fairy-tale resolution still betray both the problems that require such strenuous control and its human cost.

Notes

1 Coppélia Kahn in 'The Providential Tempest and the Shakespearean Family,' *Representing Shakespeare*, ed Murray M. Schwartz and Coppélia Kahn (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 217-63, says rightly that the homosexuality implied between Leontes and Polixenes expresses Leontes' unwillingness to trust his manhood to women and sexuality, and accounts for his jealousy (233).

2 Stephen Reid in 'The Winter's Tale,' *American Imago* 27 (1970) 262-77, sees homosexual attachment and Oedipal guilt underlying Leontes' jealousy, the guilt overlying the homosexuality and thereby lending to it the aura of innocence (277).


4 In 'Leontes' Jealousy in *The Winter's Tale,* *American Imago* 30 (1973) 250-73, Murray M. Schwartz sees the spider expressing Leontes' primary fear of maternal engulfment. One gets a more precise sense of the emotions involved, however, by surveying earlier contexts in which the spider appears. In 2 *Henry VI* York, who will become Richard III, says 'My brain more busy than the laboring spider / Weaves tedious snares to trap mine enemies' (III.i.339-40). That first image resembles the last one in *Henry VIII*, when Wolsey is described as attaining his success by creating deceiving illusions 'spider-like, / Out of his self-drawing web' (I.i.62-3). In both of these images the spider suggests snares of deceit, drawn from the inward being of one who by means of these snares appears virtuous to others. The Duke in *Measure for Measure* makes Angelo's plot to seduce Isabella an example of how one may use idle spiders' strings to draw others into evil and distort their views of reality.

Women's duplicity is added to these images of male deceit by the spider image in *The Merchant of Venice*; Bassanio says of Portia's portrait that 'the painter plays the spider, and hath woven / A golden mesh to entrap the hearts of men' (III.ii.122-4). Though Portia overtly functions positively, the description of woman's beauty as that which entraps man, turning him into a gnat, suggests the darker ranges that also subtly attach to her character as she weaves a web around Shylock. That female association with the spider's power to entrap and devour is also connected with cruelty, when the Bastard in *King John* says that should Hubert consent to the child's murder in the ensuing despair, 'the smallest thread / That ever spider twisted from her womb / Will serve to strangle thee' (IV.iii.126-9). Women's sexual and generative powers here become the spiderlike snares of deceit that, like Cleopatra's, are both drawn from and are designed to draw men back into the horrible womb that creates them. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* links the spider to creeping things that destroy
the beauty of Titania's bower, and Richard II associates spiders with toads and with poison, wishing his enemies inflicted with 'spiders that suck up thy venom, / And heavy-gaited toads, lie in their way' (III.ii.14-15).

The association of spiders with other obnoxious insects, as well as with poison, pervades Richard III. Anne wishes her husband's murderer more wretched things than she can wish to 'adders, spiders, toads, / Or any creeping venom'd thing that lives!' (I.i.19-20), and the image acquires more force when Margaret, calling Richard a 'poisonous hunchbacked toad,' asks Elizabeth why 'strew'st thou sugar on that bottled spider? / Whose deadly web ensnareth thee about?' (I.iii.246,242-3). These images are used specifically in connection with Richard's sexual seduction of women into embracing his spider self in order to get revenge for his misshapen body by making them love him. That combination of images to describe a foul sexuality also appears in Cymbeline when Guiderius tells Cloten that 'Toad, or Adder, Spider' (IV.ii.90) are less disgusting names than his own. These images bring the spider into the range of Othello's foul cistern in which toads 'knot and gender,' and also suggest the various disgusting toads, blindworms, snakes, and other horrors with which the witches fill their cauldron to entrap Macbeth. They also recall the poisonous asp from Nilus' slime that is both Cleopatra's power to poison Antony's hours, and the baby that lulls her asleep.

When all these associations are taken into account the spider in Leontes' cup can be seen to embody Leontes' fear of woman's sexual charms, which will expose and punish his foul sexuality by reducing him to an insect, and will by devouring him incorporate him into her interior foulness.

5 Roger Stilling in Love and Death in Renaissance Tragedy (Baton Rouge: University of Louisiana Press, 1976) sees Leontes re-enacting the death of love occasioned by the misogyny of Hamlet and of Othello, but redeemed by Perdita and Florizel, who are reborn versions of Romeo and Juliet. He argues that in the earlier works the romantic view, and in the later works the anti-romantic view, lead to death.

6 Schwartz, in 'The Winter's Tale: Loss and Transformation,' says that the play is about fear, represented by the bear (156), and desire for maternal power (158).


9 This argument for the incestuous implication of the reunion scene harmonizes with the play's source, Robert Greene's Pandosto, in which the father kills himself after falling in love with his unrecognized daughter. It may have been that the incest motif in the source generates the play, but is itself replaced by the final uneasy merger of naturalistic and magical plotting, and by the penumbra of transcendent value that surrounds Perdita and Hermione.

10 In 'The Winter's Tale, Othello and Troilus and Cressida: Narcissism and Sexual Betrayal,' American Imago 36 (Spring 1979) 80-93, Joan M. Byles finds Leontes too emotionally thin to be dramatically related to the miraculous restoration (92).
The Winter's Tale (Vol. 45): Time

Marjorie B. Garber (essay date 1974)


[In the following excerpt, Garber examines the importance of time in The Winter's Tale, especially with regard to dreams and the metamorphoses concomitant with seasonal changes.]

The Winter's Tale, . . . centers much of its attention on problems of timelessness and time. Metamorphosis is everywhere in its plot and imagery. The large structural units of the play are the four seasons of the year: winter in the opening "jealousy" scene at Leontes' court; spring with the finding of the child in Bohemia; summer in the great pastoral scene of the sheepshearing; and autumn or harvest in the return to Sicilia and the restoration of the king's wife and child, assuring order and fertility. This cyclical movement is occasionally cut, or halted, by moments of the sort we have been calling timeless, when the world of dream and the irrational intersects with the ongoing world which surrounds it. We are now purposely using "dream" in a double sense, for the entire world of The Winter's Tale is indeed a dream world as we have described it, and the fundamental element of dream, metamorphosis or transformation, will continue to inform it throughout. The other kind of dream is frequently accompanied by an artifact—a tale, play, or statue. This is the redemptive element, the moment beyond time, often attended by music, which suggests that the cyclical action may not after all have to repeat itself endlessly T. S. Eliot, writing of these moments of the "intersection of the timeless with time," calls them "only hints and guesses," and so they are in The Winter's Tale. But it may be that the play is suggesting that hints and guesses are all that man is given, that always underneath these startling moments of transcendence and insight there must be cycle and change, metamorphosis, life and death. Just as the young Mamilius dies and is not revived, so mortality, the moment of Hamlet in the graveyard, is ultimately the radical condition of man.

The metamorphosis of seasonal change in the play is, of course, matched by appropriate human actions in each season. Contained within this broad structure, however, there are many little cycles; and these too are enlightening on the question of metamorphosis and dream. For example, in the opening moments of the play, Polixenes, recalling his childhood with Leontes, describes them as

Two lads that thought there was no more behind
But such a day tomorrow as today,
And to be boy eternal.

[I.ii.63-65]

Had they remained in that state, he suggests, they would have avoided the taint of original sin. He is thus evoking a kind of golden age, an almost Wordsworthian innocence which is simultaneously Christian and pagan. But in longing to be "boy eternal" he is protesting against the very cycle which gives life, against the necessity of experience before eternity. The "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood," is perhaps the best commentary on his wish; the children on the shore in Wordsworth's poem are very like the "boy eternal," but the "sober colouring" of mortality is essential to Polixenes, to Shakespeare, and to any permanency which is to come out of The Winter's Tale. Just as in the Intimations Ode the man of imagination succeeds the child of nature, so in The Winter's Tale the essential experiences of nature and time alone produce imagination and art. The critical turning point at which Wordsworth praises
Those obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishings

is very like Paulina's crucial call to "awake your faith." Geoffrey Hartman writes that

the strength which [the child's] imagination exhibits in going out of itself and blending with a lesser nature is the source of all future strength: it is for Wordsworth the act of regeneration.

. . . The mature man . . . bases his faith in self-transcendence on the ease or unconsciousness with which the apocalyptic imagination turned in childhood toward life. Then the crisis was to go from self-love (unconscious) to love of nature, and now it is to go from self-love (conscious) to love of man.⁹

A very similar psychological process seems to be animating the transcendent activity of dream in the romances.

Polixenes' assertion is therefore a clue to lack of self-knowledge, manifested in a resistance to the normal flow of the seasons. His deficiency is at the outset much less evident than Leontes', although they are actually very similar figures, because much of the first act is occupied by Leontes' internal monologue of jealous suspicion. And the substance of Leontes' remarks testifies to a limited understanding of dream which is also an aversion to change:

Affection! Thy intention stabs the center.
Thou dost make possible things not so held,
Communicat'st with dreams—how can this be?—
With what's unreal thou coactive art,
And fellow'st nothing. Then 'tis very credent
Thou mayst co-join with something, and thou dost,
And that beyond commission, and I find it,
And that to the infection of my brains,
And hardening of my brows.

[I.i.138-46]

According to this reasoning "affection," or passionate emotion, since it is known to ally itself with dreams and "what's unreal," is even more likely to be provoked by a real stimulus, such as sexual infidelity. The logic is extremely dubious, itself affected by "affection." Once more Shakespeare shows remarkable insight into the operations of the dream work, for Leontes' problem is precisely that he has subconsciously displaced and substituted the fictive for the real in order to give vent to a latent "affection," a propensity for sexual jealousy. As a synonym for dream he uses the significant "nothing," which anticipates his Tourneurian interrogation of Camillo:

Is whispering nothing?
Is leaning cheek to cheek? Is meeting noses?
Kissing with inside lip? . . .
. . . Is this nothing?
Why then the world and all that's in't is nothing,
The covering sky is nothing, Bohemia nothing,
My wife is nothing, nor nothing have these nothings,
If this be nothing.
The manifest irony here is of course that these things are nothing in the sense of Leontes' question—they do not exist and are therefore not evidence of suspicious conduct between Hermione and Polixenes. As always, however, "nothing" is a richly ambiguous word, and here particularly so, since Leontes himself has equated it with dream, and since so clearly draws attention to itself in the lines just quoted. All the grievances he catalogues are indeed Leontes' dreams and delusions, though he means to assert the contrary. What is more interesting, however, is the reading of the last four lines we produce if we answer the preceding question ("Is this nothing?") with its proper answer, yes. Then, following Leontes' logic, "the world," "the covering sky," "Bohemia," and his wife are all nothing, dreams, as well. But what are these elements but the primary components of the drama itself—the fictive world, the stage, the scene, the characters? In its way Leontes' hyperbole is an anticipation of Prospero's great speech at the close of the masque in *The Tempest*:

```
like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind.
```

With consummate skill the poet suggests an underlying sense of reflexivity, even in Leontes' most self-delusive moments. Leontes himself is, so to speak, confounded by his own logic. From the first he confuses reality and illusion in the court world of Sicilia, and his illusion is nightmare, malign fiction: "I have drunk, and seen the spider" (II.i.45). In the trial scene in act III his dialogue with Hermione further bares his confusion, which is not a transcendent reversal but rather an error of fact.

*Hermione:* Sir,
You speak a language that I understand not.
My life stands in the level of your dreams,
Which I'll lay down.

*Leontes:* Your actions are my dreams.
You had a bastard by Polixenes,
And I but dreamed it.

[III.ii.77-82]

Again he speaks truth in the guise of irony; he has "but dreamed it." Hermione asserts that her life is totally at the mercy of his delusions. His reply, that her actions "are his dreams," has been true in many dream situations in past plays but is wholly untrue here. One of the many effects of this symmetrical and devastating exchange is to warn us about the negative power of dreams, a facet hinted at in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The world of dream possesses the power it does because its creative energy produces poetry and art. But the essence of dream is the irrational, and the irrational contains the seeds of danger and destruction. Leontes' progression from this point to the awakened faith of the unveiling scene is in part a progress from bad dream to good, from daemonic nightmare to creative imagination. Here is metamorphosis of yet another kind, coupled with a serious and sober appraisal of the doctrine of dream.

The immediate effect of these unwholesome "dreams" upon Leontes is to produce sleeplessness, a malady which is by now familiar to us from the cases of Macbeth and Richard III. Leontes' delusory daydreams have
crowded out the possibility of normal sleeping dreams; and he, like Macbeth, is forced to live in a waking world governed by his own fictions. Leontes himself is aware of this, though characteristically he disregards facts for impressions;

Dost think I am so muddy, so unsettled,
To appoint myself in this vexation? Sully
The purity and whiteness of my sheets—
Which to preserve is sleep; which being spotted,
Is goads, thorns, nettles, tails of wasps—

[I.ii.326-30]

"Goads, thorns, nettles"—Leontes uses these words as metaphors for a psychological state. His world is all "in the mind." When the same images appear in *The Tempest*, they will be part of an externalized dream world, the "Toothed briers, sharp furzes, pricking goss, and thorns" (*Tmp.* IV.i.180) with which Ariel abuses the shins of Stephano, Trinculo, and Caliban. But Leontes is the fabricator of his own delusions and the cause of his own inability to sleep. Paulina acknowledges this fact in her reply to the servant who tries to keep her from entering the court with the newborn Perdita:

I come to bring him sleep. 'Tis such as you
That creep like shadows by him, and do sigh
At each his needless heavings—such as you
Nourish the cause of his awaking.

[II.iii.33-36]

Again we have the verbal contrast between "his awaking," which is a barren state, and the awakened faith at the close of the play. Leontes' state of mind is frozen and sterile, and he denies evidence of his own fertility, the child who is "the whole matter / And copy of the father" (II.iii.98-99). Images of physical dream, sleeping and waking, are thus early integrated into the larger pattern of change and growth.

The seasonal metaphor of reawakening has as its counterpart in the plot the "death" and resurrection of Hermione. It is the knowledgeable Paulina, again, who suggests the possibility of such a revival as early as the third act. Like all her most significant utterances, however, this one is slightly gnomic, because it is deliberately phrased as a condition contrary to fact.

if you can bring
Tincture or luster in her lip, her eye,
Heat outwardly or breath within, I'll serve you
As I would do the gods.

[III.ii.202-05]

There is some possibility that when Shakespeare wrote this scene and the one that follows, Antigonus's dream, he had not yet conceived the idea of reviving Hermione. It is difficult to think, however, that he would have let this passage stand, after altering the play's ending, if it conflicted with his dramatic or symbolic purposes. The net effect of Paulina's avowal, in any case, is to put into the minds of the audience the very possibility she denies. The scene thus becomes a dramatic anticipation of the denouement, an emphatic statement of the impossibility and irrationality of something which will turn out to be true. It is the pattern of dream in little again, a cycle within the cycle.
We have discussed the large structure of metamorphosis in terms of time. That structure can also be analyzed spatially, in the geographical fluctuation from Sicilia to Bohemia and back again. Sicilia here is initially the "real" world of the court, Bohemia and its inhabitants the dream world and its spirits; and the return to Sicilia brings with it a faith in dream by which what was previously impossible, Hermione's regeneration, becomes possible and true. Again and again in this play large movements of this sort are anticipated by smaller ones, and thus in the lyric "window" passage at the opening of the third act we catch a glimpse of redemption. Cleomenes and Dion have been sent by Leontes to the oracle of Apollo, which Shakespeare mistakenly places on the isle of Delos. The mistake serves him well, however; Delphi, the actual site of the oracle, is inland, while Delos, an island, provides opportunity for a symbolic sea journey and itself becomes proleptic to the Bohemian dream world of the main plot. Cleomenes' report of the island is indicative:

The climate's delicate, the air most sweet,
Fertile the isle, the temple much surpassing
The common praise it bears.

[III.i.1-3]

It might almost be a description of Prospero's isle. We may especially take note of the emphasis on fertility, associating that trait with poetic inspiration (Apollo) and again anticipating the pastoral abundance of the Bohemia scenes. This short scene functions like a metaphor in the play as a whole; the two messengers are for a moment in that state of "grace" which is so central to the language of The Winter's Tale. When Cleomenes says the oracle "so surprised [his] sense / That I was nothing" (III.i.10-11), we see the other side of the question of "nothingness," a transcendent subjectivity which leads to insight. The breathing space is short-lived, however; Leontes denies the oracle, the deaths of Mamilius and Hermione are reported, and Perdita is doomed to exile. At this point the scene shifts to Bohemia, a tempest, and a dream.

Antigonus's dream vision of the dead Hermione is the only literal dream in the play, and like the dream visions of Pericles and Posthumus this one lacks the real energy and imagination of Shakespeare's maturest writing. Its tone is discursive and its images somewhat underdeveloped, hints of symbols rather than symbols themselves. Antigonus makes a number of observations about dream and the dream state of a kind which have become wholly familiar to us by now: "ne'er was dream / So like waking"; "I . . . thought / This was so, and not slumber"; "Dreams are toys; / Yet for this once, yea superstitiously, / I will be squared by this. I do believe . . . " (III.iii.14-45). He defines himself as a person who ordinarily scoffs at dreams, implying that there is something unusual about this particular dream which sets it apart. In outline the dream itself is an old-style monitory dream, the return of a spirit from the dead to warn the living: the figure of Hermione, "in pure white robes / Like very sanctity" (21-22), requests him to take Perdita to the shores of Bohemia and informs him that he will never see his wife again. This last circumstance, one of the two irreversible tragedies of the play (the death of Mamilius is the other), is partially responsible for a sense of sobriety that obtains even at the play's close, when Paulina points out that all are revived and reunited but he. Yet there is internal justification for Antigonus's death more than for Mamilius's: when he says of the infant Perdita "this being indeed the issue / Of King Polixenes" (42-43), he demonstrates his own lack of faith. The apparent fact of Hermione's death in the dream is at first more puzzling, since she is later demonstrated to be alive. Yet in a metaphorical sense she is properly imaged as dead, since in the imaginative worlds of poetry and dream "death" is a failure of belief, another instance of unawakened faith. What is most interesting, however, is the language of imagery with which he chooses to describe her, in a long passage relatively devoid of images. "Her eyes," he says, "became two spouts" as she began to speak. The picture calls to mind the figure of Niobe from the Metamorphoses of Ovid (VI.146ff), who turns into a fountain and weeps for the loss of her children. Like the "pure white robes / Like very sanctity" this is in part an allegorizing tendency, but it is also a hint of transformation. When Perdita, at the close of the passage, is addressed as "Blossom," the covert growth and transformation imagery is once more supported.
If the dream of Antigonus is in some ways the least successful symbolic incident in the play, it is followed by what might be called the most successful: the unexpected entry of the bear and the extraordinarily rich and vivid dialogue between the shepherd and the clown. Greene's *Pandosto*, the direct source of *The Winter's Tale*, makes no mention of the bear who pursues Antigonus and is later so placidly described by the clown. But the bear is an important symbol for the play as a whole; though it exemplifies the wild and irrational character of the land of Bohemia, it seems unanticipated by anything in the previous action. Yet in folklore the bear is one of the most common symbols of immortality and resurrection, because of its habit of winter hibernation. Adherents of the cult of the Thracian Salmaxis, the bear-god, believed that the bear first feasted, then slept in an underground chamber as though dead, returning to the world of the living with the spring thaw. The bear was thus the symbol of a cult of immortality, its own cycle coinciding with the pattern of the *sacre du printemps*, the spring resurrection festival. The related legend of Kallisto, the Great Bear, includes the fact that the bear child, her son Arkas, the ancestor of the Arcadians, was sacrificed at a feast of the clan. Mimetically in his memory a human child was annually offered at the shrine of Zeus Lykaios, in a gesture not unlike the abandonment of Perdita. It is also interesting to note that the house of Odysseus was traditionally associated with the bear, and that the heroes Melikertes ("honey-cutter"), Sisyphos, and Autolykos are closely related to one another and to Odysseus. Autolykos, the maternal grandfather of Odysseus, is the father of Sisyphos; and Sisyphos, the Master Thief of Greek folklore, is the hero of a story about the outwitting of death which takes the same general pattern (apparent death, descent to Hades, release and revival) as the bear cult and the fertility myths. The episode of the bear is thus symbolically related to the appearance of Autolycus at the same time that it reinforces the cyclical framework of regeneration with which we have been concerned.

With the exit of the bear there arrive onstage the shepherd and the clown, the native inhabitants of Bohemia, possessed of much of the uncalculated insight we have come to expect from the denizens of a dream world. A great deal of what they say in this pivotal scene has an arresting simplicity, a vividness of image which strikes the ear. The old shepherd's first remark is a recapitulation of the hibernation motif:

```
I would there were no age between ten and three-and-twenty, or that youth would sleep out the rest; for there is nothing in the between but getting wenches with child, wronging the ancientry, stealing, fighting.
```

[III.iii.58-62]

The tone of this, as of many of the shepherd's observations, is detached, removed from the difficult human passions which trouble the other characters. His son's account of the destruction of the ship and the death of Antigonus has the same curious and striking fictive distance; it is much more like the telling of a dream than was Antigonus's tale:

```
O, the most piteous cry of the poor souls!
Sometimes to see'em, and not to see'em;
now the ship boring the moon with her mainmast, and anon swallowed with yeast and froth, as you'd thrust a cork into a hogshead. And then for the land-service, to see how the bear tore out his shoulder bone, how he cried to me for help, and said his name was Antigonus, a nobleman! But to make an end of the ship, to see how the sea flapdragoned it; but first, how the poor souls roared, and the sea mocked them; and how the poor gentleman roared, and the
```
bear mocked him, both roaring louder than
the sea or weather.

[III.iii.88-99]

The immediacy of images, the lack of logical development, and the way in which no background is supplied for events narrated are all characteristics of the process of dream. The clown's world is indeed one in which dream enters the waking consciousness, as the world of Bohemia is illustrative of that consciousness. And just when we are caught by the haunting power of his prose, Shakespeare has the same clown break the spell, saying without transition "the men are not yet cold under water, nor the bear half dined on the gentlemen; he's at it now" (102-03). The spurious elegance of "dined," together with the sudden insistence of "now," removes the previous narration some distance from the quality of fable, without investing it with human horror. The shepherd and the clown are observers for us; they translate us into the realm of Bohemia, by talking of tragedy as if it were romance—as, indeed, Shakespeare is to do in The Winter's Tale as a whole. It is at this point, ascribing the development to "fairies" in whom he most fittingly believes, that the old shepherd makes his crucial observation: "thou met'st with things dying, I with things new born" (110-11). Again such a stark and pivotal assessment of the play's purposes, in which myth for a moment rises to the surface of language, is placed at the midpoint of the action. From this moment The Winter's Tale moves toward renewal and redemption. The pattern of natural metamorphosis is again affirmed.

We touched briefly upon Antigonus's evocation of Niobe in the vision of Hermione with eyes which "became two spouts." Specific uses of Ovid's Metamorphoses, whether allusively, as here, or more directly, as in the tale of Tereus in Cymbeline, are highly significant in the larger context of metamorphosis and the dream world. In the great pastoral scene we now approach (IV.iv.), the internal pattern of seasonal growth and decay is once more recapitulated. In its opening lines Florizel describes Perdita as "no shepherdess but Flora, / Peering in April's front" (IV.iv.2-3). Flora is described in Ovid (Fasti V.231 ff.) as possessing a magical flower which, given to Juno, makes her pregnant; later in the scene Perdita will herself enact this role, giving flowers to the assemblage at the sheepshearing and both directly and symbolically encouraging fertility and fruition. "April's front" is of course an image of the shyness of early spring flowers; it is succeeded in act IV, scene iv, by the full blossoming of summer: "the year growing ancient, / Not yet on summer's death, nor on the birth / Of trembling winter" (79-81). This is a literal description of the time in which the sheepshearing is taking place, but it is also a figurative way of expressing the temper of the moment of flower-giving. With the announcement of the love of Perdita and Doricles and the plighting of troth, the idea of maturation and harvest is introduced, and this in turn quickly gives way to a new repressive and authoritarian regime with the unmasking of the irate Polixenes. Within this framework the idea of metamorphosis is continuously suggested. Florizel, explaining the appropriateness of his disguise as a shepherd and hers as a queen, cites Ovid for a precedent,

The gods themselves,
Humbling their deities to love, have taken
The shapes of beasts upon them. Jupiter
Became a bull and bellowed; the green Neptune
A ram, and bleated; and the fire-robed god,
Golden Apollo, a poor humble swain,
As I seem now. Their transformations
Were never for a piece of beauty rarer,
Nor in a way so chaste, since my desires
Run not before mine honor, nor my lusts
Burn hotter than my faith.

[IV.iv.25-34]
Florizel's classical examples, characteristically, have both a local and a broader significance; they are not randomly chosen. Jupiter the king, Neptune the seagod, and Apollo the poet and giver of inspiration are the three gods regnant in the play as a whole. The same relevance characterizes Perdita's later invocation of Proserpina:

O Proserpina,
For the flow'rs now, that, frightened, thou let'st fall
From Dis's wagon!

[116-18]

The story of Proserpina and Ceres is of course the pattern of the story of Perdita and Hermione, the cycle of death and rebirth. These small grace notes from the mythological past add dimension and timelessness to the play as it proceeds. So naturally are they introduced into the action that they do not jar or obtrude, yet their presence in itself contributes to the quality of myth or fable the poet has carefully been developing. Each such moment is yet another "window," opening on the inexhaustible past on which the present action draws.

The espousal of the process of metamorphosis by Perdita and Florizel is closely related to the problem of disguise, which in turn is part of the larger problem of illusion and reality. Florizel is a prince disguised as a shepherd; Perdita is a princess who thinks she is a shepherdess disguised as a queen. Thus unmaskings in Perdita's case are really maskings of a sort, since they reveal a partial truth and hide a full one. Even the sheepshearing itself is a symbol of the shedding of disguise. Given this complexity of fact, the uses of the concept of dream in the pastoral scene acquire an additional significance. For example, early in the scene the old shepherd speaks with pride to Polixenes about his daughter's virtues. "If young Doricles / Do light upon her," he says,

she shall bring him that
Which he not dreams of.

[IV.iv.179-80]

The context of this observation is praise of her dancing, and by "that / Which he not dreams of the shepherd refers overtly to her personal graces and accomplishments. Yet there is a covert meaning to his words as well, since he knows of the gold left by her side as an infant, and the "bearing-cloth for a squire's child" (III.iii.112-13) in which she was wrapped. His phrase is thus also an aside to himself, a reminder that he knows more than the others about the true situation. And the audience, of course, knows more still; for them "that / Which he not dreams of encompasses as well the fact of her royal birth and the expectation that this will affect the relationship between Leontes and Polixenes. Similarly, later in the same scene, the shepherd and Florizel discuss the question of the marriage portion, and the shepherd, thinking of the gold, announces to the assemblage:

I give my daughter to him, and will make
Her portion equal his.

[388-89]

Florizel, believing her a shepherdess and knowing the truth of his own condition, replies in words very like the shepherd's:

O, that must be
I' th' virtue of your daughter. One being dead,
I shall have more than you can dream of yet,
Enough then for your wonder.

"Dream" in both these cases is used to mean "imagine." But in each case the speaker's point is that what his audience "dreams of (or "not dreams of," which carries an even further implication of impossibility) will in fact turn out to be true. This is the reversal of categories yet again, its application complicated and enriched here by the concrete fact of disguise and the entire atmosphere of dream.

Perdita herself has throughout the scene been particularly conscious of the fictive aspect of her role and her disguise. She has continual recourse to the play metaphor, which brings together the themes of change (role playing, metamorphosis) and timelessness (transmutation into art). "Methinks," she says,

I play as I have seen them do
In Whitsun pastorals; sure this robe of mine
Does change my disposition.

She herself makes the implicity equation between the play and the dream, as fictive constructs which—from her point of view—perpetrate illusion. Thus when Polixenes finally reveals his identity, Perdita speaks to Florizel in the metaphor of dream:

Will't please you, sir, be gone?
I told you what would come of this. Beseech you,
Of your own state take care: this dream of mine
Being now awake, I'll queen it no inch farther
But milk my ewes, and weep.

Here is the same reversal yet again. The "dream" of being a queen is more true than the apparent "reality" of being a shepherdess. Further, it is from this point, and the subsequent flight of the lovers, that there is precipitated the true awakening or unmasking. Florizel unconsciously emphasizes the exchange that has taken place between the true and the fictive by a reply to the cautious Camillo which recalls the language of Theseus's speech on imagination. "Be advised," says Camillo, and Florizel responds

I am, and by my fancy; if my reason
Will thereto be obedient, I have reason;
If not, my senses better pleased with madness,
Do bid it welcome.

A variation on the theme of "we lose our oaths to find ourselves," his reply is a sign that he has accepted the world of dream. When Camillo advises Perdita to disguise herself for flight, urging her to disliken

The truth of your own seeming
the vocabularies of seeming and being, disguise and revelation are once more joined in an act of transformation. Yet at the same time the note of reflexivity, the out-of-time recognition of the play as an artifact, is struck again. Camillo assures Florizel that "it shall be so my care / To have you royally appointed, as if / The scene you play were mine" (594-96), and Perdita's reply to his suggestion about disguise is

I see the play so lies
That I must bear a part.

The play metaphor, thus integrated into the ongoing action, is a hint of what will come. If the process is metamorphosis and transformation, the product is art. With the appearance of Autolycus in the fourth act, the two realms are fused in a single character.

Of all the agents and objects of metamorphosis in *The Winter's Tale*, Autolycus is the master. He belongs to the category of quicksilver characters which also includes Puck and Ariel. To a certain extent he is transformation itself and not merely a practitioner of it. His lightning facility with disguise and his almost aesthetic pleasure in gulling others with a pretended identity places him thematically near the center of the play, though his dramatic role of poet-observer precludes true participation in the society of the play's world. When we first meet him, alone, he is himself, a thief by choice and an enjoyer of the goods of the world. Under our gaze he rapidly transforms himself into a "robbed man" who robs the clown, a peddler of ballads and furbelows at the sheepshearing, and a "courtier" purportedly in the service of King Polixenes. In a way he is like the fox and ape of Spenser's *Mother Hubberd's Tale*, satirizing the pretensions of society by pretending to have those pretensions. But his fictive and symbolic role is clearly even more complex than this. He is the play's artist and poet and thus its master of imagination and manipulator of dream. When he enters the house of the shepherd in his guise as peddler, an impressed servant reports his prowess to the company:

Why,
he sings 'em over, as they were gods or goddesses;
you would think a smock were a she-angel, he so
chants to the sleevehand, and the work about the
square on't.

The servant's report, the more believable for its naïveté, is essentially an account of transformation. The image is amusing to the audience, especially because we are familiar with the "peddler's" other activities, but plainly the audience that Autolycus has set out to please is already under his spell. Moreover, Autolycus is a seller and singer of music; his entrance in the fourth act is the first appearance of music in the play. In all he sings six songs and snatches of two others; calling himself a "snapper-up of unconsidered trifles" (IV.iii.26), he makes of those trifles, whether song or costume, another version of Wallace Stevens's "fictive covering." His first song, "When daffodils begin to peer" (IV.iii.1-12) is a song of the seasons and the passions, which rejoices in the arrival of spring and summer, making yet another small cycle within the larger one; and the witty image of melting snow as sheets pulled off hedges seems to suggest that Autolycus himself is in a way responsible for the coming of the spring. Two of the subsequent songs, sung in his guise as peddler, are about the peddler's wares, considered as fictions or affectations, "masks for faces and for noses" (IV.iv.222). Language is designedly his medium, and he is a dream figure of the most direct sort, assuming whatever guise his situation and companions demand; at the close of the fourth act, encountering the terrified shepherd and his son, he articulates their basest fears and inner thoughts. Like other quicksilver figures of the
Shakespearean dream world, he finds himself ultimately outside the charmed circle of resolution, and is not included in the summing-up.

Autolycus's language is the language of metamorphosis by reason of his command of craft. By contrast, the clown, the old shepherd's son, is for *The Winter's Tale* a figure parallel to the *Hamlet* gravedigger, the *Macbeth* porter, or the clown in *Antony and Cleopatra*. His malapropisms carry multiple meanings, the more effective for his total unawareness of them. Thus after the offstage recognition scene at Leontes' court (V.ii.) he confronts Autolycus (still in his role of courtier) with his new position: "See you these clothes?" he crows,

Say you see them not
and think me still no gentleman born; you
were best say these robes are not gentlemen
born. Give me the lie, do; and try whether I
am now a gentleman born.

[V.ii. 132-36]

To which Autolycus amusedly replies, "I know you are now, sir, a gentleman born" (137-38). Clothing and high birth are here images deliberately related to an absolute belief in transformation. The episode is a comic diminution of an idea which has been of the utmost seriousness throughout. Perhaps the best example, however, is the clown's venture into the special world of music, as reported to us by Autolycus. "No hearing, no feeling, but my sir's song, and admiring the nothing of it" (IV.iv.615-16). "My sir" is of course the clown; and "nothing" is simultaneously "poor quality," "fictiveness," and "noting," or singing. To Autolycus this is merely an opportunity to cut purses; the sense that the rustics are spellbound, however, is important to the play's major themes, here once more presented in comic reduction. Music in all its forms has a particular significance in *The Winter's Tale*, and the clown's attempt to emulate Autolycus, like the dances of shepherds and satyrs at the feast, is positioned in part to prepare us for the very different music of the final scene.

The great accomplishment of this scene is its reconciliation of the fictive and the real, the metaphoric and the literal. The reawakening of Hermione is a transcendent event, made possible by "faith" and art, but it is at the same time carefully made explicable in natural terms. Hermione is not dead; her rebirth is subjective, in the minds of the onlookers, and not objective or magical. This "naturalizing" of the supernatural is startling in its effect; once again it is the "art that Nature makes" which leads to new insight, and the world of dream which demonstrates its primacy over the merely "real." There is an interesting anticipation of this moment earlier in the act, during the discussion between Paulina and Leontes on the subject of remarriage. It is useless for him to remarry, she contends; the oracle has plainly said that he will have no heir "till his lost child be found" (V.i.40). Moreover, no woman could match the dead queen. Leontes concurs, and in doing so he creates a rhetorical ghost, a fictive shade of Hermione:

One worse,
And better used, would make her sainted spirit
Again possess her corpse, and on this stage,
Where we offenders now appear, soul- vexed,
And begin, "Why to me?"

[56-59]

The spirit here is entirely subjective, a figure of speech, and yet in his imagination it walks and speaks. Paulina, quick to catch his mood, reinforces the image with embellishments of her own:
Were I the ghost that walked, I'd bid you mark
Her eye, and tell me for what dull part in 't
You chose her; then I'd shriek, that even your ears
Should rift to hear me, and the words that followed
Should be, "Remember mine."

The resemblance to the ghost in Hamlet is striking. Revenge for a moment hovers in their air and then is put aside in favor of grace. Relenting of her sternness, Paulina now begins to blend the fictive ghost with the real one, the mental image with the living statue. If Leontes must marry again, she says,

she shall not be so young
As was your former, but she shall be such
As walked your first queen's ghost, it should take joy
To see her in your arms.

The double meaning here is perceptible only to Paulina; neither Leontes nor the audience know that Hermione is still alive. At this point the arrival of Perdita and Florizel is announced, and Leontes greets them "Welcome hither, / As is the spring to th' earth!" (V.i.151-52). The underlying natural cycle again reinforces the larger pattern of regeneration.

The actual "resurrection" of Hermione takes place, significantly, in a part of Paulina's house variously described as a "chapel" and a "gallery." The contents of the gallery are works of art, artifacts of the sort we have described as being removed from the round of time. The statue of Hermione, however, is insistently linked with time and life, even while it partakes of the stillness of eternity: "Prepare," says Paulina,

To see the life as lively mocked, as ever
Still sleep mocked death

reminding us of Juliet and Imogen, and later Leontes, "transported" (69), will exclaim "we are mocked with art" (68). Just as Perdita was a princess who thought she was a shepherdess masquerading as a queen, so the "statue" of Hermione is a living woman who is thought to be a statue but described as looking "alive." These are dream equivalences too, the subjective dream state rendering the onlookers unable to distinguish between art and life. Even the visible contribution of "great creating Nature," the wrinkles on Hermione's face, are described by Paulina as evidence of the "carver's excellence" (30), showing her as she would be if she were still alive. The process of reawakening is deliberately a slow one, as Leontes begins to become aware of reality; "no longer shall you gaze on't," says Paulina, "lest your fancy / May think anon it moves" (60-61), yet in fact his fancy is once again more accurate than reason. The final breaking of the boundary, the flowing together of dream and reality, is preceded by Paulina's crucial pronouncement:

It is required
You do awake your faith.
The sleeping-waking metaphor is no accident here, but rather the culmination of a figure which has been highly significant throughout; faith is to be awakened by an acceptance of the possibility of dream. And once the faith is awakened, so too is the "statue":

Music, awake her: strike.
'Tis time; descend; be stone no more; approach;
Strike all that look upon with marvel; come;
I'll fill your grave up.

[98-101]

Music is the sign of metamorphosis and redemption, the union of the myths of Proserpina and Galatea. Time and timelessness, the art object and the process of mortal growth and change, are brought together for a moment in a symbol of regeneration.

It is important that the condition of art is here transitional, rather than terminal and eternal; Hermione returns to life, returns moreover with the wrinkles of time upon her and the final emphasis is on mortality. Even in the last glad moments of reconciliation we are reminded of the death of Antigonus. For in The Winter's Tale Shakespeare has measured art and nature, the dream world and the real world, and resolved them into the "art that Nature makes." The stage of art is essential to the play's resolution: the play itself contains a number of internal artifacts—the "winter's tale" itself, the songs of Autolycus, the play-within-a-play in the pastoral scene. But fundamentally the play moves through art to life again, the statue descends and becomes flesh. Without the transcendent insight of the dream state this movement could not have occurred, but just as the return to Sicilia is necessary, so too is the return to mortality. The very perfection of the reanimated statue as a symbol is its blending of the two states into one. In the "winter" section of the play the boy Mamilius, asked for a tale, replied

A sad tale's best for winter; I have one
Of sprites and goblins.

[H.i.25-26]

"Sprites and goblins"—the traditional denizens of dream, the spirits of A Midsummer Night's Dream. By the time of the last scene Paulina will declare

that she is living,
Were it but told you, should be hooted at
Like an old tale; but it appears she lives.

[V.iii.115-17]

The "sprites and goblins" have been replaced by kings and shepherds, the tale, though it seems fictive, is real. The imperative word of the last scene is "awake," and the progress through dream to a renewed and heightened reality, the symbolic fulfillment of dream, is achieved through a coming together of symbols which express and contain it.

Notes


**Stanton B. Garner, Jr. (essay date 1989)**


*[In the essay that follows, Garner considers the dramatic tension of The Winter's Tale as a conflict between the present and time, as a place of innocence versus a realm of regret and longing.]*

Literally as well as figuratively, Time stands at the center of *The Winter's Tale,* giving strikingly emblematic stage life to a theme that had occupied Shakespeare's imagination since the sonnets and the earliest plays, through the often turbulent drama of the playwright's middle years, and into the romances, those strangely fabulous works that play variations on what came before. The confusions of Syracuse and Illyria sort themselves out in the movements of time; Richard of Gloucester and Macbeth draw back to seize time's promise; an aging poet reminds his younger friend, still in time's graces, of time's quiet ravages: "That time of year thou mayst in me behold / When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang." Though time constitutes an organizing motif in Shakespeare's nondramatic work, as this last example suggests, its presence is actionally more central to the world of the plays, where characters must confront dramatic time as it unfolds in the present and where actors must navigate through the temporal movement of performance. In drama, as we have seen, time is a theme by necessity, for in the medium of performance it stands as a structuring component of stage activity, and of the dramatic action that this activity bodies forth. In the sonnets, time makes its appearance through reflection, with the virtual atemporality characteristic of meditation and address; its movements and their consequences are presented within linguistic parameters, manifested through a poetic utterance that, textually fixed, itself eludes time. In the plays, time intrudes itself experientially, through the unmediated temporality of performance: moments happen in the theater and within the play, establishing time as a felt reality for characters and audience alike. Time lies at the heart of Shakespeare's dramatic interests, in large part, because of its centrality to the theater for which he wrote.

*The Winter's Tale*—with its memories fond and bitter, its plans and prophecies, its tales and ballads, and its striking leap of sixteen years—explores the experience of temporality with a prominence and self-consciousness unusual even for Shakespeare. As Inga-Stina Ewbank notes, "while in *The Winter's Tale* time has largely disappeared from the verbal imagery, it is all the more intensely present as a controlling and shaping figure behind the dramatic structure and technique." In keeping with the other pairs that serve to organize this dramatic diptych—Sicilia and Bohemia, youth and age, Nature and Art, rosemary and rue—*The Winter's Tale* presents human engagement with time in terms of a duality edging into paradox. On one hand, humanity lives in the present, a moment so complete in its immediacy that it seems to escape time entirely. This experience of the Now, and its apparent eternity, infuses Polixenes' description of the childhood innocence that he and Leontes shared:

We were, fair queen,
Two lads that thought there was no more behind
But such a day to-morrow as to-day,
And to be boy eternal.
His lines undermine the very idea of time, for the word today, charged with the force of the "eternal," subsumes behind and tomorrow in such a way that temporal distinctions blend and dissolve. Past and future warp into the seemingly boundless expanse of the present, and sequence unravels into a moment of Wordsworthian innocence, experienced as a condition outside Time's hourglass.

For all its apparent timelessness, however, this Edenic state is a memory, telescoped into what Prospero calls "the dark backward and abysm of time" (The Tempest, I.ii.50) in part by the very tense through which it is articulated. The stage presence of Leontes and Polixenes, both adults, constitutes a visual reminder of temporality, in which the present is barely an instant, collapsed into recollection by inexorable change. As Time boasts,

    I witness to
    The times that brought them in; so shall I do
    To th' freshest things now reigning, and make stale
    The glistening of this present, as my tale
    Now seems to it.

These words recall the temporal world of the sonnets, where existence is subject to the ironies of mutability as it plays its movement from "glistening" to "staleness"—a world where "every thing that grows / Holds in perfection but a little moment." From this vantage point, time confronts humanity with the inevitability of consequence, since action, in the temporal realm, always has outcomes, foreseen or unforeseen: "I, that please some, try all, both joy and terror / Of good and bad, that makes and unfolds error" (IV.i.1-2). The contrast is pronounced: if the present in The Winter's Tale is the realm of an almost prelapsarian joy, time is the province of memory and anticipation, nostalgia and longing, regret and foreboding. It is, in short, the province of narrative, public and private, that cognitive and social domain where the images of events assume a fixed relationship with each other.

That presence and temporality rule this play, halved as it is by its dramatic caesura between III.iii and IV.ii, comes as no surprise, for Shakespeare's dramaturgical break forces characters and audience alike to come to terms with time's changes and consequences. But the sixteen-year gap signaled by Time's appearance is only one of many instances in which temporal change dramatically and ironically counterpoints the present. Down to the level of individual lines, like those fondly spoken by Polixenes, the play displays a temporal intricacy rivaled, perhaps, only by Shakespeare's other romances. As a number of critics have noted, Shakespearean drama is characterized, as a rule, by relatively little antecedent action: unlike the drama of Kyd or Tourneur, its action falls largely within a present that moves forward to its culmination. But the past bears on the present of The Winter's Tale through a number of subtler inclusions: the childhood of the two kings; the courtship of Hermione; the Old Shepherd's wife; the man who "Dwelt by a churchyard," frozen in Mamillius' "sad tale" (II.i.25-32); numerous moments of story and remembrance. This layering of past on present and present on past becomes more pronounced as the very stage moment in which the characters move is set against the broader passage of years, and as these years in turn verge upon an ever-emerging present. As The Winter's Tale progresses, in other words, it acquires—like Pericles, Cymbeline, and The Tempest—a temporal double vision tonally reminiscent of the opening lines of a fourth-century Chinese poem: "Swiftly the years, beyond recall. / Solemn the stillness of this fair morning."

For the play's characters, double vision of this kind eventually bridges the gap between memory and the present, between the frozen image of the past and the often robust vitality of the moment. For the play's audience, such multiple perspective constitutes the experiential matrix against which the play's action unfolds.
Like the characters, though at an aesthetic remove, the audience is faced during performance with a dramatic world subject to the laws of temporal relationship, and with a stage present that is actual, changing, always somewhat outside the structures of time created to enclose it. *The Winter's Tale*, then, Shakespeare's most explicit treatment of time, counterpoints the twin experiences of temporality and presence, not only in its dramatic action, but also in its narrative and theatrical effects. As elsewhere in his plays, Shakespeare grounds thematic issues within theatrical experience, and makes performance fundamental to dramatic meaning through the audience's cognitive engagement. In relation to both characters and audience, *The Winter's Tale* displays a profound concern with perception and its consequences, and with the personal and social challenges posed by temporality in life and in the theater. In this chapter, we will trace Shakespeare's broader dramaturgical balancing in *The Winter's Tale* of time's outlines with a dramatic and theatrical present that can never be fully "staled." In so doing, we will see that this strange but powerful Shakespearean play, like *Everyman* and *Mankind*, forges clear experiential links between the dramatic action on stage and the stage's "action" on its audience.⁶

When Time exits from the middle of *The Winter's Tale*, he leaves a world disrupted by his passage. For the play's characters, time's impact is concentrated in "that wide gap" (IV.i.7) between the dramatic present and the events of the first three acts, a temporal fissure during which, as Time informs us, Leontes has continued to mourn "Th' effects of his fond jealousies" (1. 18) and Perdita and Florizel have grown up. This span, though, bears differently upon the various characters. Those who have lived through it, the members of the now older generation, have hardened themselves against time by maintaining a sharp remembrance of its losses, a remembrance that they are nonetheless powerless to erase. Camillo misses Sicilia and still feels bonds of loyalty to Leontes, whose "sorrows" remain so tangible that Camillo calls them "feeling" (IV.ii.7-8). Polixenes, too, lives in memory, burdened with a past that refuses to fade:

> Of that fatal country Sicilia, prithee speak no more, whose very naming punishes me with the remembrance of that penitent (as thou call'st him) and reconcil'd king, my brother, whose loss of his most precious queen and children are even now to be afresh lamented. (11. 20-25)

Focused through trauma's inward gaze, time only underscores the memory of what has been lost, and in its irrevocability the past seems more real than the present that has taken its place.

Polixenes, however, has more recent concerns to temper his bitterness: shifting from friend to father, he urges Camillo to accompany him on a mission to discover the cause of his son's disappearance from court. The scene likewise shifts, and before the two arrive at the Shepherd's cottage the stage is given to Perdita and Florizel, who demonstrate a markedly different relationship to time. Neither is burdened by the events at Sicilia, and both show an attitude toward their more immediate pasts less rigorous than that of their elders. Perdita says nothing of her early years as a shepherdess, and Florizel hides the signs of his past by donning rustic clothes. In response to Perdita's concern over his father's disapproval of their match, he modulates between the languages of present and future and affirms a love outside such threat:

> To this I am most constant,  
> Though destiny say no. Be merry, gentle!  
> Strangle such thoughts as these with any thing  
> That you behold the while. Your guests are coming:  
> Lift up your countenance, as it were the day  
> Of celebration of that nuptial, which  
> We two have sworn shall come.

(IV.iv.45-51)
Both are characterized by this forward-gazing anticipation, conceiving of the future as a never-ending continuation of the present, with "such a day tomorrow as to-day." In their innocence, free of time's psychic damages, they dwell on this present and on the sounds, objects, and gestures that constitute it. Florizel's description inscribes Perdita within the moment:

    Each your doing
    (So singular in each particular)
    Crowns what you are doing in the present deeds,
    That all your acts are queens.

(11. 143-46)

Perdita, more the realist, nevertheless allows hope to "strangle such thoughts." "O Lady Fortune," she exclaims, "Stand you auspicious!" (11. 51-52).

When Polixenes and Camillo enter disguised, then, and the sheep-shearing scene gets under way, the stage contains a mixture of attitudes toward time and its relationship to the present. On one hand, it offers the lovers, with their sense of the immediate and their vision of possibility; on the other, the king and counselor, aged by time and scarred by its memories, their awareness of consequence a potential threat to Perdita and Florizel. By this point in the play, though, the audience has had its own experience of dramatic time shifted and modulated, through the play's broader dramaturgical rhythms. Theatrical versions of immediacy and temporality are counterpointed throughout the play's development, often in sharp juxtaposition, as we can see if we review the audience's comprehension of dramatic time in the first three acts. There is, for instance, the play's beginning, in which the stage image of friendship between Polixenes and Leontes, the present's version of the past's innocence, is abruptly dispelled by the King's distorted jealousy. William H. Matchett points out sexual ambiguities in the lines between Polixenes and Hermione and claims that the audience is made to feel suspicious,7 but these ambiguities are subliminal and largely recollected, if at all, in light of Leontes' misinterpretation of them. More pronounced is the audience's awareness of their "timeless" friendship, of which Archidamus has said "I think there is not in the world either malice or matter to alter it" (I.i.33-34) and of which Polixenes has described the childhood origins. The initial stage interaction between the characters does little to dispel these accounts: gracefulness and compliment characterize the scene's beginning, and the "gestural dialogue between hands" that Charles Frey discerns throughout the play here expresses bond and affection.8 When Leontes "tremor cordis " does appear, it constitutes an intrusion of dissonance into the scene's easiness, and the stage present becomes abruptly shadowed by the threat of disturbance: "I am angling now, / Though you perceive me not how I give line" (I.ii.180-81). The words angling and line are revealing, for it is the essence of Leontes' jealousy to form imaginary connections between people and between incidents, quickly generating a web of misperception and suspicion that includes even Mamillius and Camillo. As Leontes begins to act on these misperceptions, consequences multiply with rigorous inevitability, and the stage present becomes increasingly pressured by a network of events, imaginary as well as real.

One of the most remarkable features of the developing Sicilia sequence (I.i through III.ii) is its narrative tightness and autonomy; omitting Perdita's survival, it could stand by itself, brief but complete. Its incidents are relentlessly forward-moving and continuous. For one thing, the narrative line of Leontes' jealousy and its effects is, to an extent unusual even in Shakespearean tragedy, unrelieved by breaks. Hermione's exchange with Mamillius constitutes only thirty-two lines, and the scene in which Cleomines and Dion describe their visit to Delphos is shorter still (twenty-two lines). Far from serving as self-contained interruptions, both are themselves interrupted, and devoured, by the omnivorous main action: the former by Leontes' entrance, the latter by a reminder of the proclamations against Hermione. For another thing, incidents and details are introduced and linked with a high degree of narrative continuity. Shakespeare changed the source material of Pandosto to increase the "probability" of the story's incidents,9 and he did so, in part, by tightening its plot connections: whereas Greene's young prince Garinter dies suddenly, for instance, Shakespeare's Mamillius
sickens and dies specifically out of grief concerning his mother's predicament. This tight sense of antecedents and consequences focuses audience attention even more closely on the unfolding narrative sequence, on dramatic time in its actual and potential outlines.

The sequence concludes with a pronounced note of closure, heightened by the rapidity with which its final events take place. The oracle's tersely declarative pronouncements reveal the truth concerning the preceding actions, a truth the audience and all the characters save Leontes have known. Entering with news of Hermione's death, Paulina condemns his folly by outlining the consequences of his misconceived actions on Polixenes, Camillo, his abandoned daughter, Mamillius, and Hermione: "O, think what they have done, / And then run mad indeed—stark mad!" (III.ii.182-83). Her speech (11. 175-214) rings with summary force, and—together with Leontes' heartbroken resolve to bury his wife and son in a single grave, to display an account of "the causes of their death" (1. 237), and to visit it every day for the rest of his life—it gives the sequence of the Sicilian first half what J. H. P. Pafford has called "a Miltonic close fitting for the end of a tragedy."10

"The King shall live without an heir, if that which is lost be not found" (III.ii.134-36). A strand remains incomplete—an opening, as it were, in the closed sequence of action and its consequence that the audience has followed for over two acts. With Antigonus' entrance in III.iii, the narrative sequence continues. But the audience's temporal comprehension of The Winter's Tale's events and its orientation toward the stage and its actions shift in two important ways. First, attention no longer centers on the inevitable triumph of truth and the stripping away of a central character's delusion. Throughout the Sicilian sequence, the audience has indeed enjoyed an Olympian distance upon Leontes' jealousy, secure in its awareness of the actual state of events. The audience, in other words, stands in the position of superior awareness that Bertrand Evans considers one of the characteristic dramatic principles of Shakespearean drama;11 and although its awareness is far from complete, the audience's understanding of temporal outlines is more closely aligned to that of Time than to that of the action's participants. Once the truth is revealed, though, subsequent actions become openended: although the oracle's pronouncement suggests further resolution, this final clause is cast as a riddle and contains no details about how the resolution might be achieved. Uncertainty, therefore, replaces inevitability; the outcome of events becomes less determinate, less subject to rigorously constrained consequence. Ironic awareness is replaced by uncertainty, and the audience, like Perdita, is left in the wilderness—a wilderness, in this case, of the stage and its unpredictability.

Second, the coherent narrative of the first part is replaced by a remarkable sequence of incidents, each of which is characterized by striking immediacy, and all of which stand in sharp juxtaposition to each other. Immediacy is achieved partly through a dazzling array of "theatrical" effects: effects of sound, movement, and spectacle that display the stage at its most physical. Such effects are strikingly absent from the Sicilian sequence of the play's first half: although the earlier sequence is characterized, as Daniel Seltzer points out, by numerous examples of "intimate stage business" between characters,12 there is nothing to compare with the storm effects (suggested by the text), the famous bear, the sound of hunting horns, or the archaic staginess of Time's entrance. The immediacy of the sequence's incidents is heightened by their almost Brechtian juxtaposition: the mixture of tones and effects gives each a kind of discontinuous autonomy on stage, and this sudden, unprepared-for variety, following the vastly more streamlined narrative of the first half, forces abrupt, disorienting shifts in audience response.

Matchett observes that this sequence wrenches us "from our response to the plot and the action to a wider perspective. . . . Challenging our awareness, it opens us to fresh experience."13 He discusses this shift in terms of the art/nature opposition, but his observations apply still more valuably to the basic level of audience attention that this sequence engages. On this level, the sense of "fresh experience" is a result of elements that draw attention away from broader temporal outlines and heighten the autonomy of individual stage moments, much as the storm scenes do to the dramatic world of King Lear. Such "fresh experience" in Shakespearean (as in all) drama is that experience uniquely available in the theater: of a stage present existing in its own
right, intruding itself into the very "tales" that dramatists make it tell. When Time stands forward to signal the leap of years, in other words, he addresses an audience that is already undergoing its own experiential leap, from prescience and irony to uncertainty and surprise, in the face of a stage turned strange and new.

As with the graceful present of the play's first scene, this scenic presence is diverted and distanced. The couplets of Time's soliloquy telescope the seacoast sequence into the past and return the audience to the play's main narrative line. But this line, with its rigid chain of consequence, has been weakened by the appearance of incidents and stage elements outside its projected outcomes, and the theatrical moment in all its presence and autonomy looms large in time's subsequent developments. Indeed, the stage is now set for the sheep-shearing scene, one of the longest scenes of heightened stage presence in all of Shakespeare. This scene is introduced three times—by Time, by Polixenes and Camillo, and by Autolycus—and each introduction contributes a nonnarrative "timelessness" to its action. The first two are usually viewed as connective scenes, linking past and present, and indeed (as we have seen) each does include references to the play's first half. Oddly, though, these references are less conjunctive than disjunctive: Time's reference to Leontes, after all, is offered to take "leave" of him (IV.i.17), and Polixenes finally urges Camillo to "lay aside / the thoughts of Sicilia" (IV.ii.51-52). Both scenes look ahead to Florizel and Perdita, and both do so, in part, by distancing the play's first half. As a result, the sheepshearing scene bears few reminders of the Sicilian past, and even the Bohemian past is rendered less consequential to the festival present: Shakespeare omits the marriage plans that Greene's Egistus made for his son Dorastus and has Polixenes visit the Shepherd's cottage as much from curiosity as from suspicion.

The third introduction to the sheep-shearing scene also introduces one of its main participants. Despite the number of critical attempts to integrate Autolycus into the play's thematic structure, this stage rogue continues to baffle the play's readers (while delighting its spectators). He is introduced later (IV.iii) than probably any other pivotal Shakespearean character, yet he plays no part in the play's concluding scene. He becomes almost a genius of the pastoral festivities, yet he was once a member of Florizel's retinue, a detail introduced so casually (between stanzas of a song) that it risks being missed. But if we put aside attempts to incorporate Autolycus into the play's thematic framework and concentrate, instead, on his stage presence, his dramatic function within the play (and within the sheep-shearing scene in particular) becomes clearer. In a play that counterpoints modes of time and presence, Autolycus represents life (and drama) at their most theatrically immediately.

Speaking to the Clown in a self-dramatizing third-person, Autolycus characterizes himself as a figure of Protean identity:

I know this man well; he hath been since an ape-bearer, then a process-server, a bailiff, then he compass'd a motion of the Prodigal Son, and married a tinker's wife within a mile where my land and living lies; and, having flown over many knavish professions, he settled only in rogue. Some call him Autolycus. (IV.iii.94-100)

On stage, he displays a similar fluidity of roles, moving between them with an improvisational randomness that suggests his opportunism and delight in mischief. Like the mischief figures of morality drama, he plays upon the moment, and the impulsiveness of his actions makes them strikingly self-contained. His major contribution to the main plot (discovering the Old Shepherd's secret and deciding to act on it) originates largely out of whim: "Though I am not naturally honest, I am so sometimes by chance" (IV.iv.712-13). Moreover, like Nowadays, New-Guise, and Nought, his incessant acting and tumbling prose are charged with a vibrant self-assertiveness that draws attention away from more serious matters and toward himself. His wonder at the rustics' response to his ballads—"No hearing, no feeling, but my sir's song, and admiring the nothing of it" (IV.iv.612-13)—captures much of the distracting effect of his stage presence as a whole. Like the wares he hawks, Autolycus himself is largely an "unconsider'd trifle" (IV.iii.26), "inconsequential" in the strictest sense, a carefully placed dramaturgical tangent to his world's fixed sequence.
His appearance before and during the sheep-shearing scene, then, contributes to its self-contained immediacy: along with the Shepherd's dance that precedes him and the "Saltiers" who succeed him, his presence during the scene—with his "ribbons of all colors i' th' rainbow" (11. 204-5), songs and ballads, and other antics—constitute some of the play's most frenetic stage activity. Even before Autolycus' entrance as ballad-monger, this scene has drawn characters and audience alike into an experience of atemporality. Among the characters, the past is suspended almost by consent: as we have seen, Polixenes and Camillo suspend memories of Sicilia, and Perdita and Florizel "strangle" thoughts of his superior rank. Time and its effects (as well as its threat) remain present during the scene, especially in the disguised visitors, but the emphasis is on the moment, and even age is brought within its domain. Matching Florizel's "timeless" admiration, Camillo tells Perdita: "I should leave grazing, were I of your flock, / And only live by gazing" (11. 109-10). Polixenes, too, participates in the festival atmosphere to an extent not generally acknowledged in discussions of the scene; his famous debate with Perdita concerning the "streak'd gillyvors," for all its potential allusion to Perdita's station and its implications, is largely playful, a quality more evident in the theater than in the text, and one that tends to undercut threat. Moreover, when later in the scene the Clown remarks that "My father and the gentlemen are in sad talk" (1. 310), Polixenes is "refreshed" enough by the entertainment to request the Saltiers. It would be a mistake to claim that Polixenes "forgets" his mission, even temporarily, but it would also be a mistake to neglect the extent to which even he surrenders to his disguise and submits to the scene and its diversions. Both visitors could, with truth, join Perdita in her confession: "Methinks I play as I have seen them do / In Whitsun pastorals. Sure this robe of mine / Does change my disposition" (11. 133-35).

The audience, too, is offered a "fresh experience" of the stage present, one that tends to subsume awareness of time and its consequences. Francis Berry claims that the audience, remembering the play's first half, "frames" the sheep-shearing scene and modifies its response to the lovers in light of their parents' experience. But pictorial metaphors such as this are misleading, since the theater is a temporal as well as a spatial medium: earlier moments are rapidly distanced in performance, and memory often requires explicit reminders if it is to "frame" the stage present with what has already occurred. Such reminders are few, and the audience's awareness of threat is subordinated, in large part, to the scene's compelling immediacy, an immediacy heightened by the innocent love of Perdita and Florizel, by Autolycus' antics, and by a gracefulness of gesture finding its natural culmination in dance. The audience never completely abandons its apprehensive detachment from the lovers, but we must not underestimate how much the stage draws all who watch into its easiness.

With the exit of the dancing Saltiers, however, and Polixenes' interruption of the festivities, the audience is abruptly returned to an awareness of consequence and the claims that time exerts on the present. If Leontes' earlier attack of jealousy is painful because of the idyllic picture we have been given of his childhood friendship with Polixenes, the latter's remark to Camillo—"'Tis time to part them" (1. 344)—is even more chilling, because we have been given an extended stage version of such carefreeness. Like Prospero's truncation of The Tempest's wedding masque, Polixenes' subsequent explosion completes the disillusionment for the audience and for Perdita and Florizel, returning the former to its awareness of consequence as it returns the latter to the realities of their disparate stations. Perdita tells Florizel:

Beseech you
Of your own state take care. This dream of mine
Being now awake, I'll queen it no inch farther,
But milk my ewes, and weep.

(11. 447-50)

Just as Time makes "stale" the "glistening" present, so Polixenes' rage makes the festival timelessness seem itself a dream.
When Camillo persuades the lovers to sail to Sicilia, the audience returns one last time to the play's broader narrative outline, resuming a more privileged distance concerning events. Freed from the tragic irony of the first part, the audience now enjoys the perspective of comic irony. With the secret of Perdita's birthright secure, the audience watches the characters, each of whom lacks at least one piece of information, move toward a reconciliation with romance inevitability. All converge on Sicilia: Florizel with Perdita, Polixenes with Camillo, Autolycus with the rustics and their secret. Audience attention centers on the logic of events, which unfolds with a neatness both providential and artistic; time, "that makes and unfolds errors," begins to right the situation, and the audience is allowed the omniscience to appreciate its workings. Anticipation runs high, looking forward to a reconciliation that will redeem the present from the apparent irrevocability of the past, awaiting the wonder on the part of the characters when the apparently miraculous is disclosed.

It is a measure of the dramaturgical complexity of *The Winter's Tale* that these expectations are at once fulfilled, unfulfilled, and more than fulfilled. On one hand, the Gentlemen who report the reunion between Leontes and Perdita underscore the miracle of the encounter, calling it "so like an old tale, that the verity of it is in strong suspicion" (V.ii.28-29). On the other hand, despite Nevill Coghill's attempt to defend the effectiveness of these messenger speeches, if there is any clear scène à faire in the play, the disclosure of Perdita's identity is it—since, in fulfilling the oracle's prophecy, it gives Leontes an heir, Florizel a wife, and Perdita a royal family. The reunion effects a reconciliation between age and youth, past and present, Sicilia and Bohemia. Such a scene the audience expects to see; ironically, the messenger scene is disappointing precisely because *The Winter's Tale* is not a tale but a play, and a play's most powerful moments are its stage moments. The very quality of the reunion that "lames report to follow it, and undoes description to do it" (11. 57-58) is that quality of immediacy the stage provides. We want the scene to be represented as dramatic present, not deflected into a narrative past.

The usual justification for the messenger scene is that the reunion is described to lend focus to the final scene, but this explanation underestimates both the disappointment of the former and the theatrical coup of the latter. For the audience, there is no play beyond this reunion; at least this is what the earlier scenes have indicated. The oracle's only prophecy concerns the lost child, as does Time's anticipation of the play's second half:

> What of her ensues  
> I list not prophesy; but let Time's news  
> Be known when 'tis brought forth. A shepherd's daughter  
> And what to her adheres, which follows after,  
> Is th' argument of Time.

(IV.i.25-29)

In terms of the audience's expectations since the shipwreck, Perdita's return represents the projected end of the narrative movement, and the audience has anticipated it as final. To extend the play beyond this promised conclusion is to press stage action, once again, beyond the apparent confines of plot.

We have been studying *The Winter's Tale* in terms of two interrelating perceptions: that of time, evidenced through its effects of change and consequence, and that of the moment, experienced as something seemingly beyond these effects. We have explored, too, how the play represents a complex dramaturgical manipulation of temporality as it is experienced within performance: drawing attention away from narrative outlines into the stage present, distancing the present by the perceived intrusion of time and its effects. In the play's own vocabulary, occasioned by Perdita's gift of "rosemary and rue" to the disguised king and counsellor, we have been exploring the interacting rhythms of something like "grace and remembrance" (IV.iv.74-76) and the ways in which Shakespeare builds these rhythms into the play's dramaturgy and stagecraft. The statue scene, justly praised as one of the culminations of Shakespeare's art, represents the play's crowning interpenetration of these two realms of temporal experience.
As in *The Tempest*, the final reunion of this play is orchestrated by a master of ceremonies in command of the secrets behind external events. When Paulina reappears with Leontes at the beginning of the fifth act, however, she does so, not as a provider of second chances, but as a spokesperson for memory at its most fixed, keeping fresh the remembrance of an apparently irretrievable past and feeding its hold on the present with almost unpleasant insistence. Cleomines appeals to Leontes to "Do as the heavens have done, forget your evil, / With them, forgive yourself (V.i.5-6), and Dion urges him to consider his heirless kingdom; but Paulina, who "hast the memory of Hermione . . . in honor" (11. 50-51), pressures his conscience with the claims of the past:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Were I the ghost that walk'd, I'd bid you mark} \\
\text{Her eye, and tell me for what dull part in't} \\
\text{You chose her; then I'd shriek, that even your ears} \\
\text{Should rift to hear me, and the words that follow'd} \\
\text{Should be "Remember mine."}
\end{align*}
\]

(11. 63-67)

To the servant's praise of Perdita's beauty, Paulina laments:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{O Hermione,} \\
\text{As every present time doth boast itself} \\
\text{Above a better gone, so must thy grave} \\
\text{Give way to what's seen now!}
\end{align*}
\]

(11. 95-98)

Her lines deny the possibility that loss can ever be replaced, or that the present can in any way heal the past. At the same time, unknown to Leontes and to the audience, these lines are half-truths, since the play's conclusion will dramatize a transcendence of memory and a better "present" that will fill time's grave. In their paradoxical truths and untruths, Paulina's lines anticipate the transformation of time that structures the statue scene itself: a transformation from the realm of memory, associated with lifelessness and sepulchral coldness, to the more vibrant present of "what's seen now."

This transformation, when it occurs, is seamless in its movement from one temporal vision to the other. Leontes' initial response to the statue's unveiling is an acute "remembrance," directed toward a past so cunningly recreated in stone that its image is resurrected, with equal vividness, in memory: "O, thus she stood, / Even with such life of majesty (warm life, / As now it coldly stands), when first I woo'd her!" (V.iii.34-36). The statue, in other words, confronts Leontes with the past and with his responsibility for its loss, while paradoxically bringing it so vividly into the present that this loss seems to vanish. As he continues to gaze, the harsh line between past and present blurs, shading the memorial presence of the statue into the living presence of Hermione. In a word that reverberates throughout the scene, time's apparent irrevocability is "mocked" by a reappearance that seemingly occurs outside time's laws, and memory is both dissolved and brought to life in the face of the present's revelation. With this dramatic stroke, Shakespeare moves beyond Aristotle, whose third form of *anagnorisis* bears striking resemblance to the statue scene: "The third kind of recognition is through memory: we see one thing and recall another, as a character in the *Cyprians* of Dicaeogenes saw the picture and wept, or the recognition scene in the lay of Alcinous, where Odysseus listens to the bard and weeps at his memories, and this leads to the recognition" (*Poetics*, XVI). As Aristotle's examples make clear, art serves a function much like memory, giving form to the flux of experience, and in Aristotle's moments of recognition it points to the life from which it has been abstracted. Recognition in *The Winter's Tale*, by contrast, moves beyond memory into the miraculous: it occurs when what is seen actually becomes what is recalled, through a transformation that merges past and present, image and life, narrative and a
moment beyond its predictions.

Paulina commands the statue to "Strike all that look upon with marvel" (1.100), and the final accomplishment of Shakespeare's stagecraft in The Winter's Tale lies in the audience's inclusion in the striking marvel of this scene. The stage reconciliation that the audience was denied in V.iii takes place, but the disclosure that makes it possible, Hermione's survival, comes as a revelation for the audience as well as for the characters. The earlier image of Hermione falling to the stage floor, Paulina's confirmation of her death, Leontes' plans to bury her, and Antigonus' ghost-like dream apparition (recalling "visitors from the dead" elsewhere in Shakespeare), all establish the Queen's death as a dramatic reality for the audience, breaking sharply with Shakespeare's usual practice (in plays such as Twelfth Night and Pericles) of making his audience confidants to all secrets and partners to all contrivance. Much more in the manner of Beaumont and Fletcher, Shakespeare withholds a narrative detail, the revelation of which transforms both the outcome of the play and the significance of what has preceded it. That the play hinges on such a deception is, by now, a commonplace in criticism. The Winter's Tale. But, like many Shakespearean commonplaces, its full implications for audience response remain imperfectly understood, even though dramaturgical decisions invariably adjust the audience's relationship with the developing stage action. Most obviously, the audience is forced into a collective experience that mirrors that of the stage characters, chiefly Leontes, whose discovery constitutes the scene's principle focus. Like Leontes, the audience is initially forced into its own moment of remembrance. It matters little at what point the audience realizes that Hermione is alive; when the statue shows signs of life, the audience scans its memories, recalling the play's earlier scenes, trying to find the connections that could justify a development so beyond expectation. Hermione explains to Perdita that she remained in hiding to await the fulfillment of the oracle's prophecy, but this detail, like all others in the closing scene, is subsumed in the moment itself, luminous in its freedom from anticipation. In place of the ironic superiority over characters usually enjoyed during such dramatic reconciliations, Shakespeare creates a theatrical experience for which, as we noted earlier, the critical lexicon lacks descriptive terminology, an experience that constitutes the opposite of irony, for in this instant, as the statue becomes that which it has commemorated, the present is vastly more than we thought: fuller and richer, freed from irony's frameworks.

By setting the statue scene outside the audience's comprehension of plot and time, and by making the stage action, literally, beyond the anticipation that has sought to contain it, Shakespeare allows the stage itself, one last time, to assume a heightened autonomy. As in the sheep-shearing scene, attention is directed toward individual objects, movements, and gestures, carefully orchestrated by dramatic speech highlighting the particular. Polixenes' "The very life seems warm upon her lip" and Leontes' "The fixure of her eye has motion in't" (11.66-67) recall, in their specificity, Autolycus' ribbons, the "flow'rs of winter," and (most tellingly) Florizel's admiration of Perdita's movements:

When you do dance, I wish you
A wave o' th' sea, that you might ever do
Nothing but that; move still, still so,
And own no other function.

(IV.iv.140-43)

Ewbank writes of this scene: "Speeches are short, the diction plain, the language almost bare of imagery: as if Shakespeare is anxious not to distract attention from the significance of action and movement. . . . An unusual number of speeches are devoted just to underlining the emotions and postures of people on stage, as in Paulina's words to Leontes: 'I like your silence, it the more shows off/Your wonder' [11. 21-22]."21 This shift of emphasis away from language and toward gesture is heightened by the audience's own attention on the actress playing Hermione, as it watches for signs of breathing and movement, trying to detect the gesture that will reveal whether or not Hermione lives. The final discovery of The Winter's Tale, then, lies in a surrender to the moment; and for the audience, this involves a surrender to the stage moment, in which the most riveting
activity is pure gesture outlined, almost pictorially, within the stillness of performance, and to which the most appropriate response is rapt attention and "wonder." With the accompanying music, movement and gesture acquire balletic expressiveness.

It is easy to see why the play's conclusion has tempted critics toward Christian interpretations of the play, especially in light of Paulina's reference to redemption from death and her pronouncement that "It is requir'd / You do awake your faith" (11. 94-95), and in light of the word grace, which recurs throughout the play like a musical motif. Though strictly Christian frameworks are hard to attach to the play as a whole, the final scene is indeed charged with an almost religious sense of grace as something freely given, beyond desert. Hermione's reappearance provides characters and audience with a development beyond the apparent consequence of events as the play has suggested them, with "the experience of restoration after total loss." In this sense, the scene is beyond time, or at least beyond time as it has constituted a reality in the minds of characters and audience. If time participates in the play's denouement, it is less the stock figure of the play's middle than a force of mystery, always outside comprehension's hold, revealing itself in the miracles of the present. For the audience, grace is born in the "wink of an eye" (V.ii.110), when the stage action severs itself from rigorous connection with the "dramatic time" that has ruled for much of the play.

In the midst of its transformations, however, such grace is never completely free of remembrance. The first four acts have presented grace in terms of freshness, innocence, and gracefulness of gesture and bearing: Hermione has been called "a gracious innocent soul" (II.iii.29), and Perdita was described by Time as "now grown in grace / Equal with wond'ring" (IV.i.24-25). This grace, like the youth of Polixenes and Leontes, is timeless because it has not yet been subjected to the laws of change and consequence. The "grace" of the final scene, however, is richer because more dearly bought, and the passage of time from which it emerges leaves traces to spark remembrance. For one thing, the scene contains reminders of irreversible change. Hermione has grown old: "Hermione was not so much wrinkled, nothing / So aged as this seems" (11. 28-29). And while Perdita has found a mother, she has also acquired a history, which, like Prospero's narration to Miranda in Act I of The Tempest, marks her emergence into a world that contains, among other things, time and its changes. Also apparent are reminders of consequences not redeemed by the present. Paulina recalls the dead Antigonus with moving regret, and Leontes' decree that she should marry Camillo does not fully dispel this awareness of "wither'd" loss (1. 133). Similarly, the scene lacks Mamillius, who actually was buried. Although he is never explicitly mentioned in the final scene, he has been mourned as recently as V.i, and his absence leaves the reunited family vaguely incomplete. While Florizel serves as a replacement for Mamillius, he also stands as a reminder of his loss.

The play's conclusion, in other words, resolves the plot with its image of a world ransomed from time, but it nevertheless remains marked by the memory of what time has destroyed. The paradox of temporal experience resolves itself into a duality of perception, a double vision in which time and actuality infuse and qualify each other, a balance of faculties appropriate to a world of coexistent loss and gain. The play has shown that time's effects are inescapable, since action, for all the world's miracles, does have consequences. One cannot escape the reality of change in a sublunary world ruled by mutability's "staling" hand. Festivity must end: Perdita and Florizel enter the cycle of the generations, and Autolycus, after his appearance in the penultimate scene, simply vanishes. Nonetheless, through Shakespeare's manipulation of the stage and its narrative possibilities, the audience feels the rigor of temporality open, again and again, into a stage presence always slightly beyond time's changes and consequences. Sicilia gives way to the wilderness of Bohemia; Polixenes, despite his age and station, succumbs in part both to the festival's liveliness and Perdita's charm. Most of all, in the play's final stroke, the audience discovers that, when it tries to predict time's outlines and outcomes, it risks amazement—that the present can mock not only consequence, but comprehension as well.

Notes

1 Sonnet 73, 11. 1-2.

3 Sonnet 15, 11. 1-2.

4 "It was Shakespeare's usual practice, histories apart, to bring the whole action of his plays within the frame of the picture, leaving little or nothing to narrative exposition" William Archer, *Play-Making: A Manual of Craftsmanship* [New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1912] p. 98).

5 T'ao Ch'ien (A.D. 365-427). Arthur Waley, trans., *A Hundred and Seventy Chinese Poems* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1919; popular ed. 1923), p. 116; quoted (with slight inaccuracy) and discussed in William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1930), pp. 30-32. This thematic duality of the temporal and the atemporal no doubt drew upon the opposition present in the Elizabethan/Jacobean conception of temporality, in which time was viewed both as an unchanging realm of universal abstraction and as the more familiar realm of contingency and temporal change. Bernard Beckerman terms these two notions of time *iconic* and *historic*, and suggests that the development of Tudor drama saw a general movement from the former conception of time to the latter; see "Historic and Iconic Time in Late Tudor Drama," in *Shakespeare: Man of the Theater*, ed. Kenneth Muir, Jay L. Halio, and D. J. Palmer (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1983), pp. 47-54. While the thematic celebration of unchanging ideals may have been relatively muted by the reign of James, *The Winter's Tale* demonstrates that the theatrical manifestation of iconic time in the stage's immediacy was being explored with unabated dramatic interest.

6 Investigating this connection brings us into the company of those critics who have approached this play's dramaturgy and stagecraft: Nevill Coghill, "Six Points of Stage-Craft in *The Winter's Tale*," *Shakespeare Survey*, 11 (1958), pp. 31-41; William H. Matchett, "Some Dramatic Techniques in *The Winter's Tale*," *Shakespeare Survey*, 22 (1969), pp. 93-107; Barbara A. Mowat, *The Dramaturgy of Shakespeare's Romances* (1976); and Charles Frey, *Shakespeare's Vast Romance: A Study of The Winter's Tale* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1980). *The Winter's Tale* has made itself available to some of the finest "theatrical" readings in Shakespearean criticism, perhaps because (as we have long sensed) its dramatic effects depend more than any other play on its realization in performance. The statue scene alone has been an important school for such readings.


10 Ibid., p. iv. Though Mowat disputes the claim of critics such as E. M. W. Tillyard that Acts I through III constitute the equivalent of Shakespearean tragedy (*The Dramaturgy of Shakespeare's Romances*, pp. 5-21), it is nonetheless striking how dramaturgically similar this concluding scene is to the tragedies and how many
devices it borrows from them: the stage configuration of assembled characters grouped around a locus of suffering, commemoration of the tragic events in the form of narrative, the ironic counterpointing of knowledge and loss.


14 One of the most extensive thematic studies of Autolycus' role within the play is Lee Sheridan Cox, "The Role of Autolycus in The Winter's Tale," Studies in English Literature, 9 (1969), pp. 283-301.

15 Francis Berry, "Word and Picture in the Final Plays," in Later Shakespeare, pp. 93-94.

16 Coghill, "Six Points of Stage-Craft," pp. 38-39. "In practice this scene is among the most gripping and memorable in the play" (p. 39).

17 To a much lesser extent, the reunions between Leontes and Polixenes and between Leontes and Camillo are also "obligatory," and these too are merely reported. The Messenger speeches do contribute something important to the play's conclusion, in part through their narrative activity. The Messengers present the onstage events in the terms of story and fable—"like an old tale" (V.ii.28); "like an old tale still" (1. 61)—contributing to the almost formal narrativity of the play's final scenes. But the scene itself underscores the limits of such narrativity, for the burden of these reports is to suggest how fully the offstage reconciliations exceed the bounds of story—"Such a deal of wonder is broken out within this hour that ballad-makers cannot be able to express it" (11. 23-25); "I never heard of such another encounter, which lames report to follow it, and undoes decription to do it" (11. 56-58)—and to make the conventions of narrative feel inadequate to the "wonder" recounted and (unknown to the audience) soon to be staged. Marjorie Garber discusses the messenger scene in terms of the "inexpressibility topos"; see "'The Rest is Silence': Ineffability and the 'Unscene' in Shakespeare's Plays," in Ineffability: Naming the Unnamable from Dante to Beckett, ed. Peter S. Hawkins and Anne Howland Schrotter (New York: AMS Press, 1984), pp. 47-48.

18 In this role, she anticipates Ariel, who likewise scourges memory in his "ministers of Fate" speech to Alonso, Antonio, and Sebastian: "But remember / (For that's my business to you) that you three / From Milan did supplant good Prospero, / Expos'd unto the sea (which hath requit it) / Him, and his innocent child" (The Tempest, III.iii.68-72).


20 For a discussion of the ways in which Shakespeare uses specific notations in the text to control the theatrical realization of the statue scene, see Jörg Hasler, "Romance in the Theater: The Stagecraft of the 'Statue Scene' in The Winter's Tale," in Shakespeare: Man of the Theater, pp. 203-11.


**FURTHER READING**


Compares *The Winter's Tale* with Robert Greene's *Pandosto*, the prose romance thought to be Shakespeare's source for the play.


Claims that spatio-temporal discontinuities shape the social relationships in the play.


Positions *The Winter's Tale* in the history of Middle English romances according to its manipulation of the pattern of traditional folktale types, most notably the separation of family members and their eventual reunion.


Contends that, in both *Othello* and *The Winter's Tale*, "the examples of Othello and Leontes demonstrate that in a patriarchy the fidelity of wives is the major prop and condition of social order."


Against a religious background, views Leontes' conversion as an overcoming of "mimetic desire."


Contends that *The Winter's Tale* contains "a consistent series of allusions which function as a reinforcement of the tragicomic structure: the harmonious conclusion to potentially tragic events may be seen as analogous to the promised restoration of the [Jacobean] Golden Age."


Claims that the play dramatizes the breakdown in the communicative power of language.


Places the play in its historical context in an effort to appreciate the meaning of several frequently misunderstood scenes, including the theatricality of Leontes' jealousy and the
dramatic function of Autolycus.


Argues that a tragic background looms over the comic elements of The Winter's Tale.


Examines Hermione's statue against Shakespeare's possible source materials in an effort to illuminate his psychological topography.


Deconstructs the claims of many modern interpreters of The Winter's Tale in an effort to expose their ideological assumptions and contrast them with those of Shakespeare's contemporaries.


Explores The Winter's Tale in order to reconstruct Shakespeare's attitude toward James' monarchy; Tylus interprets the play to be "a carefully crafted challenge to the cultural poetics of the Jacobean court."


Examines a puzzling passage in act one, scene two of The Winter's Tale, interpreting it as a reflection of multiple levels of consciousness and self-deception.


Discusses the character of Autolycus, concluding that "Autolycus's unrepentant egotism [is]
an avatar of Shakespeare's creative self."

The Winter's Tale (Vol. 57): Introduction

The Winter's Tale

Scholars concur that The Winter's Tale was written in 1610 or early 1611 and that its earliest known performance was at the Globe Theatre on May 15th, 1611. Historians know that the play, a romance, was performed in 1613 as part of Princess Elizabeth's marriage celebrations, and that Shakespeare’s main source for the play was Robert Green’s Pandosto (1588). From its inception the play has attracted critical attention, although there is little or no consensus about its quality or theme. Many seventeenth- and eighteenth-century
scholars found the play implausible, faulting Leontes's irrational rage and jealousy, the unaccounted sixteen year gap in the plot, and factual inaccuracies such as the mixing of time periods and the reference to a coastline in landlocked Bohemia. Today, scholars agree that the characteristics of the play typify the final period of Shakespeare's writing. However, instead of maintaining that this period represents a decline in Shakespeare's skill, many critics have reexamined the opinion that Shakespeare's final plays are morose and disjointed. Some critics now argue that Shakespeare was at his most innovative during his final period, creating new forms and perfecting themes that had shadowed him throughout his career. As this period has been redefined and gained greater appreciation, literary critics have applied these more positive views to *The Winter's Tale*. In addition, literary scholars have applied new concepts about feminism and emerging historical theories to *The Winter's Tale* in order to gain a better understanding of the play.

In his 1964 essay, Edward W. Tayler reflects upon the critical history of *The Winter's Tale*, arguing that while early critics such as Lytton Strachey doubted Shakespeare's ability in his final period, later scholars such as G. Wilson Knight and E. M. W. Tillyard have been more favorable. Tayler indicates that many modern critics concur that the improbable plot is meant to be symbolic, but they disagree over its meaning. He believes that Shakespeare was concerned ultimately with the relationship between art and nature, a topic which he focused on in his earlier plays and poems, such as *As You Like It* and *Venus and Adonis*. Additionally, Tayler discusses the importance of the pattern of integration and disruption in *The Winter's Tale*, a topic dealt with by Russ McDonald (1985) as well. McDonald states that the language and syntax of the play is difficult, complicated, and irregular. He posits that this tempo reflects the meaning within the plot, and that the plot and linguistic style are tightly intertwined. The critic argues that the marriage of plot and style is a distinctive characteristic of Shakespeare's final works and that both are built on his lifelong study of human nature.

Another topic which has drawn the attention of recent scholars is the sources, influences, and ideologies that shape *The Winter's Tale*. Literary critics agree that the play is based mainly upon Robert Greene's prose romance *Pandosto* (1588). Shakespeare made several key alterations that changed the focus of the play, but the early influence of Greene is still apparent. In addition, scholars note the influence of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1-8 a.d.), particularly on the statue scene in act five of *The Winter's Tale*. Scott F. Crider (1999) investigates the influence of Ovid's Pygmalian tale on this scene, and argues that by making Hermione become flesh again Shakespeare deviates from earlier versions of the story, reflecting a growing Renaissance conviction in the power of love, art, and faith over death. In his 1993 article, Robert Henke traces the influence of the Italian dramatist Battista Guarini on Shakespeare's later plays, arguing that in *The Winter's Tale* Shakespeare created an innovative new dramatic form—the pastoral tragi-comedy. Henke maintains that Shakespeare revolutionized the theater by skillfully bridging tragedy and comedy through the pastoral aspects of the play. Mary Ellen Lamb (1998) considers the influence of traditional women's tales in three of Shakespeare's plays. In her discussion, she examines the gender conflicts that arise from male anxiety over the influence that these women's tales had over children. In conclusion, the critic states that the very title of *The Winter's Tale* refers to the practice of telling folk tales, and maintains that Shakespeare's play suggests the “acceptance rather than rejection of old wives' tales.”

Modern critics have applied new feminist theories to inform their analysis of *The Winter's Tale* as well. Specifically, they are interested in questions about the nature and function of Leontes's fury and the significance of the statue scene at the conclusion of the play in which Hermione is transformed from a statue to woman again. Critics such as David McCandless, M. Lindsay Kaplan, Katherine Eggert, and Lynn Enterline believe that the answers can be found in the interrelation between the patriarchal society and emerging fears of the power of women. McCandless (1990) describes the prevailing beliefs of the time in which women were blamed for original sin and the fall of man, as well as feared for their sexual power and ability to corrupt man. He argues that in the same way that the modern pornographer seeks to destroy the image of the women that he has created, Leontes is filled with a desire to destroy his view of Hermione as a sexually corrupt temptress. Lynn Enterline (1997) states that Hermione's and Paulina's strong rhetorical skills mark their threat against the authority of Leontes. In the end, Hermione learns to maintain her silence and thus
preserve her status. In their 1994 article, M. Lindsey Kaplan and Katherine Eggert place the discussion of women's voice and power within the historical context of women's legal rights during the Elizabethan period. They maintain that *The Winter's Tale* was a means of reevaluating the power of Queen Elizabeth within a patriarchal society in which women were allotted neither a voice nor authority.

**Criticism: Language, Structure, And Plot: Edward W. Tayler (essay date 1964)**


*In the following essay, originally published in 1964, Tayler analyzes the underlying structure of *The Winter's Tale* and identifies the relationship between nature and art as a central concern.*

*The Winter's Tale,* like Book VI of *The Faerie Queene,* exhibits a specialized use of the traditional materials of pastoral in conjunction with an explicit interest in the philosophical problem of Nature versus Art. Discussion must involve, at least initially and briefly, some reference to Shakespeare's earlier work and then to *Cymbeline* and *The Tempest,* both from his last period; for these later works, in particular, share many of the same intellectual concerns as well as the romance form. The last plays suffered a period of criticism in which, like Spenser's Legend of Courtesy, they were dismissed because they resembled insufficiently the work of The Poet's Serious Period. After the sentimental pleasure nineteenth-century critics like Dowden took in visualizing Shakespeare On The Heights in his last years at Stratford, the reaction, led by Lytton Strachey, took the romances in one way or another as evidence of senile decay. Shakespeare's powers were declining; like Spenser he was being bored to death by life and art. In the past twenty years, however, the last plays have received favorable attention from such writers as G. Wilson Knight and E. M. W. Tillyard, who have come to regard the romances as organic extensions of Shakespeare's earlier preoccupations, as complementary to his earlier tragic concerns.

In one way or another the writers of recent criticism have endeavored to lend the last plays dignity by arguing that Shakespeare had more on his mind than cranking out remunerative romances. The verse, in its range and intensity, seems to support the idea that these plays have depths beyond what is usually allowed to the genre of romance. In *Cymbeline,* for example, the generally wooden Posthumus, at long last united to Imogen, exclaims in the moment of their embrace:

Till the tree die!  

Hang there like fruit, my soul,  

(V. v. 263-64)

The sudden power of lines such as these appears to point to a degree of seriousness that seems incompatible with the form of dramatic romance, and in *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest* the percentage of such lines increases.

A convenient example of the kind of intensity of which Shakespeare was capable at this time occurs in *The Winter's Tale* when Leontes describes his state of mind at discovering his wife's supposed infidelity:

In my just censure, in my true opinion!  
Alack for lesser knowledge! how accru'd  
In being so blest! There may be in the cup  
A spider steep'd, and one may drink, depart,

 How blest am I
And yet partake no venom, for his knowledge
Is not infected; but if one present
Th’ abhorr’d ingredient to his eye, make known
How he hath drunk, he cracks his gorge, his sides,
With violent hefts. I have drunk, and seen the spider.

(II.i.36-45)

We are of course at liberty to see the rhetorical mastery and violent strength of verse like this as melodramatic; what is harder is to see it as appropriate to romance. Accordingly, recent criticism has quite properly tried to find “symbolic” and “mythic” undercurrents beneath a “superficial” surface of romance and pastoral elements. D. A. Traversi, for example, maintains that the “plot of The Winter’s Tale is a perfect example of the symbolic technique perfected by Shakespeare in his last plays. It is the story of the division created in love and friendship by the passage of time and by the action of ‘blood,’ and of the healing of those divisions through penitence and renewed personal devotion.”

Granting it seems unwise to dismiss the genre of romance without having scrutinized it at all closely, most of us will nevertheless sympathize with such attempts to lend the last plays a serious purpose, if only because we are dissatisfied with the picture of Shakespeare as an elderly romanticist yawning his way through imitations of Beaumont and Fletcher. The tendency is to seek this serious purpose at some “mythic” or “symbolic” level because the romantic and pastoral elements are generally regarded as merely entertaining.

Putting aside for a moment the knowledge that pastoral does not preclude philosophy, the fact remains that the improbable plots of the last plays invite symbolic interpretation. In each of the plays a royal father loses his offspring through his own passionate excess, so that an initial atmosphere of prosperity and tranquillity precedes a time of confusion and suffering. In each the lost child is restored after living for a time among shepherds or in the wilderness, so that after the period of suffering, and out of the green world, emerges a new atmosphere of prosperity and tranquillity. This symbolic pattern is, however, so overlaid with the highly stylized elements of traditional romance—sublimely faithful love and excessive jealousy, complex incident and intrigue, puppet characterization, mistaken identity, disguisings, coincidence, innocuous poisons, white magic, amiable savages, and the like, that the pattern is hard to discern and harder still to exhibit as part of Shakespeare's conscious or unconscious intention.

Although The Winter's Tale reveals a particularly complete and intense formulation of the “mythic” or “symbolic” pattern that critics suppose to be characteristic of the last plays, this underlying configuration is of such a comprehensive type that it has proved susceptible of translation into a variety of different terms: it may be a derivative pattern of a quasi-psychological kind, as in Tillyard's theory that the last plays represent a vital extension of concerns revealed by Shakespeare during his tragic phase; or it may be an anthropological pattern, a sophisticated vegetation myth, its ultimate meanings looking back on folk ritual; or it may even be, despite the elements of romance, a theological pattern of sin, atonement, and redemption. So far as The Winter's Tale is concerned, the problem is not so much whether the underlying pattern exists, but how it is to be theorized about.

The language and the imagery of the play, remarkably rich in allusions, seem to offer justification for psychological, theological, anthropological, and other interpretations, but my own conviction is that we are not likely to settle anything through appeals to different systems of abstraction; all such systems appear to be so comprehensive as to include the fundamental story elements of which the romances are compounded. My own contribution, in any case, is not to offer a new system of abstractions (for I intend to describe the underlying pattern in as neutral language as possible), but to point out that a fundamental part of the pattern reveals Shakespeare's literary and philosophical concern with Nature and Art. In other words, the “symbolic” pattern of The Winter's Tale, turning on images of the seasons, of birth and death, of the sea as destroyer and savior, works together with the conceptual pattern of Nature and Art.
The division between Nature and Art occupied Shakespeare throughout his career. It is implicit in the pastoral episodes of *As You Like It*, and even as early as *Venus and Adonis* he is toying with the conventional notion of strife between Nature and Art in painting:

Look, when a painter would surpass the life  
In limning out a well-proportioned steed,  
His art with nature's workmanship at strife,  
As if the dead the living should exceed.

(ll. 289-92)

And in reference to a painting of the siege of Troy in *The Rape of Lucrece*:

A thousand lamentable objects there,  
In scorn of nature, art gave lifeless life.

(ll. 1373-74)

The association of “art” with death and “nature” with life persists even so far as the “dead likeness” of Hermione in *The Winter's Tale*, and the commonplace pairing of Nature and Art is alluded to in play after play, reappearing at some length in *Timon of Athens*, shortly before the writing of the last romances. In the opening scene that advertises the main concerns of that play, the Poet and the Painter are discussing an example of the Painter's work, and the Poet is amiably self-important in traditional terms:

I will say of it,  
It tutors nature. Artificial strife  
Lives in these touches, livelier than life.

(I.i.36-38)

Such statements are commonplace, and despite some attempt at variation the similarity of wording implies that Shakespeare produced such literary detritus from his memory on demand, without thought and without effort, as the appropriate occasion presented itself.

Although Shakespeare's use of the division in his allusions to the fine arts is entirely traditional, Nature and Art represented a vital and living problem for him in the ethical speculations of the last plays. In *Cymbeline* the beginnings of what is to be an intense preoccupation may be glimpsed in one of the major ethical contrasts of the play—between the King's stepson, Cloten, and his real sons, Guiderius and Arviragus. Cloten is the product of the “art o’ th’ court” that Belarius, the guardian of the real sons, continually disparages. Guiderius and Arviragus, having been brought up in savage surroundings apart from the court, represent the triumph of Nature untutored by Art. As Belarius explains it:

O thou goddess,  
Thou divine Nature, how thyself thou blazon’st  
In these two princely boys! They are as gentle  
As zephyrs blowing below the violet,  
Not wagging his sweet head; and yet as rough,  
(Their royal blood enchaf’d) as the rud’st wind  
That by the top doth take the mountain pine  
And make him stoop to th’ vale. ’Tis wonder  
That an invisible instinct should frame them  
To royalty unlearn’d, honour untaught,  
Civility not seen from other, valour  
That wildly grows in them but yields a crop  
As if it had been sow’d.
The opposition between Nature and Art is not absolute for Shakespeare—he allows the Princes to express an awareness that courts may be in many respects superior to caves—but throughout the terms have been manipulated in such a way as to provide a main theme of the romance. As far as the Princes are concerned, Shakespeare agrees with Spenser and the courtesy books in making Nature more powerful than nurture; and thus it is appropriate that Nature unaided by Art should figure in the reconciliation scene at the end of the play. Granted the thematic value of the terms, remarks like those of Belarius' attain in context a force beyond that which may be assigned to a commonplace. In Cymbeline statements about Nature and Art have become part of the dramatic design, so that they function, perhaps a little creakily, as part of the plot and not merely as isolated allusions.

By the time of The Tempest the process has been developed and intensified, passing from the relatively derivative use of the division to a more subtle and skillfully articulated study of the traditional opposition of Nature to Art. Frank Kermode's elegant Introduction to The Tempest takes full account of Nature and Art and there is no need to rehearse his arguments here; although one may grow restive at his identification of Caliban as the central figure of the play, against which all the other characters are measured, it nevertheless seems clear that Kermode is right in contending that the “main opposition is between the worlds of Prospero's Art and Caliban's Nature.” Hence there is little to be gained by pursuing this survey: enough has been said to establish Shakespeare's interest, early and late, in Nature and Art and to provide a context for detailed consideration of The Winter's Tale, the play that exploits most fully the relationship between the philosophical division and the pastoral genre.

Beneath the romance trappings of The Winter's Tale the critics have seen a pattern that, reduced to its essentials and stated in relatively neutral language, is based on cycles or alternations of harmony and alienation, of integration and disruption. Harmony, symbolized in the friendship of Leontes and Polixenes, receives initial emphasis in the first scene as Camillo remarks, perhaps a little ambiguously: “They were train’d together in their childhoods; and there rooted betwixt them then such an affection which cannot choose but branch now.” In the next scene Polixenes sounds the same note as he recalls for Hermione what it was like to be “boy eternal” with her husband, Leontes.

We were as twinn’d lambs that did frisk i’ th’ sun
And bleat the one at th’ other. What wechang’d
Was innocence for innocence; we knew not
The doctrine of ill-doing, nor dream’d
That any did. Had we pursu’d that life,
And our weak spirits ne’er been higher rear’d
With stronger blood, we should have answer’d heaven
Boldly, “Not guilty,” the imposition clear’d
Hereditary ours.

(I.ii.67-75)

The idea of carefree harmony and the connotations of spring and birth are in this particular passage subordinated to the theological terms. The harmony recalled by Polixenes is a vision of the integrity of man in Eden, free of the taint of original sin—an association reinforced by the wit of the following lines as he and Hermione joke about the boys having “first sinn’d with” the queens, the implication being that the innocence of former days was lost because of woman.

This is not allegory, of course, nor is The Winter's Tale a covert recapitulation of the Fall of Man. But the web of allusion in these lines provides a frame of reference within which the main events of the play can receive meaning: the speech introduces the vision of the green world, the ideal of past harmony, and associates it with
birth, innocence, spring, even with the garden of Eden. To speak technically, this is the “integrity” of Nature before the Fall.

The vision of the Garden, however, is brief and not easily sustained. As Shakespeare's audience was well aware, the harmony of Eden had been lost to man so that his “stronger blood” was no longer free from the hereditary “imposition.” Consequently the Elizabethan audience was better prepared than Shakespeare's modern critics for Leontes' sudden and unmotivated jealousy, the towering excess of passion that, appearing in the same scene as Polixenes' speech of remembered bliss, obliterates the initial mood of harmony and introduces chaos and death for which Leontes is finally to do penance.

Leontes is a man, his Nature impaired by the Fall, so that he is *non posse non peccare*, not able not to err. The terrible consequences of Leontes' passion—alienation from Polixenes and Camillo, the death of his son, the death of Antigonus, the apparent deaths of his daughter and wife—form the main burden of the play until the Chorus of Time that introduces Act IV. Meanwhile the members of Shakespeare's audience have seen the result of an excess of passion and have been able to judge the action in the terms, moral and theological, most meaningful to them. The first phase of the cycle is complete; harmony and integration have been replaced by alienation and disruption.

The pivotal point of the play lies where it should, toward the end of Act III; as in *Pericles* and *The Tempest* it involves a storm at sea, the archetypal image of birth and death. The young shepherd (the clown) witnesses the destruction of the ship and the death of Antigonus, but at the same time the old shepherd comes across the living babe whose restoration figures in the fulfillment of the oracle. The scene thus recalls the disruption and chaos of the earlier action and at the same time anticipates the restoration of harmony in the last act. As the old shepherd puts it, saying more than he understands: “Now bless thyself! thou met'st with things dying, I with things new-born” (III.iii.116-18).

Act IV includes the pastoral interlude and, as we have come to expect, the main references to the controversy over Nature and Art. Florizel, the son of Polixenes, has fallen in love with the shepherdess Perdita whom we know to be the daughter of Leontes, marooned by his order during a transport of jealousy. The child has grown up without the benefit of Art, and yet her demeanor, like that of the Princes in *Cymbeline*, reflects the irrefragable excellence of royal blood. Throughout the word “queen” is applied to her, for as Florizel says:

> Each your doing,
> So singular in each particular,
> Crowns what you are doing in the present deed,
> That all your acts are queens.

(IV.iv.143-46)

Both royal children are for the moment disguised as shepherds, the difference being that Florizel knows his true birth whereas Perdita does not. And while they masquerade as pastoral figures, Shakespeare takes care to have us associate the children with more than purity of blood.

Florizel's name—it does not appear in Shakespeare's source—is clearly allegorical, and the association with Flora receives further emphasis in the Prince's description of Perdita in her role as queen of the sheep-shearing:

> These your unusual weeds to each part of you
> Do give a life—no shepherdess, but Flora
> Peering in April's front! This your sheep-shearing
> Is as a meeting of the petty gods,
> And you the queen on't.
Despite the wide difference in (apparent) birth, Shakespeare makes it clear that there is no intention of exercising droit du seigneur; Florizel's “youth” and “blood” are as idyllic and pure as his pastoral surroundings, as Perdita herself recognizes even when his praise of her is so extravagant as to seem suspicious:

Your praises are too large. But that your youth,
And the true blood which peeps so fairly through’t,
Do plainly give you out an unstain’d shepherd,
With wisdom I might fear, my Doricles [i.e., Florizel],
You woo’d me the false way.

Florizel makes it explicit:

Run not before mine honour, nor my lusts
Burn hotter than my faith.

In short, Shakespeare has taken care to lend Florizel and Perdita the qualities that his audience associated with pastoral figures—idyllic innocence and artless Nature.

The value of Perdita's artlessness is particularly emphasized. Her intellectual simplicity cleaves directly to the heart of a problem, a quality that leads Camillo to acknowledge that he

She lacks instructions, for she seems a mistress
To most that teach.

And her modest demeanor does not prevent her from making the pastoral comparison between country and court explicit in referring to Polixenes' rage at discovering his son in love with a “shepherdess”:

I was not much afeard: for once or twice
I was about to speak, and tell him plainly
The selfsame sun that shines upon his court
Hides not his visage from our cottage, but
Looks on alike.

Even this satiric cut—it is in no sense “democratic”—is of the kind common in pastoral. So far in Shakespeare there is no more than what may be expected from the bucolic tradition: spring, youth, innocence, idyllic love, and the assumption that Nature is superior to Art. But when we have understood the exact function of the pastoral episode in relation to the play as a whole, in relation to its dramatic structure and to its underlying alternation of harmony and disintegration, we will be in a better position to see the individual uses to which Shakespeare has put the traditional materials of Nature and Art.
The pastoral episode immediately precedes the last act, the time of reconciliation and reintegration. The court of Sicily—where the action of the play began—is now the scene of an elaborate series of discoveries in which poetic and other justice is rendered all around. A number of exchanges between Paulina and Leontes have assured the audience that the king is truly repentant; the theological note, sounded so persistently and quietly throughout the play, once more assumes a prominent function, as in the words of Cleomenes:

Sir, you have done enough, and have perform’d
A saint like sorrow. No fault could you make
Which you have not redeem’d; indeed, paid down
More penitence than done trespass. At the last,
Do as the heavens have done: forget your evil;
With them, forgive yourself.

(V.i.1-6)

Redemption is indeed at hand.

Florizel and Perdita, fleeing Bohemia and the anger of Polixenes, appear at the Sicilian court; and Leontes, in words that recall the pastoral interlude, welcomes the lovers as a change from the winter of his discontent: “Welcome hither / As is the spring to th’ earth” (V.i.151-52). The “unstain’d” youth of Florizel and Perdita, their “true blood,” symbolizes the restoration of harmony, the coming of spring to the wasteland, and the purification of the “stronger blood” of their fathers that is impaired by the stain of original sin. Perdita, she who was lost, is found, and discovered to be the daughter of the King; Leontes and Polixenes are once more united in friendship; the way is cleared for the young lovers; Hermione is restored to Leontes during the famous (or notorious) statue scene; and the extraordinary network of repeated words and phrases—youth and age, spring and winter, Nature and Art, birth and death, innocence and sin, Nature and Grace, blood and infection, and so on—is resolved in a series of brilliant puns, in the paradoxical wit of the last scenes. The second phase of the cycle of alienation and harmony, of disruption and reintegration, has been completed.

Enough has been said so that the function of the pastoral scenes in this cycle of—to put it theologically—Fall and Redemption is perhaps obvious. Without these scenes the play would be structurally and symbolically defective, for they reflect, at the appropriate point in the action, the harmony with which the play began: the qualities that Leontes and Polixenes were said to have had as boys are those which Shakespeare gives in turn to Perdita and Florizel. And even the imagery of “twinn’d lambs,” together with the assumption of innocence unimpaired by original sin, that Shakespeare uses in describing the young princes accurately reflects pastoral conventions; Shakespeare chose appropriately if not “originally” in this respect.

The imaginative force of the paradisiacal intimacy that once existed between Polixenes and Leontes is therefore essentially similar to the pastoral harmony that is now associated with Perdita and Florizel, and it is therefore proper that the two moments in the Garden balance each other structurally, the one preceding disruption and the other preceding integration. Moreover, the two moments serve a similar moral function in the play. In the cycle of disruption and integration the moments of childhood innocence and pastoral integrity provide the audience, in essentially similar ways, with visions of ideal order in terms of which the rest of the action may be meaningfully understood. The pastoral episode is consequently not merely a decorative interlude but the structural and symbolic prelude to the restoration of harmony in the last act.

Shakespeare's use of pastoral as the expression of an ethical ideal, of a simple world by which the more complex one might be judged, is strictly traditional, and yet it is a little more complicated than my statements so far might imply. Shakespeare's idealization of shepherd life, for example, does not extend much beyond Perdita who is, like Pastorella in The Faerie Queene, of shepherd nurture but not of shepherd nature. And while the old shepherd, that “weather-bitten conduit of many kings' reigns” (V.ii.61-62), is allowed to display a certain amount of rude dignity, the Mopsas and Dorcases of Shakespeare's pastoral world are bumpkins,
foils for that snapper-up of unconsidered trifles, Autolycus. Perdita's royal blood manifests itself despite her surroundings and not because of them. For Shakespeare, then, shepherds may serve as exemplars of virtue if they are royal shepherds, and Nature may do without the civilizing influence of Art if it is royal Nature. Toward ordinary shepherds Shakespeare's attitude is realistic and gently satirical; his tolerant humor recalls Theocritus but is a long way from Vergil's delicate enthusiasms.

Shakespeare's attitude toward the division between Nature and Art is at least as complicated, but analysis begins most conveniently with his knowledge of traditional materials. Certainly he was aware of the long-standing association of pastoral with Nature and Art, for his pastoral episode includes a fairly thorough debate on the subject. Camillo and Polixenes, disguised, appear at the sheepshearing to investigate the truth of the rumored liaison between Florizel and some humble shepherdess. Polixenes and Perdita discuss flowers, but matters of cultural propriety are always near the surface of what is ostensibly a horticultural argument.

These speeches are worth quoting at length because of their explicit relevance to my thesis, their complex character, and their importance as conceptual statements of the ethical concerns of the play. Perdita begins by apologizing for presenting these men of “middle age” with winter flowers; she has no fall flowers because she will not grow “nature's bastards,” and the discussion immediately turns into a highly technical debate on Nature and Art.

Per. Sir, the year growing ancient, Not yet on summer's death nor on the birth Of trembling winter, the fairest flow'rs o' th’ season Are our carnations and streak’d gillyvors, Which some call nature's bastards. Of that kind Our rustic garden's barren, and I care not To get slips of them.

Pol. Wherefore, gentle maiden, Do you neglect them?

Per. For I have heard it said There is an art which in their piedness shares With great creating nature.

Pol. Say there be. Yet nature is made better by no mean But nature makes that mean. So, over that art Which you say adds to nature, is an art That nature makes. You see, sweet maid, we marry A gentler scion to the wildest stock And make conceive a bark of baser kind By bud of nobler race. This is an art Which does mend nature—change it rather; but The art itself is nature.

Per. So it is.

Pol. Then make your garden rich in gillyvors, And do not call them bastards.

Per. I’ll not put The dibble in earth to set one slip of them; No more than, were I painted, I would wish This youth should say ’twere well, and only therefore Desire to breed by me.

(IV.iv.79-103)
The speeches are obviously meant to be significant in relation to the entire action of the play; they are not merely decorative commonplaces, but their function has never been fully explained.

There is a possibility that Shakespeare intended the actor portraying Polixenes to speak his lines in such a way that the audience will take the horticultural reasoning as a trap, as a device by which Polixenes hopes to expose Perdita as a scheming wench who is after that “bud of nobler race,” Florizel. But it is Perdita who first commits herself against “nature's bastards,” and Polixenes' tone, now deliberative, now authoritative, does not appear to support such an interpretation. The King seems pretty clearly to be reasoning in earnest.

Admittedly, the contention that an Art that changes Nature is in fact Nature may seem at first blush sophistical, calculated to make a young girl betray her desires for the “gentler scion.” Yet Polixenes' stand is perhaps the most dignified and carefully argued in the whole history of possible opposition between Nature and Art. Like Aristotle and Plato, Polixenes points out that the “art itself is nature.” Aristotle had argued in the Physics that when we claim that Art perfects Nature we do in fact mean in the last analysis that Nature perfects herself: “The best illustration is a doctor doctoring himself: nature is like that.” And Plato in the tenth book of the Laws had maintained that the good legislator “ought to support the law and also art, and acknowledge that both alike exist by nature, and no less than nature.” Although Polixenes' argument may appear sophistical, it is in fact an orthodox statement of the “real” significance of the ancient opposition.

There is of course nothing new in the mixture of horticultural and social vocabularies either, but the implications of the mixture in Polixenes' argument are shockingly unorthodox:

A gentler scion to the wildest stock
And make conceive a bark of baser kind
By bud of nobler race.

Translated into purely social terms—Shakespeare's equivocal vocabulary forces the audience to consider the social implications—the argument of Polixenes seems to call for a program of egalitarian eugenics, a program equally shocking, one suspects, to Polixenes and to the Elizabethan audience. Especially in the given dramatic situation, for the King is at this moment disguised as a shepherd expressly to prevent his “gentler scion” from marrying a “bark of baser kind.”

Perdita has throughout revealed a Spenserian appreciation of “degree,” and now her reply to Polixenes rejects his (implied) social radicalism along with his horticultural orthodoxy:

I’ll not put
The dibble in earth to set one slip of them;
No more than, were I painted, I would wish
This youth [Florizel] should say 'twere well, and only therefore
Desire to breed by me.

Perdita's uneasiness in her “borrowed flaunts” (IV.iv.23), her modest conviction that she is, “poor lowly maid, / Most goddess-like prank’d up” (IV.iv.9-10), has culminated in her final identification of Art with deceit, with false imitation, with “painted” womanhood—a kind of Art morally and otherwise inferior to Nature. Her position is, indeed, as venerable as that of Polixenes, appearing in such diverse places as Plato's concept of imitation in the fine arts, in Castiglione's view of cosmetics, and in virtually the whole of the pastoral tradition. Yet neither Polixenes nor Perdita may be taken to represent Shakespeare's final word on the division between Nature and Art. The two traditions are both philosophically “respectable”; dramatic propriety alone requires that Polixenes maintain the court position and Perdita hold to the pastoral belief in the absolute dichotomy between the two terms.
If Shakespeare’s “own” position must remain for the moment conjectural, it is at least possible to understand what he is doing with the ancient division between Nature and Art. Clearly he is using it dramatically, as an oblique commentary on the action of the play. Less obvious is his use of the conceptual terms of the division to reflect the major ethical concerns of the play, using them to sum up with dramatic irony the ethical and social questions of *The Winter's Tale*.

With Perdita, for example, the debate becomes a comment on the way Shakespeare has characterized her. She is given to us as the creation of Nature who, despite her lack of Art, is “mistress / To most that teach”; she is completely incapable of deceit, and her charming sensuousness is tempered by a clear perception of decorum, of her proper place in the order of things. At the same time her role in the sheepshearing is the creation of Art; her “unusual weeds” make her a “goddess,” a “queen,” but since these “borrowed flaunts” are deceitful, she resolves finally to “queen it no inch farther” (IV.iv.460). Thus Perdita’s stand on the ancient debate accurately reflects her character; it is perfectly consistent with the manner in which she is dramatized. It is this and more. In addition it anticipates ironically the discoveries of the last act, for although Perdita at this point appears to be arguing (in horticultural terms) against a marriage with Florizel, her words describe unwittingly but exactly the final situation of the two lovers: in the last act it will be revealed that Perdita is a “queen” by Nature rather than by Art, that her “borrowed flaunts” are hers by right. At the time when she takes her stand on the question of Nature versus Art, she is by Nature what she conceives herself to be by Art.

Her speech to Polixenes is therefore effective in two main ways: on the one hand it accents her pastoral status as a figure of Nature, free of the corruption and taint of Art, suggesting the Nature of Eden; on the other hand the speech anticipates obliquely the last act of the play in which she and the other characters (the spectator is of course already aware of the dramatic irony of her speech) will understand that Florizel’s metaphorical praise—“all your acts are queens”—represents truth on the literal as well as the figurative level.

Polixenes’ argument similarly sets up reverberations far beyond the limits of his speech and the immediate context. Polixenes, like Perdita, seemingly argues against his own best interests, for his resolution of the opposition between Nature and Art apparently sanctions the marriage of a noble to a commoner, the “bud of nobler race” to a “bark of baser kind.” Thus, as far as Shakespeare and the audience are concerned, it is still another opportunity for dramatic irony; again the spectator is aware of more in a character’s words than the character himself. Polixenes appears conscious only of the horticultural application of his words while the spectator is in a position to see that, in the case of Perdita, the “art itself is nature.” Thus, Polixenes is also “right,” even in the social sense of his words, though he cannot yet see the queenliness of Perdita’s “nature is made better by no mean / But nature makes that mean.” It is only in the last act that the disagreement between Perdita and Polixenes is transcended and resolved in the general restoration of harmony.

The last act is worth looking at in connection with Nature and Art because Shakespeare returns to the subject, this time in the sphere of the fine arts, in an attempt to resolve the paradoxical contrarieties generated out of the debate between Perdita and Polixenes. That which was lost has been found in the person of Perdita, and the two kings are reunited. All that remains is for the dead to rise as in *Pericles*: the “dead” Hermione is still lost to Leontes. Her improbable restoration in the statue scene has been condemned as a vulgar concession to popular taste and cited as an example of the triviality of the romance form. Such criticism quite misses the point, for it ignores the ground swell of harmony and alienation that informs the play and, even more pertinently, it neglects Shakespeare’s preoccupation with Nature and Art.

Properly assessed, the “unrealistic” quality of the statue scene is beside the point. Here as elsewhere in the last romances Shakespeare’s respect for “truth” lies in the intensity of his verse and in the underlying pattern of the plays. If the statue scene is improbable, it nevertheless conforms with fidelity to the cycle of alienation and harmony, and the verse of this scene possesses a rare imaginative integrity. All the crucial words of the play—summer and winter, “infancy and grace,” Nature and Art, life and death—come together in the last scenes in a series of reckless paradoxes. Paulina speaks to the statue:
Bequeath to death your numbness, for from him
Dear life redeems you.

(V.iii.102-3)

The time of Hermione's "better grace" has arrived; her stepping down from the pedestal means harmony, forgiveness, restoration, redemption.

The role played by Nature and Art in this larger resolution is perhaps obvious. Clearly a statue represents Art, and in this case the statue represents living Art, or Nature. Such distinctions were equally clear to Shakespeare, and his language shows that he also expected his audience to have in mind the traditional opposition between the terms. We first hear of the statue from the Third Gentleman, whose description is marked by the ancient division and avails itself of the ancient analogy:

… a piece many years in doing, and now newly perform'd, by that rare Italian master, Julio Romano, who, had he himself eternity and could put breath into his work, would beguile Nature of her custom, so perfectly he is her ape.

(V.ii.103-8)

The artist is the ape of Nature, his imitation practiced so perfectly that he almost outdoes Nature, his final aim being naturam vincere. We have already seen the same notion in Venus and Adonis, the Rape of Lucrece, and Timon; it is the cliché of iconic poetry of the period, summed up in Cardinal Bembo's epitaph on Raphael: "Nature feared that she would be conquered while he lived, and would die when he died." It is in this tradition of friendly contest between Art and Nature that Paulina invites praise of her "statue":

To see the life as lively mock'd as ever
Still sleep mock'd death,

(V.iii.18-20)

and it is in this tradition that Leontes praises it:

The fixture of her eye has motion in't,
As we are mock'd with art.

(V.iii.67-68)

Art has successfully imitated Nature, or so it seems to those who do not know that Paulina has preserved Hermione alive.

The symbolic value of the scene is clear: as with Perdita, the imitation or "mock" of Nature turns out finally to be Nature after all. What seems to be Art is in fact Nature, fulfilling Polixenes' assertion that the "art itself is nature" and confirming Perdita's belief in the supremacy of "great creating nature." The statue scene is with all its improbability a dramatic embodiment of Shakespeare's preoccupation with Nature and Art; it transcends the earlier disagreement between Perdita and Polixenes, for the opposition between Nature and Art dissolves in the pageantry of the statue's descent.

The traditional division lies at the center of The Winter's Tale. It is used conceptually and as an instrument of dramatic irony in the pastoral episode, and it appears symbolically as part of the total resolution of Act V. Nevertheless, Shakespeare does not seem to be as far committed to the division as Spenser. Although both
poets take full advantage of the association of the literary genre with the philosophical division and although both use the pastoral as “an element in the harmonious solution of a longer story” about the court, in Shakespeare the division lacks much of the didactic immediacy it possesses in Spenser. The virtue of courtesy must be placed properly in the order of nature, and Spenser uses Nature and Art to achieve this didactic end; he is thinking with the established terms more than he is about them. Perhaps because The Winter's Tale is less obtrusively didactic, Shakespeare thinks about the terms more than he does with them, finding in Nature and Art opportunities for witty debate and verbal paradox; perhaps because of his lack of absolute commitment he can afford to extract from various and conflicting interpretations the full dramatic value of the philosophical division. In The Winter's Tale the traditional terms represent, through dramatic irony, a conceptual summation of the ethical and social interests of the play, and in the last act they form a main part of the elaborate series of paradoxes culminating in the statue scene—the pun made flesh.

Notes

1. References will be to the accessible one-volume Complete Works of Shakespeare, ed. George Lyman Kittredge (Boston, 1936).
3. This is particularly true of the more obviously experimental romances, Pericles and Cymbeline.
4. See F. C. Tinkler's ingenious article on The Winter's Tale, Scrutiny, V (1937), 344-64.
7. I am aware that my language is not entirely neutral. “Harmony and alienation” may, as a pair, have for some readers theological associations, and “harmony,” in particular, has musical connotations. My main effort is simply to avoid forcing the reader to choose between, say, the theological interpretation of S. L. Bethell and the anthropological interpretation of F. C. Tinkler; my own argument does not require the acceptance of either.
8. It seems appropriate to remark that Shakespeare, like Spenser, satirizes the “art o’ th’ court” without actually questioning the status quo: Nature that is admirable without benefit of Art almost invariably turns out to be royal or at least noble Nature.
12. There is no warrant in the play for ascribing either position to Shakespeare. But despite the uncertainties arising from the dramatic form, it seems possible to determine Shakespeare's “own” position by seeking what he assumed rather than gave to characters, and by correlating generalizations about Nature and Art with his own artistic practice and with the conduct of “normative” characters. This, however, demands a thorough study of all the plays and is clearly beyond the scope of this chapter.
13. Generally Shakespeare associates Nature with life, Art with death; see the citations from Venus and Adonis and the Rape of Lucrece at the beginning of this chapter.
York, 1912), p. 432. Wolff associates this use of pastoral, perhaps a little vaguely, with the long tradition of “escapes” from the “life active” to the “life contemplative” of the Lower World or the Fortunate Islands. He also points out that pastoral is not so used in Sannazaro, Tasso, or Guarini, all of whom lack the “urban enveloping action,” which leads him to hazard, I believe correctly, that “this employment of pastoral is distinctive of Elizabethan fiction.” There is some precedent, however slight, in Longus, but it seems that the Elizabethans were the only ones to exploit fully this social use of pastoral.

**Criticism: Language, Structure, And Plot: Russ McDonald (essay date 1985)**


*[In the following essay, McDonald focuses on the distinct linguistic form employed in The Winter's Tale, stating that its more complex style is connected with the intricate plot.]*

*The Winter's Tale*, it is generally agreed, is difficult to read. To move from *Macbeth* or *Antony and Cleopatra* into the world of Sicilia is to enter strange territory where a peculiar dialect is spoken. When Leontes steps apart from Hermione and Polixenes, turns to the audience, and utters his meditation beginning “Too hot, too hot,” listeners and readers alike are apt to be mystified. We ought to be disturbed, of course, by the king’s logic and conclusions; but more to the point, we are immediately confused by his language, and the trouble encountered in these early speeches is characteristic of the play as a whole and of the romances in general. Shakespeare's late verse is different from his earlier poetry—more complicated, elliptical, and irregular. J. M. Nosworthy, referring particularly to *Cymbeline*, describes the late style as follows: “Blank verse is handled with the utmost freedom, and run-on lines, light, weak, and double endings are marked characteristics. Ellipsis and elision contribute greatly to stylistic economy, and short speeches are so concentrated as to be perplexing. …”¹ The complexity of the late verse is a critical commonplace; the sources and functions of its syntactic and prosodic complexity are less well known.²

I wish to propose a correspondence between Shakespeare's command of a new kind of blank verse in *The Winter's Tale* and his treatment of dramatic action and theatrical effects. Moreover, I think I can demonstrate that the structure of the late style is, like the shape of the plots, determined by Shakespeare's tragicomic conception of the structure of human experience. The relation between verse and character has long been acknowledged; the agitation of Leontes' speech attests to the disorder of his mind. Yet to say this does not take us very far toward defining the particular stylistic qualities of this or the other romances. That connection, after all, is obvious in a host of other works, notably *Othello*. What distinguishes *The Winter's Tale* is that much of the poetic language is organized periodically: convoluted sentences or difficult speeches become coherent and meaningful only in their final clauses or movements. A similar principle governs the arrangement of dramatic action: the shape and meaning of events become apparent only in the final moments of the tragicomedy. Obviously every sentence is to some extent periodic. So, too, every play needs an ending to give it meaning.³ In both respects, however, the late plays are distinctive. Shakespeare has exaggerated the grammatical means of suspension so that sentences or passages in these plays gain momentum and then “discharge” powerfully or unexpectedly.⁴ Likewise, in each case the significance of complex actions is altered and clarified by a surprise ending. In other words, we find a parallel between syntactical and narrative satisfaction, between small and large units of dramatic structure, and such consistency is a function of the tragicomic vision that has generated both story and style. The late plays present a world that is not immediately comprehensible, but one that eventually rewards bewildered characters and spectators with understanding and happiness. By analyzing the words used to create that world, I will try, in the pages that follow, to demonstrate the truth of Derek Traversi's observation that in the plays of the final period
“Shakespeare's power of uniting poetry and drama is now such that the plot has become simply an extension, an extra vehicle of the poetry.”

The reader will recognize here a fundamentally structuralist argument, an attempt at “locating and analyzing relationships between … one part of a text and another.” In identifying these relationships and exploring their artistic implications I have followed the lead of Tzvetan Todorov, who has written persuasively on structural unity—the identity of narrative and style—in the fantastic tales of Henry James:

The Jamesian narrative is always based on the quest for an absolute and absent cause. Let us consider the terms of this phrase one by one. There exists a cause: this word must here be taken in a very broad sense; it is often a character but sometimes, too, an event or an object. The effect of this cause is the narrative, the story we are told. It is absolute: for everything in this narrative ultimately owes its presence to this cause. But the cause is absent and must be sought: it is not only absent but for the most part unknown; what is suspected is its existence, not its nature. The quest proceeds; the tale consists of the search for, the pursuit of, this initial cause, this primal essence. The narrative stops when it is attained. On one hand there is an absence (of the cause, of the essence, of the truth), but this absence determines everything; on the other hand there is a presence (of the quest), which is only the search for an absence. Thus the secret of Jamesian narrative is precisely the existence of an essential secret, of something not named, of an absent and superpowerful force which sets the whole machinery of the narrative in motion.

Having firmly established the presence of this absence in tale after tale, Todorov goes on to show that “the complexity of James's style derives entirely from this principle of construction and not from a referential (for instance, psychological) complexity. ‘Style,’ ‘feelings,’ ‘form,’ and ‘content’ all say the same thing, all repeat the same figure in the carpet.” Todorov's argument moves from narrative cause to stylistic effect. I prefer, in treating The Winter's Tale, to reverse the process, to offer a descriptive survey of some major stylistic traits and then to relate them to the vision informing Shakespearean tragicomedy, the dramatist's confidence in the Providential ordination of human affairs. It must be significant that the poet's creation of a new style coincides with the playwright's mastery of a new mode and with the imaginist's revised conception of experience. In The Winter's Tale, even the syntax is tragicomic.

The most immediately striking feature of Leontes' poetry is its unpoetic sound. The crucial early speeches are rough, harsh, even cacophonous. In this passage consonants assault the ear, especially 'k's, d's, p's, and t's, letters that stop the line and compel the speaker to start over, as in “Inch-thick.” Sounds normally euphonious here create the opposite effect: in the clause “whose issue / Will hiss me to my grave,” the sibilants and internal rhyme produce a decidedly sinister mood. The choppy rhythms are characteristic of the liberal approach to meter in Shakespeare's late style. Caesurae intrude repeatedly to disrupt the flow, as the heavy punctuation implies. Although the lines submit to ordinary scansion, their harsh music arises from a disjunction between the familiar beat of the blank verse and the violent irregularity of the spoken rhythms, so that the chief impression they convey is one of turbulence and strife. And the cacophony of the lines I have
quoted is typical. Consider such other instances as “be it concluded, / No barricado for a belly”; or “Come, captain, / We must be neat; not neat, but cleanly, captain”; or “any flax-wench that puts to / Before her troth plight.”

Leontes’ discordant music owes much to Shakespeare’s metrical liberties. It is well established that in the early dramatic poetry the rhetorical unit tends to coincide with the poetic unit—the thought ceases with the line—and that as the poet gains experience with iambic pentameter his use of stops becomes much more liberal and varied. By the time of the romances, Shakespeare uses the caesura to achieve a wide range of effects. Unwilling to wait for the end of the line, he stops early and stops often. A distinctive trick of the late style is Shakespeare’s devotion to the pause in mid-foot:

Why, he that wears her like her medal, hanging
About his neck, Bohemia; who …

They’re here with me already; whisp’ring …

Make that thy question, and go rot!

Is goads, thorns, nettles, tails of wasps …

Such freedom with pauses is consistent with the increase in feminine endings and with an evident fondness for trochees (points to be taken up later), and it permits immense rhythmic variation; Shakespeare exploits such possibilities, especially at the beginning of The Winter’s Tale, to suggest agitation and tension.

The pursuit of violent and unexpected effects extends beyond individual sounds to the placement of words and phrases within sentences. Jonathan Smith has identified two distinct languages in the king’s early speeches: first, a courtly dialect based in Latinate polysyllables, and second, the language of blood, a simpler style consisting mainly of Anglo-Saxon monosyllables. Smith demonstrates that the fierce diction of the second type quickly overpowers the more formal style, and we may extend his analysis to show that the basic language of blood is spiked with unusual and arresting nouns and verbs. Many of Leontes’ celebrated passages consist almost exclusively of flat, workaday words that serve as foils to set off a shocking verb or a memorable image:

(Or I am much deceiv’d) cuckolds ere now,
And many a man there is (even at this present,
Now, while I speak this) holds his wife by th’arm,
That little thinks she has been sluic’d in’s absence
And his pond fish’d by his next neighbour, by
Sir Smile, his neighbour. …

(I.ii.190-96)

Everybody remembers this speech, thanks mainly to the uncommon images—“sluic’d,” “fish’d,” and the smarmy Sir Smile—words that stand out in relief against a background of homogeneous monosyllables. Those words that bear the pressure of the prosody also bear the pressure of meaning. For five lines the actor finds very little to emphasize except “cuckolds,” and thus Shakespeare encourages him to pounce upon the nasty-sounding “sluic’d.”

Even more striking than particular sounds or words is the architecture of the king’s sentences, which manifest these same principles of harshness and variety. Leontes’ syntax is, for the most part, choppy and complex. Clauses pile upon clauses, sentences run to uncommonly great length, verbs may lag behind their subjects by several lines, and often long sentences refuse to yield up their meanings until the last possible moment. A
glance at the text reveals, in addition to the commas and verbal arresters already mentioned, an abundance of dashes, parentheses, and other such grammatical interrupters. The passage just quoted illustrates this feature, but there are still more impressive instances:

(But that’s past doubt: you have, or your eye-glass Is thicker than a cuckold’s horn) or heard? (For to a vision so apparent rumour Cannot be mute) or thought? (for cogitation Resides not in that man that does not think) My wife is slippery?

(1.ii.267-73)\textsuperscript{13}

We might backtrack briefly to observe that “slippery” functions as does “sluic’d,” as the odd word in the critical spot. But the important point now is that Shakespeare has controlled the grammar of the sentence to augment the effect of the final clause. Without it the sentence is meaningless, and yet getting to it is no easy matter. Leontes begins by posing a question for Camillo, but before disclosing its substance he leads the auditor through a maze of parenthetical elements and qualifying material: a series of three verbs, “seen,” “heard,” and “thought,” alternates with a corresponding series of lengthy phrases asserting that Camillo must have seen, heard, and thought. The effect is that of a grammatical labyrinth in which we make our way through a series of baffles, then turn a corner, and find ourselves faced with the beast—“My wife is slippery.”

Another way of putting it is to say that we are suspended in air, left dangling through six circumlocutory lines, until we land with a jolt on the final clause; and this tactic of suspension may be the most revealing stylistic trait of \textit{The Winter’s Tale}. The very first sentence of the play is just such a conditional—“If you shall chance, Camillo, to visit Bohemia”—and Shakespeare repeats the construction again and again. According to the familiar form of such suspensions, the ear requires that the conditional beginning be resolved, but Shakespeare often elaborates and protracts the first term to such a degree that we may lose our way before receiving syntactical satisfaction. In addition to the strict “if-then” constructions, of which there are many, Shakespeare also includes a host of sentences that in one way or another delay their completions until the very end:

May a free face put on, derive a liberty
From heartiness, from bounty, fertile bosom,
And well become the agent: ’t may, I grant:
But to be paddling palms, and pinching fingers,
As now they are, and making practis’d smiles
As in a looking-glass; and then to sigh, as ’twere
The mort o’th’ deer—O, that is entertainment
My bosom likes not, nor my brows. …

(1.ii.111-19)

Such a construction, although a strict Latinist might object to the designation, is periodic, if not in fact certainly in effect, and its operation is representative of Shakespeare’s syntactic choices throughout the play. As Carol Thomas Neely points out, “The referents of the speech are not clear until its end, and even then [Leontes] refers to his guest and his wife only by the pronoun, ‘they.’”\textsuperscript{14} Leontes begins with a possibility (that such behavior might be innocent), enumerates in a string of verbal and prepositional phrases the ways in which it might be construed as proper, summarizes this interpretation in a conditional clause calculated to prepare for its rejection, then demolishes the case for purity in the massive infinitive phrase beginning with “But,” and finally recapitulates his conclusion in the appended clause altering the sense of “entertainment.” Technically speaking, the sentence owes its effect to the rhetorical device known as anacoluthon, a statement
that begins in one direction, shifts in the center, and concludes in the opposite direction. Here the conjunction “But” signifies the reversal.

My use of the term “periodic” demands some explanation, especially since it is here applied to poetry, and not only to sentences but also to whole speeches. The poetic sentences I consider here lack the tight grammatical organization normally characteristic of periodic sentences in prose. In fact, the syntactical arrangement of most sentences in Shakespeare's late verse is discursive; they are made up of loosely connected phrases and clauses which are often interrupted by parentheses, dashes, and changes of direction. The practical effect of this complication is to postpone the full disclosure of meaning until the end of the sentence. For example:

Dost think I am so muddy, so unsettled,  
To appoint myself in this vexation; sully  
The purity and whiteness of my sheets,  
(Which to preserve is sleep, which being spotted  
Is goads, thorns, nettles, tails of wasps)  
Give scandal to the blood o’th’ prince, my son,  
(Who I do think is mine and love as mine)  
Without ripe moving to’t? Would I do this?

(I.ii.325-32)

This passage captures the mutual effect of digressive and periodic strategies found throughout the first three acts. An instructive variation occurring more than once is the sentence which is finished, and completely revised, by another character. When Leontes summons the lords to follow him with the words “We are to speak in public; for this business / Will raise us all,” Antigonus adds privately, “To laughter, as I take it, / If the good truth were known” (II.i. 197-99). Antigonus not only reverses the meaning of Leontes' words but also radically alters the tone at the end of the scene. Numerous passages take this general form, in which the speaker changes direction or moves back and forth through a series of qualifying phrases; and often the meaning of the passage depends entirely upon the shape of the very last phrase.

Leontes is not the only speaker who employs such loose periods. One of the most stunning suspensions comes from Paulina, in one of the most crucial scenes of the play, after the trial when she announces the death of the queen:

What studied torments, tyrant, hast for me?  
In leads or oils? What old or newer torture  
Must I receive, whose every word deserves  
To taste of thy most worst? Thy tyranny,  
Together working with thy jealousies  
(Fancies too weak for boys, too green and idle  
For girls of nine), O think what they have done,  
And then run mad indeed: stark mad! for all  
Thy by-gone fooleries were but spices of it.  
That thou betray'dst Polixenes, 'twas nothing;  
That did but show thee, of a fool, inconstant  
And damnable ingrateful; nor was't much,  
Thou would'st have poison'd good Camillo's honour,  
To have him kill a king; poor trespasses,  
More monstrous standing by: whereof I reckon  
The casting forth to crows thy baby daughter  
To be or none or little; though a devil  
Would have shed water out of fire, ere done 't:  
Nor is't directly laid to thee the death  
Of the young prince, whose honourable thoughts  
(Thoughts high for one so tender) cleft the heart

422
That could conceive a gross and foolish sire
Blemish'd his gracious dam: this is not, no,
Laid to thy answer: but the last—O lords,
When I have said, cry 'woe!'—the queen, the queen,
The sweet'st, dear'st creature's dead: and vengeance
for't
Not dropp'd down yet.

(III.ii.175-202)

Paulina's obloquy is a masterpiece of calculation, for the speech throws all its force upon the fact of death. The beginning is, to say the least, indirect: Paulina utters a string of questions about how Leontes plans to torture her. Although this gambit is initially confusing, it coheres logically with the remainder of the passage it introduces, for torturing the faithful Paulina would be yet another of the errors and harms that the king's "Fancies" have visited upon those who love and serve him. Moreover, the extreme images with which she begins indicate the damage that Leontes has already inflicted. As the tirade unfolds, we perceive that Paulina's joint purposes are interwined: she will simultaneously condemn Leontes and reveal his most appalling crime. The first objective waits upon the second, which remains unknown until the conclusion. Every line looks forward explicitly or implicitly to the climax, for every folly and act of cruelty must be compared with Leontes' last incomparable outrage. Thus not only is the tirade constructed periodically, but it also declares its periodic form early, just after the initial questions. Paulina insists, as she ticks off the specific harms done so far, that each must pale in light of what she will announce. It might be said also that the shape of her revelation is fundamentally theatrical. The plaint is obviously arranged to create a powerful effect upon the main member of her audience, Leontes, and is tailored for and addressed directly to him. But it works similarly upon the stage spectators, acknowledged in "O lords," and upon the theatre audience. The auditor is made to wait, to lean forward in anticipation of horror. This affective aim is consistent with Paulina's theatrical manner elsewhere. Pafford speaks of "the calculated tactlessness which is her favourite weapon," and her directorial style in the final scene is an expansion of her strategy in this crisis.

The emotion and energy of her condemnation make themselves felt in the violent music Shakespeare has composed. The syncopated effect of one rhythm superimposed upon another is especially noticeable here. The lines teem with spondees: "what wheels," "most worst," "stark mad," "cry woe!" Another kind of syncopation is discerned by F. E. Halliday, who asserts that "Shakespeare, particularly in his later plays, imposes a secondary rhythm on the primary iambics" by integrating "natural trochees" into the basic iambic pattern. Halliday illustrates the method with a well-known line of Alonso's in The Tempest: "I'll seek him deeper than e're plummet sounded." This same practice accounts for the richly polyphonic texture of Paulina's oration. A third of the lines contain at least two such falling disyllables, and many of these are connected, as Halliday shows they are in the passage from The Tempest, by alliteration and assonance: "newer torture," "monstrous standing," "little … devil," "Blemish'd … gracious." In each case the rhetorical movement of the sentence strains against the fundamental beat of the verse, and the tension creates a rich kind of music.

Pace is important also, for it accelerates markedly. After the broken rhythms of the opening interrogatives, the passage gathers speed through the recitation of the king's crimes and moves purposefully toward its horrifying end. This swift pace is not easily or immediately achieved: for example, the general attack on Leontes' "tyranny" and "Fancies" (ll. 179-84), with its halts and jerks, its repetitions and appositives and interjections, necessarily retards the speaker. But the specific catalogue of crimes that follows unfolds in a sentence that extends over seventeen lines. Of course the quickening pace is impeded by brief stops and a set of obstacles just prior to the conclusion: "but the last—O lords, / When I have said, cry 'woe!'—the queen. …" Paradoxically, however, the collision of such intrusive clauses with the established momentum of the sentence propels the listener even more rapidly toward the revelatory end. Paulina delays slightly with the repetition of "the queen," and the sibilants and elisions of the penultimate line thrust us toward the ugly monosyllable, "dead." But what about the remainder, that anti-climactic final clause? It records a fitting conclusion that has
not occurred, and so the words “drop down” with a monosyllabic flatness, alliteration and assonance echoing the hollowness denoted. It is significant that the queen's death is neither the end of the sentence nor the end of the play.

Paulina bewails disorder in poetry that threatens to burst out of its formal limits. By a variety of means Shakespeare sees to it that the speech is crowded with words. Syntactical complexity tends to elongate the lines, as in the repeated questions needing a pause after each: “What wheels? racks? fires? what flaying? boiling?” Extra syllables abound: ten of the twenty-seven lines end with a soft syllable. One line, “Thy by-gone fooleries were but spices of it,” contains twelve syllables, and even though *fooleries* is compressed into two, the end of the line is loaded with an additional beat, in *spices of*, thus throwing the emphasis on the still-nebulous *it*. Elision is frequently demanded: “That thou betray’dst Polixenes, ’twas nothing”; “The sweet’st, dear’st creature’s dead.” Order in the lines is barely maintained. Generally speaking, the crowded lines and weak endings dominate the beginning of the passage. As Paulina moves more swiftly toward her end, the line endings become more regular and the iambic beat more audibly insistent. “More regular” is a relative term, to be sure: there are plenty of interruptions and metrical kinks. But it is fair to say that Paulina's creation of an ordered whole from a mysterious and chaotic beginning is mirrored in the increasing regularity of the verse.

Shakespeare embellishes this poetic structure with musical devices that reinforce the hearer's sense of its complexity. The introductory lines create a mood of incantation, particularly with the repetition of *l* sounds in lines 177 and 178. Indeed, the entire passage seems unusually alliterative: “What wheels?”; “To taste of thy most worst”; “green and idle / For girls of nine”; “kill a king”; “More monstrous standing by”; “casting forth to crows”; “thee the death”; “could conceive a gross and foolish sire / Blemish’d his gracious dam”; “sweet’st dear’st creature’s dead.” Similarly, internal rhymes create color: “newer torture”; “every word deserves … worst”; “Together working”; “damnable ingrateful.” Sometimes these tactics are combined to create extraordinary aural effects: “O, think what they have done / And then run mad indeed. …” I may appear to have wandered far from the main issue, the periodic structure of Paulina's announcement, but all these poetic tricks contribute to the power of the verbal construction, adding a weight and difficulty that makes the resolution all the more impressive.

The supreme example of syntactic and prosodic complexity is also one of the most memorable speeches in the play:

```
Is whispering nothing?
Kissing with inside lip? stopping the career
Of laughter with a sigh (a note infallible
Of breaking honesty)? horsing foot on foot?
Skulking in corners? wishing clocks more swift?
Hours, minutes? noon, midnight? and all eyes
Blind with the pin and web, but theirs; theirs only,
That would unseen be wicked? is this nothing?
Why then the world, and all that’s in’t, is nothing,
The covering sky is nothing, Bohemia nothing,
My wife is nothing, nor nothing have these nothings,
If this be nothing.
```

(I.ii.284-96)

This astonishing passage is a compendium of all the stylistic traits I have mentioned. Its dissonant music is made of assonance (“Is whispering,” “leaning cheek … cheek … meeting,” “wishing … swift,” “If this”), alliteration (“skulking … corners … clocks,” “then the … that’s … nothing”), and the incantatory repetition of “nothing.” Trochaic and iambic rhythms compete so violently that some lines seem to create their own unique
rhythm. A majority of the lines end weakly, and caesurae are numerous and random. Ellipsis contributes to the artfully manipulated pace, particularly the dropped gerund (“wishing”) in line 291. Although the first two-thirds of the speech consists of a series of rhetorical questions, the effect is of one amplified suspension in which the actor’s voice must rise repeatedly to indicate the question and the listener expects some kind of descent, some turn that will clarify the purpose of the endless interrogatives. When the rejoinder does finally come, it is strong enough to balance the beginning—if this is unreal, then reality does not exist—and the strength of the answering term is fortified by the repetition of “nothing.” Worth noting here, as in Paulina’s great suspension, is the contribution of the additional clause tacked onto the end of the sentence so that the periodic effect is qualified: in this case the redundant but forceful “if this be nothing” returns us to the list of conditions, insisting ironically that this is something indeed. Most important, of course, is the double irony: we understand what Leontes will not or cannot, that this is nothing. As a number of critics have pointed out, Anne Barton most clearly. Shakespeare throughout the last plays affords the audience a superior understanding of the speaker’s words, asks the audience to look beyond the specific speech and situation to the larger meaning.19 For all the difficulty of the style, we penetrate to the essential truth of the words.

Such complicated periodicity seems to me prominent and frequent enough to be considered a major stylistic feature of The Winter’s Tale. The reader who is hospitable to the argument thus far will find plenty of additional proof, but a couple of further examples are worth citing. Polixenes threatens Perdita in this style:

Worthy enough a herdsman; yea, him too,
That makes himself, but for our honour therein,
Unworthy thee. If ever henceforth thou
These rural latches to his entrance open,
Or hoop his body more with thy embraces,
I will devise a death as cruel for thee
As thou art tender to ’t.

(IV.iv.435-42)

The obstructions and convolutions leading to the final main clause—and even the conclusion is internally periodic—echo the language of Leontes, whose tyrannical place Polixenes has taken in the fourth act. At one time or another, virtually all the characters look to the future in language that propels us forward—Florizel, Camillo, even Hermione, whose innocence is usually expressed in uncommonly plain language. When Antigonus, recounting his dream, quotes the ghost’s instructions to him, “Hermione’s” style becomes complex and periodic:

“Good Antigonus,

Since fate, against thy better disposition,
Hath made thy person for the thrower-out
Of my poor babe, according to thine oath,
Places remote enough are in Bohemia,
There weep, and leave it crying: and, for the babe
Is counted lost for ever, Perdita,
I prithee, call’t. …”

(III.iii.27-34)

Although there are exceptions, periodic verbal structures appear most obviously in the first half of the play, when the conflict is most intense. But this distribution may itself be significant. As it is in particular sentences, so it is in the play as a whole: complexity yields to simplicity and clarity.

II
These distinctive periodic forms are intimately related to the dramatic structure in which they appear: the shape of language and action proceeds from Shakespeare's tragicomic understanding of human experience. In other words, the playwright has devised a distinctive language for the distinctive form of his last works. Such a correspondence of style and structure has been discerned in other areas of Shakespearean drama: "the argumentative character of the prose, its tendency to stick close to its syllogistic basis and to acknowledge this openly through the abundance of logical links—these one might relate to the network of causality that composes the intrigue plot." So it is with the poetry of The Winter's Tale and of the tragicomedies in general. The organization of the verse recapitulates the arrangement of event, and both kinds of structure correspond to Shakespeare's conception of the course of human life.

Putting the matter as simply as possible, we may say that the shape of the verse reflects the shape of the plot. In general terms, this is self-evident. The constricted poetry of the first three acts yields to the lyricism and simplicity of the last two, just as the setting takes us from the confined madness of Sicilia to the pastoral liberty of Bohemia. But it is possible to be still more specific, to identify a formal parallel between important speeches, even individual sentences, and the tragicomic movement of the action as a whole. The shocking and mystifying revelation of Leontes' suspicions is set forth in harsh and confusing poetry. The arresting, ugly nouns and verbs standing in relief against a neutral background—"and little think she has been sluic'd in's absence"—are represented on the stage by the solitary figure of Leontes set apart from and disrupting the concord of the great second scene. The king's words are at first opaque and disorienting because the universe into which Shakespeare thrusts us is initially puzzling. The difficulty of the verse attests to the complexity of the action it is used to portray, and this is not to say only that the disorder of Leontes' language signifies the chaos of his mind, but that the initial, apparent confusion of the verse represents the apparent disorder of mortal affairs in general.

For the listener, to come to terms with the language spoken is to apprehend the world depicted, and in neither case is this an easy undertaking. Modern interest in structural linguistics has focused attention on the temporal and linear quality of all speech. As Robert Scholes puts it in discussing the theories of Ferdinand de Saussure, "not only is each sign linear, each utterance is even more obviously so. Unlike the picture, which can display various significant elements simultaneously, the elements of a verbal narrative must be delivered in an order which is itself significant. The sign, then, as well as the sentence and all larger units of discourse, is primarily narrative. …" The linearity of speech causes understanding to occur gradually, as the syntagmatic structure establishes itself: units of language modify one another, meaning is altered, until completion is finally achieved. Just as the massive periods of The Winter's Tale are founded upon devices of delay and surprise, so Shakespeare extends the narrative potentialities of sentences; and he does so in a manner approximating his protraction of the entire narrative. The auditor is drawn into complex verbal structures without being able to predict their destination, propelled in one direction and then another by unexpected, contradictory clauses, and finally delivered to clarity by a conclusion that makes sense of all that has gone before. And much the same is true of the plot of The Winter's Tale. The great syntactical suspensions approximate the suspensions in the action, the withholding of information that would complete and explicate an imperfect pattern. As listeners and spectators, we are forced to wait, left suspended, denied immediate understanding of a jarring phrase or a surprising event until the end of the sentence or the end of the play.

Other properties of Shakespeare's late style may be regarded as parallel to the larger elements of structure. The binary form of numerous sentences, such as the "if-then" construction, is equivalent to the tragicomic structure of the entire work. The second half modifies and illuminates the opening, which would be incomprehensible without the final segment. Dramatically and grammatically, the conflicts of the first unit are not canceled by the resolution of the second; rather, each term qualifies the other, and the meaning of the conclusion is enriched by the difficulties preceding it. Moreover, the choppy and hypotactic properties of the syntax are consistent with the shape of the action. The plot begins in one direction, with Leontes' jealousy; becomes more complex with the flight of Camillo and Polixenes, the illness of Mamillius, and the banishment of Perdita; reverses itself with Hermione's divine vindication and Leontes' epiphany; is intruded upon
unexpectedly by the entrance of Time; begins afresh with the pastoral romance of Florizel and Perdita; changes course when Polixenes interferes (in a conversation with a surprise ending, [Discovering himself]); and is finally given coherence by the return of the young lovers to Sicilia, the reunion of the kings, and the restoration of the queen. Even more specifically, just as prosodic devices such as alliteration and internal rhyme give music to the language, so elements of action and character create emotional discord and harmony in the progress of the story. Ellipsis in the style corresponds to omissions in the plot: the gap of sixteen years, the reported deaths, the described reunion. The plot itself might be considered an enormous dramatic anacoluthon: its initial movement is negative, Time is the dash signifying a shift in direction, and the final movement is favorable.

The auditor's mixed response to the style—puzzlement and ironic confidence—is related to the spectator's response to the telling of the tale. Suspense and irony can often be mutually exclusive, as Wayne Booth has demonstrated in his study of narrative technique: the author who wishes to create suspense must suppress information, and this tactic is incompatible with irony, which gives the reader superior insight.23 But Shakespeare has contrived to partake of the advantages of both. We are aware, as Leontes is not, that Perdita is alive and will serve as the means of his regeneration. And yet the play also surprises us, denying us knowledge of Hermione's survival until the very end of the work, challenging our confidence in our superior understanding and thus transforming our comprehension of the world we thought we knew.

Shakespeare has arranged the verse so that it illuminates and comments on two central themes of The Winter's Tale, the complexities of perception and the importance of time in the process of perception. Todorov, in commenting on James's supernatural stories, argues that “the fantastic text is not characterized by the simple presence of supernatural phenomena or beings, but by the hesitation which is established in the reader's perception of the events represented. Throughout the tale, the reader wonders (in the same way that a character often does, within the work) if the facts reported are to be explained by a natural or a supernatural cause, if they are illusions or realities.”24 The subtleties of the Jamesian style, then, contribute to the reader's bewilderment, and it strikes me that something similar occurs to those who witness—or, in seventeenth-century parlance, “hear”—a performance of The Winter's Tale. There is a sense in which perception is the central problem of the play. The agon arises from Leontes' “Fancies,” and in the statue scene Paulina plays with the problem of illusion in her warning to Leontes: “No longer shall you gaze on't, lest your fancy / May think anon it moves” (V.iii.60-61). When “Hermione comes down,” we “perceive she stirs” (V.iii.103), but we are uncertain what to make of this perception. It is appropriate, therefore, that for much of the play Shakespeare devised a poetic style that engages us directly in the activity of perception and makes us aware of the difficulty. The combination of hypotaxis and parataxis, the violent rhythms, the false endings, and the withholding of syntactical and referential satisfaction allow us to participate at all times in the problems of comprehension.

Shakespeare's manipulation of the diachronic potentialities of the poetic sentence or speech contributes to his revelation of the importance of time in human affairs. As Time, the Chorus, puts it, “I that please some, try all”; he goes on to claim that he “makes and unfolds error” (IV.i.1-2). Leontes' self-inflicted miseries, which seem inexplicable and intolerable at the end of the third act, are assuaged and almost mended by the revelations and satisfactions of the ending. The words of Paulina's namesake are pertinent in this context: “we see through a glass, darkly.” And the implied principles of patience and faith apply to the style as well. Clauses and sentences can be trying, even incomprehensible, while one is lost in their midst; but they finally cohere into a pleasing and meaningful pattern.

This correspondence of language, form, and dramatic universe suggests an identification among speaker, dramatist, and Providence that clarifies the meaning not only of the play in question but of the tragicomic universe as well.25 If Leontes' verse does not immediately make itself clear, neither does Shakespeare's construction of events, nor does the divine architect's disposition of man's experience. An event the characters regard as a disaster may in fact be the prelude to unexpected joy. The grammatical delays and obstacles that
temporarily obscure meaning in the middle of a protracted sentence are parts of a larger whole that is eventually elucidated. Something similar may be said of particular happenings in the action of The Winter's Tale. And Shakespeare implies that our world, of which the play is the mimetic instrument, should be interpreted likewise. For the mariners in The Tempest, the storm that interferes with their journey is catastrophic; for Alonso it is a dead end from which there is no escape. But as soon as the second scene opens, the spectator understands the storm, in the grammatical terms I have been using, as nothing more than an introductory element, a subordinate clause leading to heightened understanding and fulfillment.

The method set forth here might be extended to other sections of The Winter's Tale and to other plays. The great penultimate scene, in which three unfamiliar gentlemen announce and annotate the numerous happy reunions, is fertile territory for such work. The prose they speak contains delays and indirections similar to those that mark Leontes' poetry, and again we are suspended, made to wait for and to wonder about the final phase of the action. Indeed, the entire scene is a grand hesitation. A figure who shares Leontes' verbal style is Posthumus in Cymbeline, notably in his mad aria concluding the second act. Attention to Prospero's narrative in the second scene of The Tempest reveals the same stylistic traits: although the rhythm is less wild and the diction less violent, the verse displays a host of intrusive clauses, suspensions, broken phrases, and periodic conclusions. And I am persuaded that these same correspondences of style and structure appear in most of Pericles, in Cymbeline, and in The Tempest.

One of the leading ideas in the last plays is that an understanding of the world requires patience, flexibility, and perspective. An understanding of the style demands these same qualities. In the last act of Cymbeline, when Jupiter descends to explain to the Leonati his apparent mistreatment of their son, the god reveals that misfortune is part of a larger scheme: “Whom best I love, I cross; to make my gift, / The more delayed, delighted.” It is a principle that applies as well to style as to action.

Notes


3. My attempt to connect language with action rather than character finds support from a recent article by Anne Barton, “Leontes and the spider: language and speaker in Shakespeare's Last Plays,” in Shakespeare's Styles: Essays in Honour of Kenneth Muir, ed. Philip Edwards, Inga-Stina Ewbank, and G. K. Hunter (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1980), pp. 131-50: “Shakespeare not only does not try to conceal, he positively emphasises the fact that his material is the archetypal stuff of legend and fairy-tale. That we respond to it as something far more powerful and engaging than ‘Cinderella’ or ‘Beauty and the Beast’ testifies to the subtlety with which Shakespeare has adjusted his language and dramatic art to the demands of a new mode: one in which plot, on the whole, has become more vivid and emotionally charged than character” (p. 149). Also see Marion Trousdale,

4. For a discussion of the way that sentences can “discharge,” see Eric S. Rabkin, *Narrative Suspense* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1973), pp. 85-89. My use of the term is somewhat less specific and complex than his; although his comments are revealing, they seem unnecessarily dependent on jargon.


8. Ibid., p. 154.


10. This passage is printed in the Folio thus:

    Ynch-thick, knee-deepe; ore head and eares a fork’d one.
    Goe play (Boy) play: thy Mother playes, and I
    Play too; but so disgrac’d a part, whose issue
    Will hisse me to my Graue: Contempt and Clamor
    Will be my Knell. Goe play (Boy) play, ...

    Although the stops and starts are indicated by different (and less explicit) means than in modern texts, the jerkiness and vocal complexity of the lines are still apparent.

11. George T. Wright's discussion of the dynamics of the late verse is pertinent here: “The line is more and more cast into structural doubt, first by late-line pauses and free enjambment, … by sentences that flow freely over the margins, and by rashes of short-line exchanges that hover between verse and prose; later by a rhetoric that virtually abandons the flowing sentence for brief and abrupt bursts of staccato phrases that seem almost, at times, in their jagged discourse, to mock both line and phrase.” (“The Play of Phrase and Line in Shakespeare's Iambic Pentameter,” p. 155).


13. Frank Kermode, in his edition of *The Winter's Tale* (New York: Signet, 1963), prints this speech with dashes instead of parentheses, thus making the disjunctive quality all the more evident.


15. James Sutherland, who notices the abundance of parentheses and syntactical obstacles in the verse of the late plays, disputes the common notion that these are calculated to suggest spontaneity and naturalism in the characters' speech; instead, he attributes these stops and starts to Shakespeare's haste and willingness to content himself with a vague “impressionism” (“The Language of the Last Plays,” pp. 146-47). It strikes me that neither explanation is adequate. Hesitation, revision, and reversal manifest themselves not only in Shakespeare's creation of language but also in his characterization and arrangement of action.


17. *The Poetry of Shakespeare's Plays*, pp. 31-32: “This combination of rhythm and assonance, each emphasizing the other, adds another quality to the later poetry, in which whole speeches are integrated and harmonized by the complex contrapuntal interweaving of a double rhythm with a melodic theme.” The general survey of Shakespearean verse that constitutes Halliday's introductory chapter is extremely suggestive. When he turns to each stage of Shakespeare's career in successive chapters, however, his application of his general observations does not fulfill the promise of the introduction. Still, Halliday's book is one of the few critical attempts to study particular characteristics of Shakespeare's dramatic poetry in different periods of its development.

18. Dorothy L. Sipe, *Shakespeare's Metrics*, Yale Studies in English 166 (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1968), objects to the critical emphasis on irregularity in Shakespeare's verse, particularly to the study of contrapuntal rhythm suggested by Halliday and others. Her unshakable purpose is to establish “that
Shakespeare was in fact greatly concerned about preserving the regularity of his verse” (p. 6). This aim deafens her to the subtlety of Shakespeare’s rhythmic experiments.

19. “Leontes and the spider: language and speaker in Shakespeare’s Last Plays,” pp. 147-49. “People are constantly expressing the truth of the situation without grasping what, for us, is the primary meaning of their own words—as in the reiterated description of the lowly Perdita as a ‘queen’” (p. 147).


21. The sort of stylistic and narrative correspondence I am suggesting here has been discerned in a number of authors by a number of critics. Apart from Todorov, some of the most lucid such analysis has been performed by Eric S. Rabkin. Quoting a long sentence from Absalom, Absalom!, he shows how the syntax reflects narrative structure: “This interlocking, overlapping principle in fact is reflected in the method of multiple, overlayed narrative that Faulkner employs in Absalom, Absalom! and the constant effort to get to the heart of the thought behind the sentence is much like the constant effort of the narrators to get to heart of their tale, the central, untold story of Thomas Sutpen. The structural similarities between the manner of multiple narration and the style may be called, in opposition to image-structure, syntax-structure. Both image-structure and syntax-structure cooperate to foist the fictional reality subliminally on the reader” (Narrative Suspense, p. 56). Rabkin also illustrates a different brand of syntax-structure at work in Tristram Shandy. Virtually all such analyses of which I am aware are confined to prose fiction. It seems reasonable and fruitful to attempt such a study of dramatic poetry, as long as we are aware of its conventions and special requirements. The particular problems associated with iambic pentameter created for oral delivery are addressed by O. B. Hardison, Jr., “Blank Verse before Milton,” Studies in Philology, 81 (1984), 253-74.

22. Structuralism in Literature, p. 17.
25. Wright makes some brief but fascinating suggestions about this sort of correspondence: see “The Play of Phrase and Line,” pp. 157-58.

**Criticism: Sexuality And Authority: David McCandless (essay date 1990)**


[In the following essay, McCandless posits that Leontes's persecution of Hermione represents his attempt to cast away his source of sexual shame.]

Early in Shakespeare's The Winter's Tale, Polixenes recalls the boyhood paradise he shared with Leontes and attributes its end to the intrusion of “blood”—here a synonym for man's “sensual, animal appetite” (OED 1: 929).

We were as twinn'd lambs that did frisk i’ th’ sun,
And bleat the one at th’ other. What we chang’d
Was innocence for innocence; we knew not
The doctrine of ill-doing, nor dream’d
That any did. Had we pursu’d that life,
And our weak spirits ne’er been higher rear’d
With stronger blood, we should have answer’d heaven
Boldly, “not guilty”; the imposition clear’d,
Hereditary ours.

(1.1.67-75)

Not only were the two future kings unacquainted with evil (“knew not the doctrine of ill-doing”), they were effectively exempt from original sin itself, the “hereditary imposition” of guilt they would have “cleared” had they remained unaroused by “blood”—the animal appetite of sexual passion. The agent of that corruption, Polixenes implies, the snake in the garden, is woman:

Temptations have since then been born to ‘s: for
In those unfledg’d days was my wife a girl;
Your precious self had then not cross’d the eyes
Of my young playfellow.

(1.1.77-80)

Hermione, in rebuttal, chides Polixenes, “Of this make no conclusion, lest you say / Your queen and I are devils” (1.1.81-82). Yet Polixenes's portrait of paradise lost accords precisely with the medieval view, still alive in Shakespeare's age, that women were indeed devils, or at least daughters of Eve, the alluring devil's accomplice who seduced man into sin.¹

This patriarchal myth, a projection of male dread of female sexuality, is no sooner invoked than it is mysteriously re-enacted, as Leontes, in some way newly aroused by “blood,” inexplicably imagines his innocent wife to be a conniving whore and falls apart before our eyes. I would like, in this paper, to employ Susan Griffin's definition of pornography in order to discuss Leontes's fatal delusion as a kind of pornographic fantasy, in which he degrades Hermione in order to punish her for having afflicted him with a shaming sexual knowledge, for having affronted a false ideal of incorruptibility to which he ruinously clings. True to Griffin's definition of the pornographer, Leontes defends masculine culture against feminine nature, enforcing the subjugation of women by enacting a fantasy of archetypal female treachery—a kind of revision of The Fall, in which Adam defeats Eve's attempts to corrupt and enslave him.

Pornography is an exceptionally complex subject. Even within feminist ranks attitudes towards it differ sharply. For instance, Linda Williams, who calls herself an “anti-censorship feminist” finds Griffin's position—and those of other “anti-pornography feminists” like Andrea Dworkin and Susanne Kappeler—needlessly prosecutorial and untenably utopian. She argues, in essence, that nature cannot conquer culture, that the notion of “a whole and natural sexuality that stands outside history and free of power” (23) is purely mythical, and that power is an ineradicable part of human sexuality. Indeed, Williams finds in as unlikely a place as hard-core sadomasochistic film an affirmation of female subjectivity.

Moreover, two of Griffin's targets—Sade and Sacher-Masoch, whose names are synonymous with pornographic sexual violence—inspire Roland Barthes and Gilles Deleuze not to eloquent rage but to philosophical exegesis. Indeed, Barthes calls Sade “a founder of language” (3) and Deleuze considers Sacher-Masoch “a pornologist” (18). The line between pornography and art begins to seem confoundingly blurry.

Though Griffin's view is but one among many, she does offer a particularly powerful dissection of the kind of culture that Leontes defends, as well as the sort of sadistic fantasy that he enacts. She also very poetically evokes a nature not far removed from that which the play unleashes as a liberating force. Griffin's vision may be utopian. But so, in this play, I think, is Shakespeare's.
For Griffin, culture is to nature as mind is to body, form to material, myth to experience, constraint to license, masculine to feminine—but not, it must emphasized, male to female. In fact, the feminine image so extravagantly demeaned in pornography represents the pornographer's disowned feminine self. He disclaims the feminine because he wishes to disclaim his own materiality, his creatureliness, his bodily vulnerability:

He would let his body speak; he would let the knowledge of the body in himself live; and yet this is also precisely the knowledge of which he is terrified. And so he tries to separate culture from nature. He would have what is natural in him be mute. But what is natural speaks in him. Therefore he gives “woman” a voice in pornography, but he gives her this voice only in order to silence her.

(40)

I will argue that, by ruthlessly persecuting and scheming to eliminate a Hermione re-made in the image of whore, Leontes similarly seeks to expel a demonized feminine self and so remain innocent of the bodily knowledge it compels. If Leontes lethally implements the constraints of culture in the play's first part, however, Florizel and Perdita turn the licenses of nature into a revitalizing force in its second part, reconciling the innocence and “blood” that Leontes so destructively polarizes. Not only do they hasten Leontes's recovery by bringing regenerative nature to his moribund culture, but Leontes himself atones for his crime of banishing the feminine and objectifying Hermione, first by submitting to feminization at Paulina's hands, and second by rejecting the image of Hermione-as-object in favor of Hermione-as-person, effectively summoning her off the pedestal at the play's end.

The opening scene sets up the image of Hermione as female intruder: two men, Camillo and Archidamus, make no mention of her but speak exclusively of the long-standing friendship between Leontes and Polixenes and of the great hopes residing in the gallant child Mamillius. The stage is set for the entrance of three male figures. The fourth who enters, unannounced and female, is therefore something of an alien presence. Moreover, Polixenes's verbal evocation of the “boy eternal” paradise could receive visual support from the image of Leontes at play with Mamillius, a key piece of stage business that the text strongly hints at. Leontes clearly does not attend to the conversation of Polixenes and Hermione (“Is he won yet?” [1.1.86]), the young prince should not be ignored for 120 lines, and the juxtaposition of word and image allows Polixenes to speak of his former “young playfellow” while Leontes disports himself with a current one, as if aiming to preserve the lost paradise. Indeed, Leontes's play with Mamillius could be taken as his attempt to recreate (and perhaps re-create) himself in the image of “boy eternal.”

This re-conjuring of the boyhood Eden extends the affirmations of Camillo and Archidamus, dramatizing the abiding friendship of Leontes and Polixenes and making of Mamillius a symbol for the continuity of its values. The return to paradise also has the effect of portending a second fall and of thus enhancing Hermione's status as suspicious outsider, potential snake in the garden. Can this intrinsically dangerous woman be safely integrated into male society? Can she possibly live up to male standards of purity and constancy? Leontes introduces doubt as he recalls the occasion of their betrothal:

Three crabbed months had sour’d themselves to death,
Ere I could make thee open thy white hand,
And clap thyself my love; then didst thou utter,
“I am yours for ever.”

(1.2.100-05)

Leontes yokes Hermione's vow of “forever” to a conception of time—a sour corrupting unto death—that
denies the possibility of “forever” and thus seems to forecast a betrayal or at least to estrange her from the 
changeless innocence of the “boy eternal” world. In his essay “Of friendship,” Montaigne promotes the 
constancy of “brotherly affection” over the violent variability of sexual love. The latter 
is more active, more scorching, and more intense. But it is an impetuous and fickle flame, 
undulating and variable, a fever flame, subject to fits and lulls, that holds us only by one 
corner. In friendship, it is a general and universal warmth, moderate and even, besides, a 
constant and settled warmth, all gentleness and smoothness, with nothing bitter and stinging 
about it.

When Hermione presents her hand to Polixenes, that fever flame—in the form of violent sexual 
jealousy—engulfs Leontes, and the much-anticipated fall takes place. “Too hot, too hot,” he cries, “To mingle 
friendship far is mingling bloods” (1.2.108-09). Woman's stirring of “stronger blood” once more assaults the 
tranquility of male friendship, once more destroys a vision of paradise. Having just recalled the occasion when 
Hermione's offering of her hand confirmed his selection as sexual partner, Leontes misreads Hermione's 
gesture as the choice of a new one.

Hermione unwittingly enacts the role of devilish seductress and precipitates a second fall. The notion of a 
“second fall” implies, however, that Hermione has somehow managed, at least until the moment of her 
alleged betrayal, to achieve integration into the “boy eternal” world—or that Leontes has managed to 
assimilate female sexuality to male myths of innocence. The sign of this assimilation is purely visual, for it is 
not once alluded to in the opening act: her pregnancy, her status as nurturing mother. As Coppelia Kahn says, 
“as mother and only as mother, woman is exonetered of Eve's crime … her pain in childbirth, her 
self-sacrifice in childraising, purify her sexuality” (78). Hermione can enter the “boy eternal” world solely in 
the guise of idealized madonna. Leontes's desire for her remains free of sexual taint so long as she remains an 
untainted mother-figure.

Her “entertainment” of Polixenes, however, immediately and irrevocably taints her. Her pregnancy ceases to 
be a sign of purity and becomes instead a mark of rank corruption, proof of infidelity. The ease with which 
Hermione moves, in Leontes's eyes, from madonna to whore suggests the extent to which he subjects her 
complex humanity to dehumanizing myth. He trades the myth of “boy eternal,” in which woman as sacred 
nurturer palliates sexual guilt, for the myth of “the fall,” in which woman as cunning seductress absorbs 
sexual shame. As Griffin observes, the pornographic mind “attempts to solve the problems of the psyche 
precisely by creating a world of illusion” (39).

The content of Leontes's fantasy obviously owes something to the patriarchal myth of woman as mysterious 
“other” who must be either exalted or reviled. He seems, however, to take that myth to its pornographic 
extreme, according to which woman is exalted precisely in order that she may be reviled. As Griffin explains, 
the pornographer's central project is to de-mystify his own mystified image of woman as beguiling, 
unattainable goddess, to expose her as pure flesh, to affirm her essential sordidness (29-35). Thus Leontes 
later salves his humiliation by savoring the fact that the wantonness of woman is all-pervasive, unmanageable, 
a “bawdy planet that will strike / Where 'tis predominant,” an elemental force that comes from all directions 
and penetrates all barriers (1.2.200-04).

While there can be little doubt that Leontes is horrifically deluded, Howard Felperin makes a provocative 
point: it is highly problematic to assert that Leontes “misreads” Hermione's actions when those actions are 
available to us only through Leontes's mediations: “Unless we are ready to suppose a positively hallucinatory 
Leontes, gestures in some degree susceptible of such descriptions must take place in front of us” (7). True 
enough. Such gestures as we may infer from Leontes's commentary—Hermione's taking Polixenes by the
hand, sighing and smiling, looking up at him as they walk arm-in-arm toward the garden (1.2.115, 125-26, 116-117, 183-85)—are certain to be sensually charged, since Hermione asserts from her first appearance an unapologetic—perhaps even unconscious—sensuality. Once encouraged to assist in detaining Polixenes, she casts off imposed standards of feminine modesty, steps boldly forward and works her will on him with entreaties as warm, witty, and expansive as Leontes's were spare (1.2.27-57). Moreover, while protesting against the devil's role that Polixenes assigns her, Hermione also shows herself utterly unthreatened by it, implicitly affirming the wholesomeness of marital sexuality:

Th' offenses we have made you do we'll answer,
If you first sinn'd with us, and that with us
You did continue fault, and that you slipp'd not
With any but with us.

(1.2.83-86)

Hermione's unself-conscious sensuality may also be discerned in her erotically-charged solicitation of Leontes's flattery: “cram's with praise, and make's / As fat as tame things. … You may ride 's / With one soft kiss a thousand furlongs ere / With spur we heat an acre. … Nay, let me have’t; I long” (1.2.91-2, 94-6, 101).

Thus, Hermione's friendly intimacy with Polixenes may indeed appear transgressive of feminine modesty. It undoubtedly should. Indeed, a director might be well-advised to make Hermione's displays of affection for Polixenes exuberant enough to afflic the audience with doubt, to attract a measure of sympathy for Leontes or at least to check a willingness to conclude unequivocally that his distress is unwarranted. Such a staging thus subjects Hermione's sexual charisma not only to Leontes's determining gaze but to the audience's as well, exploiting a prejudice against female sexuality, the prevailing notion that “nice girls don’t,” that warmth and sensuality too liberally dispersed convict a woman of lascivious intentions. In this manner audience members become implicated in Leontes's dementia and can only extricate themselves by questioning their instinctive stigmatizing of female sexuality.

Hermione's behavior appears so provocative because she combines the chastity and sexuality that Leontes (and patriarchy) insists on polarizing. She demonstrates that a woman may be a loyal and loving wife without requiring idealization as a madonna, that she can be a sexual being without meriting censure as a whore. Ironically, Leontes himself supplies the correct interpretation of her “entertainment” of Polixenes: it “derive[s] a liberty / From heartiness, from bounty, fertile bosom” (1.2.112-13). It discloses a forwardness (“liberty”) derived not from wantonness but from a prodigal graciousness and generous affection constitutive of a more human version of woman as nurturer (“fertile bosom”).

Unfortunately, Leontes harbors an “affection” of sexual jealousy that defeats this sound intuition. Indeed, rather than rest in his own assurance that affection “fellow’st nothing,” he concludes instead that this one “co-joins with something” and delivers himself to illusion (1.2.138-46). Leontes fatally confuses cause and effect, construing his violent jealousy as proof of his wife's guilt when, in fact, her guilt is a fiction that his violent jealousy creates. Leontes's precipitous progression from suspicion to belief—“thou may’st … thou dost … and I find it” (1.2.143-44)—suggests an eagerness to debase his wife, a readiness to enact a vindictive pornographic fantasy. In this context, his feverish punning and quibbling, the voyeuristic fervor with which he fixes on the physical interplay of Polixenes and Hermione, give an impression of autoerotic stimulation. He appears to be aroused by the very image that repels him, another experience common to pornographers.

Indeed, Leontes thinks himself infected by the corruption that he has uncovered:

A spider steep'd, and one may drink; depart,
And yet partake no venom (for his knowledge
Is not infected), but if one present
Th’ abhorr’d ingredient to his eye, make known
How he hath drunk, he cracks his gorge, his sides,
With violent hefts. I have drunk, and seen the spider.

(2.1.39-45)

He has, he feels, imbibed poison from Hermione. The previously unglimped spider of female lewdness taints the elixir of conjugal love, infects Leontes with knowledge of his own depravity, incites him to ghastly spasms of violence in an attempt to expel the poison. Hermione is made to bear the burden of Leontes's own sexual guilt. Afflicted with fleshly shame, he will mortify the flesh by mortifying Hermione whom he reduces to pure flesh. He must deprive her of a soul in order to save his. He must protect himself from sin by eliminating its imagined source.

In a key passage, Leontes testifies to a hyperconsciousness of sin and a need to be cleansed:

With all the nearest things to my heart, as well
My chamber-councils, wherein, priest-like, thou
Hast cleans’d my bosom: I from thee departed
Thy penitent reform’d.

(1.2.235-38)

This speech offers proof of Leontes's fragile conscience and explains his desperate attempt to dissociate himself from a corruption to which he feels dangerously susceptible. In urging Camillo to be Polixenes's cupbearer, Leontes appears to transform him from priest to assassin. In fact, he asks him to perform the same service as before: to cleanse his soul. Indeed, Leontes's recovery of a purified self requires the elimination of Polixenes, the impure self, the evil “twin” or bad “brother” whose sexual dereliction threatens Leontes with knowledge of his own.

If Polixenes, the adult embodiment of the “boy eternal” myth, fails as a mirror of Leontes's purity, then Mamillius, the childish image, must succeed. Leontes thus maniacally scrutinizes his son for evidence of bastardy, for traces of contamination. “We must be neat; not neat, but cleanly.” Leontes declares while cleaning Mamillius's “smutch’d” nose—“a copy out of mine” (1.2.121-23). Leontes seeks to merge with an unblemished image of an innocent self, to move through Mamillius's looking-glass into the realm of “boy eternal.” “Looking on the lines of my boy's face,” he later tells Hermione and Polixenes,

Twenty-three years, and saw myself unbreech'd
In my green velvet coat, my dagger muzzled,
Lest it should bite its master, and so prove
(As ornament oft does) too dangerous.

(1.2.153-58)

Leontes adds a new detail to the boyhood dream: he owned a dangerous “dagger” that he kept “muzzled”—an image not of innocence but of repression, a symptom of sexual dread. Mamillius cannot bear the burden of Leontes's pathological need for purity. He cannot survive in actuality the expulsion of Hermione dictated by fantasy: separated from his mother, he sickens and dies.

In sum, Leontes's mistreatment of Hermione is a pornographer's mission of revenge: he punishes her for recalling him to his own fleshliness and frailty. The master of culture abhors exposure as a vulnerable creature
of nature. Hermione's supposed sexual perfidy is but the sexual power that enforces knowledge of Leontes's essential powerlessness. He moves decisively to counter that power, which she so unthinkingly unleashes in her “entertainment” of Polixenes. With an entourage of guards, a male force, he violently invades a female space—presumably the queen's chamber (2.1.). This brutal male intrusion thus becomes emblematic of a rape, the violation of a woman's most private quarters. He arrests her, binds her, imprisons her, and threatens her with torture. He puts her on trial, adding trumped-up charges of treason to her supposed crime of adultery. In short, he brings the full power of the state to bear against this woman whose power he so fears, turning the instruments of male-centered authority into devices of subjugation, suppressing a potentially subversive female force. As Griffin observes, “when the pornographic mind creates an object, it prepares the stage for the enactment of its rage against that object. It is inevitable that this object must be rejected, humiliated, punished, tortured, bound up, silenced, even murdered” (46).

Ironically—as Peter Stallybrass says of Desdemona (141)—the more Hermione is persecuted, the more she appears to become the ideal wife: devoted, long-suffering, self-sacrificing. When first berated and arrested, she proclaims, “There’s some ill planet reigns; / I must be patient, till the heavens look / With an aspect more favorable” and concludes, “The King's will be performed!” (2.1.105-07, 115). At her trial, she calls his favor “the crown and comfort of my life” which, since lost, makes death trifling (3.2.90-96) and protests that she loved Polixenes as Leontes himself “commanded; / Which not to have done I think had been in me / Both disobedience and ingratitude / To you and toward your friend” (3.2.66-69). Hermione seems compelled to create an alternative, idealized image of herself as faithful wife. Death fixes her in that martyred image, makes of her a monument of Patience smiling at grief. Leontes gets his wish: Hermione as statue, as lifeless icon of wifely devotion, may now be “his forever.” Like Browning's Duke of Ferrara, he transforms a human being into an aesthetic object, bringing an independent woman under his firm control—but only by putting her to death. The Bohemian romance of Florizel and Perdita corrects Leontes's destructive dramatization of “The Fall.” These lovers, as in the “boy eternal” fantasy, are “two lambs frisking in the sun,” innocent playmates in a pastoral world. Their innocence is not, however, of the pre-sexual sort celebrated in the boyhood dream but is mature and sexually aware, dispelling the dream's dark shadow of misogyny and sexual dread. In Leontes's vision of “paradise lost,” woman destroys man's innocence and sexually defiles him. In Florizel's and Perdita's version of “paradise regained,” man joins with woman in a wholesome sexual partnership.

Indeed, in effecting a release from the strangulated court to the vibrant countryside, in setting nature against culture, Bohemia initiates the rectification of Leontes's wrongs. Certainly it accommodates the sexual experience that so bedeviled him. The Old Shepherd regards Perdita precisely as Leontes did: as the product of some illicit sexual liaison—“some stair-work, some trunk-work, some behind-door-work” (3.3.74-75). Yet he unfussily, good-heartedly resolves to take care of her, accepting fleshly weakness as the way of the world. Similarly, sixteen years later when he exhorts Perdita, a reluctant “mistress of the feast,” to emulate the livelier ways of his lusty wife who “welcom’d all, serv’d all,” drank and sang, and danced with multiple partners (4.4.57), he seems to encourage the same sort of generous sensuality that in Hermione struck Leontes as shameless lust.

The sheep-shearing festival reinforces the naturalness of sexuality, depicting a whole pastoral society at earthy play. Autolycus sings randy songs and sells seductive trinkets, twelve “men of hair” perform a leaping, lusty satyr dance, and the shepherd's son, a bumpkin Don Juan, finds himself mediating an immodest squabble between two frisky mistresses, Mopsa and Dorcas. The festival sanctions the release of revitalizing libidinal energy, of the “red blood” that “reigns in the winter's pale” about which Autolycus sings (4.3.4). “Blood” here retains its sexual significance but adds connotations of “life-force,” of the “vital fluid upon which life depends” (OED, 1: 929). Like the may-games of Whitsuntide (to which Perdita refers at 4.4.134), the sheep-shearing festival is essentially a fertility rite, celebrating nature's powers of renewal. Revelers dress themselves in garlands of flowers, affirming a connectedness to nature that exalts their licentious antics, as C. L. Barber observes: “May-game wantonness has a reverence about it because it is a realization of a power of life larger than the individual, crecent both in men and in their green surroundings” (24). By clothing
themselves in nature's foliage, celebrants relate “the emotions of love to its fructifying function” (24).

Thus Shakespeare's play enacts, at least until Polixenes's violent intrusion, the ancient comic mythos of seasonal renewal: summer defeats winter, fertility overcomes sterility and, in Griffin's terms, nature revitalizes culture. The flower-dispersing Perdita, costumed as Flora, resembling Persephone, functions as goddess of fertility. Cast out by culture, she becomes the embodiment of nature and, because uncorrupted by culture's fear of the body, generates precisely the healthful sexuality necessary for culture's recovery.

Indeed, Perdita and Florizel together reconcile the teeming sexuality of the festival with the purity that so obsessed Leontes. These pastoral lovers do not use festivity as a license for looseness. Florizel rejects the role of royal debaucher he might conceivably have played and which Perdita invokes when claiming that his outsized oaths resemble a seducer's tactical flatteries (4.4.146-51). Neither do they retreat into bloodless amorous warbling. Though their desire for each other is disciplined by chaste regard and marital design, it is not prettily abstract but potently sexual. Florizel makes his sexual passion perfectly clear. When Perdita chides him for humbling his royalty with a shepherd's robes, he compares himself favorably to those gods who assumed lower forms for love's sake:

Became a bull and bellow'd; the green Neptune
A ram and bleated; and the fire-rob'd god,
Golden Apollo, a poor humble swain,
As I see now. Their transformations
Were never for a piece of beauty rarer,
Nor in a way so chaste, since my desires
Run not before mine honor, nor my lusts
Burn hotter than my faith.

(4.4.27-35)

Florizel makes no attempt to hide his “lusts” and “desires”—indeed, he likens them to those appetites that made beasts of gods—but resolves to sanctify them in marriage, to reconcile passion and chastity, to harmonize the bleating of the lusty ram with that of the innocent lambs of Polixenes's Edenic vision.

Perdita, for her part, invokes Florizel's “desire to breed by me” with ingenuous frankness and evinces a longing for sexual satisfaction in wishing to bedeck Florizel with flowers and transform him into a “bank for love to lie and play on: / Not like a corpse; or if—-not to be buried, / But quick, and in mine arms” (4.4.130-32). Perdita's sense of “play” combines the innocence and sexuality that Leontes insisted on polarizing. Indeed, Leontes's most telling pun is on the word “play”: “Go play, boy, play. Thy mother plays” (1.2.187), insinuating a contrast between the innocent childish play of Mamillius—which is also the pastoral “boy eternal” play of himself and Polixenes—and the wicked sexual play of the corruptress Hermione. For Florizel and Perdita, sexual passion is not a corruptive force but the indispensable physical component to a fully generative love. Indeed, Florizel and Perdita are perhaps close to attaining the integration of body and soul that Montaigne considered the only means by which heterosexual love could surpass “brotherly affection”:

if such a relationship, free and voluntary, could be built up, in which not only would the souls have ... complete enjoyment, but the bodies would also share in the alliance, so that the entire man would be engaged, it is certain that the resulting friend-ship would be fuller and more complete.

(Frame 138)
In surpassing the pastoral friendship of Leontes and Polixenes, in wedding innocence to sexual experience, Florizel and Perdita do indeed turn Bohemia into a kind of paradise regained. They soon meet a second snake-in-the-garden, however, a stand-in for the man whose misdeeds they are redressing: Polixenes, whose sexually-laced fulminations are very nearly as cataclysmic as Leontes's. He undertakes to control his son's sexuality as strictly as Leontes sought to control his wife's. He similarly employs patriarchal sanctions as instruments of domination, threatening to disinherit Florizel if he persists in courting this lowly shepherdess. Also like Leontes, he forces an innocent woman into the role of wicked seductress and threatens her in terms that suggest he is susceptible to the very “affection” he seeks to suppress:

These rural latches to his entrance open,
Or hoop his body more with thy embraces,
I will devise a death as cruel for thee
As thou art tender to't.

(4.4.437-41)

In short, he too manifests a pornographic consciousness. He calls her “enchantment” and “fresh piece / Of excellent witchcraft” (4.4.434, 422-23), linking her with the earliest victims of pornographic violence—the “witches,” the multitude of women tortured and murdered for their supposedly demonic sexual powers. Polixenes seems prepared to mete out a similar punishment. His promise to “have thy beauty scratched with briars” takes us back to Griffin's portrayal of the pornographer as desiring beauty in order to violate it. His threat to “devise a death as cruel for thee as thou art tender to 't” parallels the pornographer's sadistic focus on the female's physical vulnerability. Polixenes means for Perdita to feel her “tenderness” and to cower before his power to hurt her.

Like Leontes, Polixenes appears to lord his authority over those who threaten it and to avenge himself on a force that bewitches him. That Perdita has such an effect on him seems evident: the very accusations of witchcraft are covert tributes to her sexual allure and twice he openly extols her beauty (4.4.78, 156-57). Yet Perdita, youthful queen of the feast, implicitly disqualifies this king from the ranks of amorous swains and suitors, welcoming him with flowers that signify—at least to Polixenes—his status as “man of winter” at a summer frolic (4.4.73-79). Florizel later seconds this characterization of Polixenes as a man past his prime, addressing his disguised father as “ancient sir who … hath sometime loved” (4.4.361-62) and enlisting him as a witness to the betrothal from which he has, in actuality, been excluded. Polixenes, however, seems unreconciled to his position as impotent observer of potent youthful revels. He not only sardonically commends Perdita for her choice of “winter” flowers but, while still disguised, warms up for his brutal tirade against the lovers with a scathingly exaggerated portrait of himself as “stupid with age and alt'ring rheums,” victim of a dreadfully incapacitating senility that makes him unfit for his own son's betrothal (4.4.397-402). The ferocity of the outburst that ensues may well owe something to a jealousy triggered by the sight of this perturbingly unattainable young woman's making amorous sport with a son seemingly intent on discarding him.

Polixenes could be considered a Pentheus-like character, adopting disguise for a mission of spying that discloses an almost prurient interest in the licentious proceedings he wishes to oppose, a craving for nature that culture demands he repel. The director could make clear the extent to which Polixenes not only passively witnesses the festival's mating rituals but is voyeuristically aroused by them. Indeed, the director might even play up the Polixenes-Leontes parallel by staging a moment of intimacy between Florizel and Perdita that moves Polixenes to Leontes-like excitation. Whatever sexual feeling is stirred in Polixenes can only cause frustration. In a festival brimming with sexual vigor, he is consigned to sexlessness. His response is to strike back against those who have neutered him—a son seemingly bent on overthrowing him and a woman whose untouchable youthful beauty is an insuperable provocation. Like Leontes, Polixenes explodes with sexual violence, prepared to destroy that which he lacks full power to possess.
Florizel's disregard of his father's interdictions, his determination to marry Perdita at the expense of his princely status, provides instructive contrast to Leontes's power-mad vendetta. If Leontes invests himself with the state's full power in order to destroy Hermione, Florizel renounces such power out of love for Perdita. In declaring himself “heir to my affection” rather than heir to the throne (4.4.481), Florizel chooses nature over culture, identifies with that vulnerable, feeling “feminine” self that Leontes so feverishly opposed. He gives himself to Perdita as Hermione gave herself to Leontes: “I cannot be / Mine own, nor any thing to any, if / I be not thine” (4.4.43-45). At the same time, his single-minded devotion to “affection,” his obsessive pursuit of a personal vision, his ready embrace of “madness” (4.4.484) make him as determined a lover as Leontes is intractable a lunatic. He is thus indispensable to Perdita's revitalization of Leontes's court.

The cocksure cony-catcher Autolycus also assists in the symbolic defeat of Leontes, exuberantly lampooning—whether intentionally or not—Polixenes's re-enactment of Leontes's despotic cruelty. Posing as a preposterously swaggering courtier, he reprises Polixenes's ranting denunciation of Florizel's and Perdita's betrothal, heaping abuse not on the absent lovers but on the terrified yokels he pretends not to recognize. “Draw our throne into a sheepcote!” he cries (4.4.79-80), echoing Polixenes's censure of Florizel, a “sceptre's heir / That thus affects a sheephook” (4.4.419-20). His loving recital of the gruesome tortures that await the clown translate Polixenes's brutal threats into unthreatening comic grotesquery. By so farcically and irreverently standing in for Leontes's stand-in, Autolycus helps dispel the specter of tragedy and preserve the spirit of festivity that he first bumptiously introduced.

Indeed, throughout the Bohemian idyll, Autolycus stands in for Leontes himself, removing, by means of comic parody, much of the sting from the crazed king's depredations. Like Leontes, he addresses the audience directly with conspiratorial asides and soliloquies, unveiling an “angling” mind intent on entrapping people. Unlike Leontes, however, he wins our allegiance, secures our admiration for his expert deceptions and pilferies. Our delight in this con-man's virtuosity stirs none of the unnerving moral qualms of our attraction to the seductive cunning of an Iago or Richard III. Autolycus is mostly a figure of fun, a crowd-pleasing prankster. Like Leontes, he traffics in illusion, but the stooges of his confidence game fare far better than the pawns of Leontes's pornographic theater.

He may seem as remorselessly submerged in selfhood as Leontes, as devoted to a self-serving mission that estranges him from an entire community. Yet, unlike Leontes's, Autolycus's predaciousness and self-absorption are assimilable—indeed indispensable—to his society. Bohemia derives much of its lifelikeness from Autolycus's zestful cynicism, his hearty trouncing of honesty and trust, his cheerful contempt for his gullible victims. He ensures that the idealized love of Florizel and Perdita unfolds in a world sufficiently infused by a force resistant to idealization. He keeps Arcadia grounded in reality.

Finally, Autolycus, like Leontes, is his world's version of “fallen man,” the embodiment of a corrupt sexuality. He consorts with “doxies,” “aunts,” and “drabs” (4.3.2, 11, 27)—in other words, whores—and peddles songs full of “dildos and fadings” (4.4.195), the singing of which lulls celebrants into a collective stupor that Autolycus equates with desexualization: “You might have pinched a placket, it was senseless; 'twas nothing to geld a codpiece of a purse; I would have fil’d keys off that hung in chains” (4.4.609-12).

But Autolycus happily accepts the sexual passion that Leontes so passionately resisted. He is not so much a carrier of corruption as a bearer of “blood,” an embodiment of that pulsating life-force that revivifies a world deadened by Leontes's misdeeds. He contributes mightily to Bohemia's effect of festive release. He not only accepts, as Leontes does not, his creaturely status. He absolutely revels in it.

Of course the play ultimately accents the insufficiencies of Autolycus's creaturely life. Indeed, one measure of Perdita's and Florizel's triumph is their transcendence of his pure materiality. Autolycus embodies a kind of nature rather different from the one that Griffin imagines: animal nature, amorally predacious, invincibly self-involved. It is the same nature embodied by the hungry bear who makes a meal of Antigonus or, in a very
different context, the nature that is Edmund's goddess. From another angle, however, Autolycus does not represent nature but marauding, despoiling culture. A refugee from court who picks on gullible rustics, Autolycus exploits nature in order to gratify a culture-bound greediness for profit and power. Thus, although Autolycus defeats Leontes through parodic doubling, he must also himself suffer defeat. He has no share in the happiness that reigns at the play's end and is left ruefully to acknowledge the limitations of his roguery (5.2.113-23). In the last analysis, his failure to find redemption provides contrast for Leontes's achievement of it.

Leontes has positioned himself for redemption by undergoing a superhuman sixteen-year penance which, to an important degree, takes the form of feminization, of submission to a woman he had previously abhorred. Indeed, Paulina's domination of Leontes effects a shift in the play from female subjugation to female empowerment. In appointing herself Hermione's champion, Paulina avenges Leontes's invasion of female space by penetrating a male bastion of power—presumably the king's chamber (2.3.)—and by maintaining a determination to talk even in the face of physical threats and scurrilous slander. Words are Paulina's weapons. She denounces the king's “dangerous, unsafe lunes” and resolves, “He must be told on’t,” adding, “If I prove honey-mouthed, let my tongue blister” (2.2.29, 31). For Paulina, militant speech serves as the substitute for manly combat, a means of vindicating the queen's honor (2.3.59-61). Her headstrong remonstrances naturally earn her the epithet of shrew. Leontes calls her “Lady Margery” and berates Antigonus for his inability to control her, declaring him “woman-tired; unroosted / By thy Dame Partlet,” a victim of beatings at her hands (2.3.160, 75-76, 92). Yet it is Leontes who takes a beating here. He yells at her, shrinks from her, implores his men to eject her and only succeeds in confirming his own impotence and cowardice.

Leontes's fear and attempted suppression of Paulina parallel his fear and attempted suppression of Hermione. The woman who is too free with her tongue is as threatening to male authority as the woman who is too free with her body. Indeed, in Shakespeare's era, a woman's verbal freedom was as strictly constrained as her sexual freedom. Patriarchy imposed on women a figurative veil of silence and the overly-talkative woman could be legitimately scorned as a whore. As Stallybrass explains, “silence, the closed mouth, is made a symbol of chastity” (127).

Since Paulina's unrestrained speech makes her as promiscuous and mutinous as Leontes imagines Hermione to be, his submission to chastisement at her hands is fitting atonement for his chastisement of Hermione. Since his need to control Hermione proved fatal to his marriage, he accepts as penance a metaphorical marriage to the uncontrollable Paulina, upon whom he confers full verbal freedom and authority. “Go on, go on; / Thou can’st not speak too much,” he says, submitting to her excoriative censure in the wake of Hermione's apparent death. “Thou didst speak but well / When most the truth; which I receive much better / Than to be pitied of thee” (3.2.214-15, 232-34). The heretofore blustering, misogynist tyrant puts himself under a woman's power. He voluntarily accepts what he had previously feared: unbridled femaleness. He submits to that “callat / Of boundless tongue” (2.3.91-92) who steps in for that wife of seemingly boundless sexuality.4

Although she may seem to shift from shrew to saint, although she may profess, as Carol Thomas Neely contends, “to drop her loquaciousness” and “identify herself as a woman subordinate to Leontes” (200), Paulina continues her fearless, recriminatory talk and holds the upper hand over Leontes to the end. Even when his first wave of penitence moves her to lament her rashness and retract her words, even after a lord has urged “say no more” and rebuked the “boldness of your speech” (2.3.216-18), she cannot refrain from reminding Leontes of his catastrophic misdeeds:

Sir, royal sir, forgive a foolish woman.
The love I bore your queen—lo, fool again!—
I’ll speak of her no more, nor of your children;
I’ll not remember you of my own lord,
Who is lost too. Take your patience to you,
And I’ll say nothing.
Similarly, sixteen years later when contesting Cleomenes's and Dion's case for Leontes's re-marriage, Paulina's reference to Hermione as "she you killed" draws an anguished protest from the grief-stricken king: "thou strik’st me / Sorely to say I did." He implores her, "say so but seldom," to which Cleomenes rejoins, "not at all, good lady" (5.1.15, 17-18, 20). Once more Paulina is urged to hold her tongue, to curb her wounding words. Her penchant for unpleasant truth-telling confirms her status as untameable shrew.

Yet this untameable shrew amasses an impressive amount of political power. She alone adjudicates the urgent matter of the king's succession. The unwaveringly deferential Leontes overrules the persuasive appeals of his political advisers and sides with Paulina, promising never to re-marry without her permission (5.1.71, 82).

In asking Leontes to re-marry, Cleomenes and Dion essentially ask him to end his “marriage” to Paulina, to free himself from her dominance and resume his rightful place as unmediated male authority. That Paulina so easily prevails, so readily retains Leontes's allegiance, implies a radical ascension of feminine influence within male-centered society, a startling alteration of the power structure.

Shakespeare thus ingeniously elevates the stock role of the man-baiting shrew. Indeed, Paulina plays a role in relation to the ravaged king that is, in some ways, analogous to that of Lear's Fool. This unsilenceable shrew is, like Lear's Fool, an unsilenceable conscience, a relentless voice of truth who spurns the subordinate's proper role of mollifying the distressed and distracted monarch. Like Lear's Fool, she is a marginalized figure within the political order who becomes the king's soulmate. Just as Lear's kinship with the Fool represents a conscious flouting of hierarchical relations, an act of atonement for his kingly neglect of the outcast and unprivileged, so Leontes's submission to Paulina sweeps aside hierarchical imperatives and helps atone for his vilification of women. If, as Enid Welsford suggests, King Lear depicts the coronation of the Fool and the investment of the King with motley (269), then The Winter's Tale depicts the empowering of the shrew and the taming of the tyrant.

Leontes's “taming,” his metaphorical marriage to Paulina, is not merely a penance. Indeed, its penitential aspects—subordination to a dominant “wife,” acceptance of the sexlessness seemingly wished for in the crazed project of self-cleansing—make it a poor model for actual marriage. But it is also an intimate friendship, marked by mutual respect and understanding. Both Leontes and Paulina have lost a spouse, so each becomes the other's “mate” in an intense, sixteen-year alliance. Leontes does not simply do penance for his past error of deprecating the feminine but, by appreciating Paulina, corrects it in preparation for his future reconciliation with Hermione. Indeed, the path of feminization on which Paulina leads Leontes, the path to health and wholeness, is also the path back to Hermione.

Paulina's spectacular charade of animating a statue consummates the curing of Leontes's habit of objectification, the rehabilitation of his pornographic consciousness. Mesmerized by the statue's uncanny resemblance to the queen, Leontes once more elects to believe in an illusion—in this case a constructed, theatrical illusion—that, under the influence of a disarranging “affection,” impresses him as true. The “affection” is his profound remorse and yearning for Hermione's return, for the recovery not simply of the image but of the woman. This longing for the whole person redeems his past crime of imprisoning her in nonpersonhood. If Leontes originally accedes to the outlandish fiction of Hermione's infidelity and proceeds to coerce her into an iconic posture of wifely subservience—thus turning her into a statue—his final acceptance of the outlandish fiction of Hermione's metamorphosis from statue to woman signals his reception of her as a living, breathing, fully independent being. Hermione's stature as venerated icon has seemingly grown in accordance with Leontes's exorbitant penance and Paulina's project of preserving her memory. In his own recollections Leontes idealizes Hermione as “the sweet’st companion that e’er man / Bred his hopes out of” (5.1.11-12). Paulina takes the superlatives even further:
If, one by one, you wedded all the world,
Or, from the all that are, took something good
To make a perfect woman, she you kill’d
Would be unparallel’d.

(5.1.13-16)

Indeed, Paulina elicits Leontes's promise not to re-marry by activating a specific memory, riveting his mind on the image of her eyes. The eyes, we know, are the birthplace of fancy, of swooning infatuation and idealization (as well as pornographic depersonalization). Moved by the memory, Leontes himself spouts superlatives: “Stars, stars, / And all eyes else dead coals!” (5.1.67-68). He has passed from the extreme of pornographically degrading Hermione to that of rapturously idolizing her. Yet he still objectifies her. Impelled by his own immense grief and Paulina's injunctions to remember, Leontes holds Hermione captive to memory's romanticized gaze, putting her forever on a pedestal.

In the final scene, then, when Leontes confronts Hermione's statue, he is, in effect, confronting his own idolatrous image of her. Her physical position perpetuates the posture of exhibited object to which he has recurrently consigned her. In 1.2., he stands aside, “frames” and tremulously narrates her supposedly salacious behavior, presenting her intimacy with Polixenes as a kind of lurid peepshow (2.115-18, 83-85). In 2.1., he urges his male entourage to “look on her, mark her well,” displaying her as a woman whose beauty must be “seen through” to the harlotry that it hides (2.1.64-77). In 3.2., he turns her trial into a virtual sadomasochistic spectacle, showcasing her as a madonna-turned-whore, a degraded object, a shamed adulteress. He preys on the powerlessness to which he has sadistically reduced her, a powerlessness greatly aggravated by her physical weakness. While it would seem far-fetched to call Hermione a masochist, she does express love for her tormentor and assume a posture of martyred faithfulness, foreshadowing her statue's pose. Once pornographically displayed as sordid flesh, she is, in the final scene, idolatrously unveiled as sainted icon.

This final scene effects a reversal of Hermione's trial. Now Leontes is utterly powerless, a dazed participant in proceedings that he only imperfectly grasps, a pawn in the maneuverings of powerful women. Perdita, not Leontes, ends Hermione's cloistered withdrawal. Paulina, not Leontes, commands her to come to life. Hermione, not Leontes, holds the key to reconciliation: she may take him back or not. In one sense, Paulina and Hermione sadistically collude to sharpen Leontes's comeuppance. The already massively grieving king confronts, in the most wrenchingly vivid way, the consequences of his deranged objectification of his wife. “Here is the kind of wife that you wanted!” the statue seems mockingly to say. Its unveiling has the predictable effect of plunging him into new paroxysms of grief and guilt. Leontes is next made to suffer the exquisite torment of Paulina's teasing encouragement of his impossible, delirious longing for Hermione's recovery. Paulina acknowledges her sadistic manipulations: “I could afflict you further.” she promises. “Do, Paulina,” Leontes begs, “for this affliction has a taste as sweet / As any cordial comfort” (5.3.75-77). The scene salubriously re-works the pornographic sadomasochism of Hermione's trial: Leontes savors his ecstasy of distress, Paulina hurts him in order to please him. This time Leontes is put on trial, made to undergo a final penitential ritual in which Hermione may consent to return if the force of his grief-ridden longing compels her.

The detection of life in Hermione transforms Leontes from worshipful penitent to desiring husband. “Would you not deem it breathed?” he asks Polixenes, “and that those veins / Did verily bear blood?” (5.3.64-65). He ceases adoring a venerated icon and begins to covet a living being. To an important degree, that coveting draws on sheer physical longing. The dizzying excitement with which Leontes awaits his wife's return has a sexual charge. His detection of “blood” in her stirs “stronger blood” in him. Discerning motion in her eye and “breath” about her, he boldly resolves to kiss her (5.3.67, 78, 80). His red-blooded passion “reigns in winter's pale,” melting away frozen idealization. His physical desire for Hermione helps elicit her physical reanimation. His wholesome assimilation of “blood” assists in releasing her from the limbo of objectification.
to which abhorrence of “blood” had consigned her.

The subtext of Leontes’s longing might thus be imagined as “wife, I come,” or—as he means to stimulate her, to elicit an arousal that betokens her satisfaction by him—“wife, please come,” inviting Hermione to consummate their marriage in life even as Cleopatra aims to consummate hers with Antony in death. As Stanley Cavell explains, a woman’s satisfaction—which encompasses but surpasses sexual satisfaction—lies beyond a man’s capacity to enforce or determine. It is not a matter of proof but of faith. It is, in fact, an aspect of the faith that Paulina makes requisite for Hermione’s revival (5.3.94-95), a faith he had once so signally lacked.

Indeed, in the play’s first part, Leontes punishes Hermione for afflicting him with the uncertainty of her satisfaction, for inciting the fear that not he but Polixenes satisfies her—hence his extreme agitation when Camillo attributes Polixenes’s delayed departure to his wish to “satisfy” the queen’s entreaties: “Satisfy? / Th’ entreaties of your mistress? Satisfy?” (1.2.233-34). As Cavell observes, assurance of satisfaction is a gift: “to elicit this gift, the extreme claim of male activeness, thus requires the man’s acceptance of his absolute passiveness” (35). Leontes initially rejects this passiveness. He refuses to submit to the power she commands as judge of his sufficiency. He takes action. He asserts his own power. He converts the uncertainty of her satisfaction into the certainty of her dissatisfaction and brutally enacts a retributive dissatisfaction with her.

In the final scene, he amends his mistake, accepting a passive, submissive posture from which, insofar as he is able, he attempts to “elicit the gift” of Hermione’s satisfaction. The sexually-charged longing is thus, in fact, a passionately chaste courtship. Leontes must woo and win Hermione once more. The scene functions as a second wedding, a theatrically extravagant renewal of vows. “O, thus she stood,” Paulina instructs an awestruck Leontes. “When she was young, you woo’d her; now, in age, / Is she become the suitor?” (5.3.107-109). This second joining of hands, this second betrothal, decisively ends the ill effects of that mock-betrothal that Leontes had perversely perceived in Hermione’s presentation of her hand to Polixenes. The battle cry of “too hot, too hot” with which Leontes greeted that gesture gives way here to the joyous exclamation “Oh, she’s warm!” (5.3.109) as he takes Hermione’s hand, perhaps the first time in the entire play that he touches her. The “too hot” fever flame of obsessive sexual “affection” gives way to the “constant and settled warmth” of loving devotion—possibly even to that harmonization of spiritual and physical satisfaction that Montaigne identified as the ideal of sexual love.

After joining hands, the two hold each other in a long, silent embrace (5.3.110-120), creating a second statue, or at least a piece of living sculpture, a tableau vivant of reconciliation and intimacy that replaces the image of the solitary frozen queen and all the pornographic displays and idolatrous images of her that have preceded it. Indeed, Camillo and Polixenes narrate and frame this moment of intimacy in a manner reminiscent of Leontes’s demented commentary on Hermione’s interplay with Polixenes. “She embraces him,” Camillo exclaims. “She hangs about his neck,” Polixenes adds (5.3.111-12).

The embrace could be staged as a further instance of dominance-and-submission: Hermione might collapse into Leontes’s enfolding arms or, by contrast, draw her kneeling husband to her bosom in the manner of a mother comforting a distressed child. It ought instead, I think, to provide an image of mutuality, of reciprocally offered love and comfort. Neither party assumes a dominant position. Each submits and is submitted to. Each nurtures and receives nurturance. Each confesses neediness and consents to meet the other’s needs.

To the extent that Hermione nurtures Leontes, she gratifies his wish to be “boy eternal.” To the extent, however, that he nurtures her, he allows her to be “girl eternal.” The “eternal childhood” thus affirmed differs radically from Leontes’s previous regressive fantasy, permitting not only mutuality but sexuality as well. This
accommodation of sexuality accords with Griffin's portrayal of childhood as a period not of sexlessness but of pre-sexual eros:

Isn't it eros we rediscover in the child's world? The beauty of the child's body. The child's closeness to the natural world. The child's heart. Her love. Touch never divided from meaning. Her trust. Her ignorance of culture. The knowledge she has of her own body. That she eats when she is hungry. Sleeps when she is tired. Believes what she sees. That no part of her body has been forbidden to her. No part of this body is shamed, numbed, or denied. That anger, fear, love, and desire pass freely through this body. And for her, meaning is never separate from feeling.

Leontes's previous attempt to be "boy eternal" manifested adult terrors and constrictions utterly destructive of the child's trust and instinctuality and thus destructive of Mamillius, image of "boy eternal" and Hermione, preserver of "girl eternal." Florizel and Perdita successfully assimilate the eros of childhood to the sexuality of adulthood, and Leontes and Hermione follow their lead. They stand together not only as nurturer and nurtured but as lover and beloved. The embrace represents a passionately chaste love-making, the climax of Leontes's fervent wooing and arousing, an experience of mutual satisfaction. They do not speak to each other. There are no idealized vows of "I am yours forever," only the "speechless dialect" of a shared physical love, the silence of a savored, enveloping feeling. The two move, as it were, beyond speech, beyond the constructs of culture and into the sensations of nature, into a realm of pure feeling where simply to touch is to express love, a love that "doth verily bear blood."

It might reasonably be objected that the nature I invoke, following Griffin, is itself a cultural construct and that even sensations—or rather our experience of them—are culturally regulated. (Does not one's experience of bodily harm or bliss depend upon culturally-instilled attitudes toward pain and pleasure?) The objection begs a philosophical debate beyond the purview of the present essay. My point is simply that I imagine in the embrace of Hermione and Leontes the consummation of a mutual need to touch and be touched—a need that each of us brings into this world—so physically powerful that it submerges them momentarily in pure sensation and rends the protective coverings of their "culturalized" selves. Indeed, to a crucial extent, the meaning of this moment lies in sensation, not only in the characters' (and, on the characters' behalf, the actors') but in the audience's as well. The audience too must allow itself to be "touched."

More exacting feminist critics have discerned in the play's ending a revival of patriarchy and a re-subordination of women. They note that Hermione seems to return to Leontes exactly as she left him: a devoted, forgiving, long-suffering human icon, lacking the wit and feistiness that characterized her earlier displays of independence. Her return seems important mainly for its effect on Leontes, for the rapt experience of deliverance and achievement of wholeness that it affords him. From this angle, the recovered Hermione symbolizes Leontes's recovered feminine self. From another angle, Hermione returns precisely because Leontes has already integrated his feminine self and therefore no longer requires her to personify its sinister double. In that sense she returns as a person in her own right, not as an extension of Leontes. In addition, the implication that things have not changed all that much seems odd in light of Leontes's radical transformation and the utterly new mutuality that he and Hermione affirm through their embrace. It might also be added that exhibitions of wit and feistiness would seem out of keeping with the final scene's effect of sublime reconciliation. As Janet Adelman observes, Shakespeare's characters are sometimes shaped by "psychological pressures not their own" (140).

The revival of patriarchy does not seem to me, then, to be explicit in the play's action. Leontes does not—at least not unambiguously—reassert power or re-enslave women. True, the "open silence" of Paulina's response to his offer of Camillo as husband permits a mimed resistance on her part that could portray him as
autocratically thwarting her. The open silence also lends itself, however, to a speechless happy compliance. Leontes's line “I partly know his mind” (5.3.142) suggests that Camillo might well present himself as a willing suitor. Certainly Paulina has little to fear from the institution of marriage itself. As Marianne Novy observes, “she has already demonstrated unambiguously how little marriage subordinates her” (177). Also, the words with which Paulina excludes herself from the “precious winners” celebration that she has overseen sound suspiciously like a death sentence (5.3.130-35) and could be taken as a self-martyring cue for precisely the invitation to the party that they elicit.

One could of course argue, as does Marilyn Williamson (149-153), that the revival of patriarchy and subordination of women is implicit rather than explicit, that regenerative female powers—Perdita's revitalizing youth, Hermione's loving forgiveness, Paulina's feminine guidance—work to “re-center” Leontes, to restore him fully to the status of husband, father and king. In preserving Leontes, the individual, that is, the women also necessarily preserve Leontes, the patriarch, and thus preserve patriarchy itself. Their gift of nurturance sustains a system that enforces their subjugation. Or, as Erickson less gloomily puts it, the play's female figures “are a powerful force for transforming the men, yet their power as facilitators is used to reform rather than to transcend the patriarchal framework” (167). The point is well-made, but to my mind under-appreciative of the implications of that “reform.” As a living work of art, as a play frequently performed in the present age, when the increased participation and influence of women have been accompanied by the increased assimilation of pornographic images and the increased incidence of violent sexual crimes, The Winter's Tale offers itself as a testament to the power and worth of women, affirming the feminine as an essential component of human wholeness, depicting the rehabilitation of a pornographic consciousness and dramatizing the transformation of a sadistic would-be wife-murderer to a deeply grieving man who repairs his life through integration of his “woman's part.” Indeed, if some ideologically-minded critics find that the play's fantasy does not go far enough, hard-headed realists might well find the fantasy untenable. In real life, violent, women-fearing men are seldom so amenable to reform. But, if The Winter's Tale demonstrates anything, it is the power and appeal of beautiful dreaming.

Notes

1. As Linda Woodbridge points out, the formal defenders of womanhood during the English Renaissance were at pains to downplay Eve's perfidy, either by ingeniously inventing excuses for her or by portraying her as the indispensable anti-type of the chaste Mary, whose devout obedience was thought to have redeemed womankind from Eve's sin as surely as Christ's had redeemed mankind from Adam's, a medieval formulation that recurs regularly in the formalist debate. Although Woodbridge emphasizes that this debate should not be taken as too exact a reflection of contemporaneous attitudes toward women, the image of Eve as seductress was a fixture of Renaissance anti-feminist mythology and her inevitable pairing with Mary promoted the perilous madonna/whore polarity that persists, in one form or another, to the present day.
2. See Pyle for a more extended consideration of the merits of this choice (14).
3. Woodbridge suggests that the plenitude of slandered women in Renaissance drama may point to actual male anxiety about the assertive, liberated women—most especially the notorious cross-dressers—who were increasingly visible in the second decade of the seventeenth century (177-81).
4. I do not mean to minimize the difference between “whores” and “shrews” or to imply that they are interchangeable. My point is that both belong to the species of “female-who-is-too-open,” both deviate from patriarchy's “normative woman.” Thus there seems to be a kind of poetic justice in Leontes's penance: having sought to dominate one unruly woman, he now submits to another.
5. Given the duration and political import of Paulina's “insubordination,” Erickson's assertion that “her domineering role is only temporary” seems a curious slighting of her achievement (163).
6. Neely believes that Leontes not only conceives of Hermione as “peerless” but as “sexual,” “human,” and “flawed” (205). It is indeed important to note that, in longing to kiss Hermione (5.1.54), the
idealizing Leontes evinces a physical desire that foreshadows his intense yearning for her in the final scene. It seems to me, however, that the emphasis in this scene is overwhelmingly on idealization. When Leontes imagines Hermione “soul-vex’d,” for instance (5.1.58), he is imagining her not as a woman but as a vengeful spirit.

Works Cited


In the following essay, Kaplan and Eggert examine The Winter's Tale's relation to questions of female sexuality and authority during Queen Elizabeth's reign.

The legal history of early modern Englishwomen has not yet been written, though recent contributions suggest that scholars are beginning to rectify this oversight. One productive point of entry into this important field is presented by defamation, generally defined in early modern England as an injury inflicted by the false and malicious imputation of a crime. The popularity of this charge and its redresses is registered in the records for both common law and ecclesiastical courts in this period, both of which evidence dramatic increases in slander cases. The value of slander for the exploration of early modern women's legal concerns is multiple. First, defamation gives us an indication—albeit more reflective, perhaps, of public opinion than actual indictment rates—of the types of crimes women were thought to commit. After all, slanderous accusations have to have some plausibility in order to be damaging. Second, defamation is an injury that women both commit and complain about in significant numbers. Finally, the form of and redress for defamation are, for the most part, gendered. Imputations of bankruptcy, for example, which could have damaged a merchant and thus were actionable for a man, would probably have had little effect if directed toward a woman. In contrast, allegations of whoredom—which, while occasionally leveled at men, were not usually thought to injure male reputations—were overwhelmingly cited by women in the slander suits they brought.

In this essay, we would like to make a foray into a gendered legal history of early modern England through the problem of slander as experienced by contemporary women and as represented and commented upon in Shakespeare's play The Winter's Tale. Not only does the play concern itself with slanders to women's reputations, it also engages a series of other transgressions particularly associated with women: adultery, petty treason, bastardy, infanticide, scolding, and witchcraft. All the female offenses aired in the play thus reveal a pairing of common concerns about women in the period, their sexuality and their authority (a circumstance discussed by early modern commentators never as autonomy from men, but always as power over men). Female criminality was on the whole popularly defined in terms of either inverting gender hierarchy, as in petty treason or scolding, or transgressing sexual mores, as in bastardy or prostitution, or both, as in adultery or witchcraft. In fact, anxiety about female sexuality might be considered a displaced version of anxiety about female authority, insofar as a causative relation between these two can ever be established. Accusations of sexual impropriety often were unsubtly coded attacks on women's perceived dominance over men in a nonsexual sphere. In a period when a woman's reputation rested largely on her sexual behavior, there was insufficient language, besides that of promiscuity, to classify and to discourage the exercise of female
authority. The next best category of opprobrium would be to characterize her behavior as male (Amussen 119-20).

England's ongoing concern with female dominance and female sexuality was only highlighted and exacerbated, in the second half of the sixteenth century, by the peculiar status of its monarch. Although Elizabeth Tudor preferred to promote herself as a singular woman, one whose sexual and legal autonomy was available to no one else, in fact her position as sole monarch and femme sole posed a significant challenge, as many critics have pointed out, to contemporary assumptions about the subordination of women. In her recent book on Elizabeth's multivalent presentations and representations, Carole Levin outlines Elizabeth's complex restructuring of gender hierarchies and the anxiety over an unfettered feminine sexuality she thus elicited. Far from simply categorizing the queen's monarchical persona as masculine, as some critics have tended to argue, Elizabeth and her subjects also considered her rule to be precisely that of a woman over a kingdom of men; as a result, as Levin puts it, although “[h]er people might regard her body politic as both pure and virginal, and the incarnation of the sacred principle of male monarchy, … the rumors and seditious words so carefully gathered [by Elizabeth's detractors] suggest a perception of her body natural as potentially corrupt in a manifestly female way” (147). As critics such as Levin, Susan Frye, and Leah Marcus (Puzzling 59-73) have contended and as we discuss below, Elizabeth's queenship elicited her subjects' fantasies and fears that she was, as Shakespeare's Cleopatra puts it, “no more but e'en a woman,” and that a woman ruling over men would necessarily subject her entire realm to unbridled feminine sexual desire. Those fantasies and fears were expressed and repeated in a number of different venues, including the courts of law, which during Elizabeth's reign heard cases that, had the female reputation at issue been not the queen's but a mere woman's, would have been considered under the rubric not of treason but of sexual slander.

Our discussion of a Jacobean play depends, however, on considering not what Elizabeth's sexual reputation underscored while she lived, but how her sexuality might have been remembered. Although Elizabeth's cherished virginity remained the topic of both idle curiosity and scurrilous attack well into the Stuart era (if not, indeed, into our own), the death of the queen tended to polarize the discussion of her sexual nature into clearer terms than the ones in circulation while she was alive. Elizabeth's disturbing presentation of herself as both virginal and sexual bifurcated after her death into opinion about whether she was virginal or sexual, so that on the one hand Elizabeth was apotheosized as the saint who through her refusal to marry had kept England Protestant and free, while on the other hand she was still the object of detraction by persons such as “one Sheapheard, a barrister of Lincolns Inn, [and] a base Jesuited papist,” who during James I’s reign uttered “base and scandalous” words regarding the late queen's honor. It is perhaps the case, then, that Elizabeth's passing offered a respite in which the late queen's sexuality could be named, codified, and contained. At the same time, however, Elizabeth's new status as a remembered personage gave England a neutral arena in which the debate over female sexuality and female authority, issues of increasing public anxiety as the seventeenth century wore on, could be creatively explored. That is, the threat posed by the desire and authority of real women is discussed in terms of the late queen so that it may be discussed at all. For these reasons, we contend, Shakespeare's Winter's Tale constructs its considerations of female sexuality around representations that remember and reevaluate Elizabeth. That reevaluation, we shall presently argue, in fact requires reaching back even farther in history, to Elizabeth's mother, Anne Boleyn, whose career provides a kind of prototype and a warning for all subsequent slandered women in positions of authority. Shakespeare's seventeenth-century recasting of sixteenth-century queens therefore serves as a larger commentary on the misrepresentations, if not defamation, that the law perpetrated against women in the early modern period in attempting to name and contain their behavior.

An account of how the law of defamation functioned for English women in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries provides a necessary foundation for our argument. As we have already suggested, gender affected both the content of and the redress for defamation, due to a large extent to differences in the way male and female reputation was constructed. Susan Amussen observes:
The defamation cases [suggest] that “honesty” had one meaning for women and another for men. Women’s honesty was determined and judged by their sexual behavior; men’s honesty was judged in a wide variety of contexts with their neighbors, and bore a closer relation to our notion of honesty as “truthful.” Reputation was a gendered concept in early modern England.

The development of defamation law in sixteenth-century England indicates how the courts reflected and reinforced gender distinctions in rectifying damage to reputation. At the beginning of the century, the only redress for defamation was to be found at the ecclesiastical courts. The offense was defined as the malicious imputation of a crime; the punishment was excommunication, which could be revoked upon the guilty party's doing public penance (Helmholz xiv). However, as the century progressed, the common law began offering a remedy for defamation, based on the same definition of the offense, which understood its effects as financial and offered as punishment and redress damages paid by the offender to the victim. The two jurisdictions were distinguished by the content of the defamations spoken: the church courts handled imputations of “spiritual” crimes (i.e., offenses against ecclesiastical law) while the common-law courts offered redress for imputations of “temporal” crimes (offenses actionable in secular law). Hence, a defamation alleging sexual impropriety by either sex would go to ecclesiastical court while a slander imputing theft, for example, would be heard in a court of common law (Helmholz xli-xlvii).

J. A. Sharpe speculates that the gendered nature of defamation reflects the differences in social roles for men and women:

… it is difficult not to see the wider types of defamation against which men litigated as a consequence of their more varied involvement in the affairs of the world. Women … were allowed free access to everyday activities, but their role within them was limited. The rarity with which they were slandered as perjurers, cheats and usurers, for example, suggests that they were not allowed to participate very fully in business or legal matters.

(Defamation 28-29)

The conception of women in terms of their sexuality reflects the limitations of their economic autonomy: the early modern English husband not only took control over his wife's property upon marriage, he also acquired property in her body. The children she produced belonged to him, and for middling and upper classes, the family's very continuity depended on her bearing a legitimate male heir to carry on the family name and control its financial holdings. Anxiety about female promiscuity thus fixates on the possibility that the wife's children might not be her husband's, and that his property might be transmitted to another man's son. A woman's assertion of independent sexuality in this way belies the important fiction that her husband owns her body, and the children she bears, by demonstrating that her sexual choices are beyond her husband's control. Thus sexual slander, while perceived as a problem by its victims, nevertheless performed a valuable patriarchal function: the threat of public humiliation and rejection, or even of disciplinary prosecution for the imputed behavior, served as a deterrent against sexual misbehavior both for victims of slander themselves and for either chaste or promiscuous bystanders (Ingram 305-07, 311-13). In fact, as Laura Gowing suggests, slanders against women's sexual reputations drew on directives for female chastity expressed in canonical and noncanonical sources: conduct and household manuals, sermons and ballads (9-10). Hence, defamation could function as a valuable force for policing female sexuality, not just as an action disruptive of the social order.

It is, then, not surprising that Elizabeth, the self-styled Virgin Queen, repeatedly found herself the victim of sexual slander in the context of attempts either to rein her into an acceptable marriage or to unseat her. Rumors alleging Elizabeth's sexual misconduct circulated repeatedly throughout her reign, revealing that even
the queen was not protected from her gender. Early in her reign, such rumors tended to emerge around discussions of the queen's marriage plans and England's concomitant fears over either foreign entanglements or subjection to a powerful domestic peer. Her affection for Robert Dudley (later earl of Leicester), for example, caused such a flurry of scandal in England and on the Continent that the representative for one of her wooers felt it necessary to inquire if Elizabeth were still a virgin (Neale 79-83). Outside of court, stories circulated to the effect that she had borne Dudley at least one illegitimate child. Such slanders regarding the queen and Dudley returned in the 1570s, 1580s, and 1590s, long after the end of her childbearing years and the earl's death (Samaha 69); as Levin explains, when Elizabeth's ability to marry and bear children was no longer an issue, “the rumors [of Elizabeth's sexual misconduct] served as a focus for discontent and fear for the succession” (67), and particularly as a focus for England's increasing desire to end female rule and institute normative male rule instead (Levin 100-20; Eggert, “Nostalgia” 524-26). In this way slanders against Elizabeth from late in her reign revived debates from early in her reign over the very possibility of a woman's public status. As a female ruler in her own right, she—like Mary Tudor and Mary Queen of Scots—contradicted the conventional wisdom that women could not rule over, and hence be superior to, men (Jordan 116-33). The general weakness and inferiority of women were cited by authors of treatises against queenship; one serious concern voiced was that once freed from male control, female lust would know no bounds.

In turn, the sexual scandals surrounding Elizabeth's own lineage also generated slander during her reign, slander that vented discontent against Elizabeth in the context of England's bitter religious controversies. In its belief that Henry VIII's divorce from Catherine of Aragon was invalid, the Roman Catholic church viewed his subsequent marriage with Anne Boleyn as adulterous and considered Henry and Anne's daughter Elizabeth a bastard. Charges against Elizabeth and Anne continued to surface well into her reign, as Catholic propaganda alluding to Elizabeth's adulterous origins and linking them with her own alleged promiscuity circulated with increasing frequency and virulence as the sixteenth century wore on. In 1588 William Allen, expatriate Catholic Cardinal of England, published in Antwerp his Admonition … Concerning the Present Warres, which not only charges Elizabeth with being the product of an incestuous union, asserting that Anne Boleyn was Henry VIII's daughter as well as his wife (Levin 80-81), but conflates that attack with vicious allegations against Elizabeth's own sexual conduct:

With [Leicester] … and diuers others she hathe abused her bodie, against Gods lawes, to the disgrace of princely majestie & the whole nations reproche, by vnspeakable and incredible variety of luste, which modesty suffereth not to be remembred, neyther were it to chaste eares to be vittered how shamefully she hath defiled and infamed her person and cuntry, and made her Courte as a trappe, by this damnable and detestable arte, to intangle in sinne and overthrowe the yonger sorte of the nobilitye and gentlemen of the lande, whereby she is become notorious to the worlde, & in other cuntryes a comon fable for this her turpitude, which in so highe degre, namely in a woman and a Queene, deserueth not onelie deposition, but all vengeaunce bothe of God and man, and cannot be tollerated without the eternal infamie of our whole cuntrie. …

(xix, B2r)

The illegitimacy of her birth and of her capacity to rule merge in this diatribe, which imagines Elizabeth's nymphomania transforming her realm into an effeminate “cuntry,” emasculating and debauching its youth, and bringing infamy to England. Elizabeth's attackers hence transform the victim of slander into a source of defamation.

The treatment of Elizabeth's parentage in fact provides a paradigm for the ways in which sexual slander was used to control a woman's assertion of authority. It is now assumed by most historians of the period that Anne Boleyn was innocent of the charges that brought about her 1536 execution, a view apparently available in the
Elizabethan period as well, since John Foxe styles her in his Actes and Monuments (1563) as a martyr whom he suspects was brought down by “some secret practising of the papists” (5: 136). However, popular stories of Anne as a treasonous witch and incestuous adulteress circulated from the time of her death well into the eighteenth century and are still current today (Warnicke 247). Henry VIII himself provided the basis for these slanders when, three years after his marriage to Anne, he charged her with adultery, incest, and treason, and had her executed and Elizabeth declared illegitimate. Foxe cites Anne's commitment to true religion as having provoked slander against her: “By reason whereof it may be easily considered, that this christian and devout Deborah could lack no enemies amongst such a number of Philistines, both within the realm, and without” (5: 136). Yet as the Second Act of Succession (1536) makes clear, it was Henry himself who removed the injunction against slanders of Anne and Elizabeth he had legislated earlier in the wake of criticisms over his divorce from Catherine of Aragon, in effect confirming and legalizing Catholic opinion in pardoning slanders against his second wife and her daughter:

… the kings most roiall maiestie, most gratiouslie considering, that diuers and manie of thi most louing and obedient subiects now latelie afor the begining of the present parlement, haue spoken [etc.] … against the said vnlawfull marriage, solemnized betweene his highnesse and the said ladie Anne, and to the preiudice, slander disturbance and derogation thereof, but also to the perill, slander and disherison of the ladie Elizabeth the kings daughter illegitimat borne vnder the same marriage, and to the let, disturbance and interrption of the said ladie Elizabeth to the title of the crowne. … Which words, dooings, [etc.] albeit they proceeded of no malice, but vpon true and iust grounds, … yet neuerthelesse the kings said subiects might heereafter happen to be impeached, troubled and vexed for such their words, dooings, acts, [etc.] … The kings highnesse therefore of his most bountifull mercie and benignitie is pleased and contented that it be enacted … that all and singular his louing subiects, which haue spoken, … [etc.] against [the marriage, Anne, or Elizabeth], or to anie of their slanders, perils, or disherison: … shall be freelie and cleerelie pardoned, discharged, and released by authoritie of this act, of all those and such treasons and misprisions of treasons aboue mentioned.

(28 Hen. VIII c. 7)

While Henry apparently believed the charges to be true, a sense still lingered that imputations against Anne and Elizabeth had been considered defamatory in the past and might continue to be. Foxe tries to right this score by noting Henry's later change of mind as manifested in his last will, “wherein, expressly and by name, he did accept, and by plain ratification did allow, the succession of his marriage to stand good and lawful” (5: 136). Nevertheless, the Second Act of Succession remained on the statute books throughout Elizabeth's reign, licensing critics of her rule to deploy imputations of sexual impropriety against both Elizabeth and her mother.

The case of a king who falsely charges his wife with adultery, seeks to execute her, and bastardizes his daughter resonates strongly with the plot of The Winter's Tale, and in fact suggests a reading of the play as an allegory of Anne's downfall and Elizabeth's bastardization, seventy-five years after the fact. Horace Walpole expressed this opinion in 1769 in a digression from the main topic of his essay “Historic Doubts on the Life and Reign of King Richard the Third”:

… there is another of Shakespeare's plays, that may be ranked among the historic, though not one of his numerous critics and commentators have discovered the drift of it; I mean The Winter Evening's Tale, which was certainly intended (in compliment to queen Elizabeth) as an indirect apology for her mother Anne Boleyn. … The subject was too delicate to be exhibited on the stage without a veil; and it was too recent, and touched the queen too nearly, for the bard to have ventured so home an allusion on any other ground than compliment. The unreasonable jealousy of Leontes, and his violent conduct in consequence, form a true portrait
of Henry the Eighth, who generally made the law the engine of his boisterous passions. …

The Winter's Evening Tale was therefore in reality a second part of Henry the Eighth.

Walpole's comments obviously contain inaccuracies, from the title of the play, to the date of its composition (he imagines it written during Elizabeth's lifetime), to its place in the Shakespearian chronology. Nonetheless, we find Walpole's reading of the play intriguing, and we propose to consider it at some length in the following pages. In the end, though, we mean not to suggest that Hermione's family and fatal career precisely correspond at every point to Anne Boleyn's, but to argue that The Winter's Tale entertains reminiscences both of the long-dead Anne and of her lately deceased daughter Elizabeth in order to expand consideration of the plight of the sexually slandered woman outside these defunct episodes. We are, then, precisely not making a “topical” argument regarding Anne Boleyn and The Winter's Tale; rather, we are arguing that while the historical issues the play engages are still current enough in the early seventeenth century to be familiar and thus useful, their use lies in their presenting a concluded and thus less controversial episode through which difficult contemporary problems surrounding gender might be explored. Charges in the play that initially seem utterly specific to Hermione, and that seem uniquely to resonate with Anne Boleyn's case, begin to attach themselves to different female characters, including women of different generations and stations than Hermione's. In this regard we find it significant that The Winter's Tale glosses its own ostentatious historical gap of sixteen years as a matter of comparison and substitution. Just as Time promises both to measure and to obliterate the distinctions between past and present—“so shall I do / To th’ freshest things now reigning, and make stale / The glistening of this present, as my tale / Now seems to it” (4.1.12-15)—so, too, do the play's female characters interchangeably occupy the slandered or slanderable positions occupied in turn by Anne Boleyn, Elizabeth Tudor, and their successors in both royal and non-royal positions: adulteress, witch, scold, virgin, bastard, bride.

One might argue, to concur for the moment with Walpole, that Leontes's apparently unmotivated jealousy begins to cohere only as a recollection of Henry VIII's rejection of Anne Boleyn. Not that Leontes is unreasonable because Henry was unreasonable (as Walpole argues), but rather that the play's bizarre accumulation of details around Leontes's suspicions recapitulates the bizarre accusations of adultery, incest, and treason through which Henry and his counselors, in the wake of Anne's failure to bear him a son, tried to make retrospective sense of Henry's wrecked lineal ambitions. For example, Leontes's reading of Hermione's hospitable reception of Polixenes—“But to be paddling palms, and pinching fingers, / As now they are, and making practis'd smiles / As in a looking-glass; and then to sigh, as 'twere / The mort o' th' deer” (1.2.115-18)—reiterates Henry's *ex post facto* conversion of Anne's Petrarchan flirtations with male courtiers into sexual, rather than social, intercourse. Although the five men charged with committing adultery with Anne represented the whole gamut of male positions at court (one musician, two grooms of the privy chamber, one former page of the king, and Anne's own brother George Boleyn, Viscount Rochford), all of them had attempted to advance their ambitions by playing the queen's courtly lovers, subscribing to what Eric Ives calls “the common currency of courtly dalliance” by claiming to love their sovereign's wife (366). In the context of Anne's indictment, however, these interchanges became described as her “inciting … five men to have sexual relations with her by the use of touches and kisses that involved thrusting her tongue into their mouths and theirs in hers” (Warnicke 203). At issue seemed to be Anne's initiation of many of these mock flirtations as a way of consolidating her command of the royal household: Ives describes a conversation between Anne and one of the men later accused, Henry Norris, as her eliciting his political loyalty in the guise of his pledge of love (366). The same technique of the courtly lady commanding, rather than passively accepting, her lovers' pledges would later be used to great effect by Anne's daughter Elizabeth; but in Anne's case, this inversion of gender hierarchy came to be interpreted as a prelude to sexual malfaiseance. As with Hermione and Leontes, it is a short step from the queen declaring “a lady's Verily's / As potent as a lord's” (1.1.50-51) to the king surmising that she “arms her with the boldness of a wife / To her allowing husband!” (1.2.184-85).
Like Anne Boleyn, Hermione is accused of adultery, treason, and conspiracy to murder the king, but hovering around those charges is another, stranger imputation that also haunted Anne: the imputation of witchcraft. Retha Warnicke has recently argued, suggestively if not conclusively, that Henry's horror of witchcraft was the primary reason he initiated proceedings to rid himself of Anne. On 29 January 1536, Anne was delivered of a stillborn male fetus whom the midwives probably thought deformed (Warnicke 201-03); witches were believed to give birth to deformed children. This circumstance, Warnicke contends, explains the care taken in the indictments of Anne to describe her as preternaturally seductive of both Henry and her adulterous lovers, initiating those “mortally sinful” tongue-thrusting kisses (Warnicke 203). Leontes is similarly disturbed by what he perceives as “[k]issing with inside lip” (1.2.286); witchcraft statutes cite “the intent to provoke any person to unlawful love” as actionable (5 Eliz. c. 16, qtd. in Rosen 56). At issue was not only the witch's provocation of men to desire, an action of course not unique to witches, but her intent to engage them thereby in unlawful, unnatural sexual acts that might in turn bring down God's punishment of a monstrous child. As well, Henry's concern that he had been bewitched might have moved him to declare himself a cuckold not only once, but five times over, since if Henry had fathered a child stillborn through witchcraft, then he himself might have been tainted through sexual contact with the witch's womb. On the other hand, sexual concourse with a witch was commonly thought to induce male impotence, a malady from which Henry evidently suffered, according to evidence given by Anne's brother George at his trial. The fact that George Boleyn's evidence was allowed to stand in the record is taken by Warnicke as evidence that Henry wanted his impotence with Anne to be made known, so that he could not possibly have fathered her monstrous son (216). Paradoxically, then, Henry's conversion of himself into a cuckold, and an impotent cuckold at that, allowed him to inoculate his patrilineage against the witch's sexual influence.

We are not qualified to assess whether Warnicke is right to hinge Anne's downfall on Henry's belief in her witchcraft. However, the rumors of witchery that sprang up against Anne and that persisted in the popular literature do bear reading in connection with The Winter's Tale's treatment of uncertain paternity. Although witchcraft is a charge leveled not against Hermione but rather against Paulina, as we will discuss below, witchcraft's presumed effects on paternity—presumptions that distill and warp a whole constellation of early modern phobias about women's sexuality and women's authority—nevertheless haunt the margins of Leontes's irrational suspicions about Mamillius's parentage. Janet Adelman has described Leontes's contradictory responses to his son as gyrating attempts to purge himself of contact with feminine sexuality; while at one moment Leontes envisions Mamillius as his duplicate, a product of fantasized parthenogenesis, at another moment Mamillius's resemblance to Hermione (“Though he does bear some signs of me, yet you / Have too much blood in him” [2.1.57-58]) causes Leontes further to recoil from Hermione's sexual desire and his own acquiescence to it (Adelman 224-28). Leontes ignores similar evidence of resemblance in the case of his baby daughter (“Although the print be little, the whole matter / And copy of the father” [2.3.98-99]) in order to declare her a bastard; one assumes that he discounts this evidence because of its source, Paulina, whose own forthrightness brings on her the charge of witchcraft that had never been elucidated against Hermione. But once the word “witch” has been uttered in connection with Paulina's refusal to keep silence, then Hermione's eloquent defense of herself, too, carries the tinge of female witchery—not solely, as Karen Newman has noted, because the witch's speech is heard in public, but because her speech coopts vehicles of hegemonic language: for early modern witches, prayers and the liturgy (66-70); for Hermione, the Oracle. But Hermione's speech, like that of the early modern witches who came to trial, and like that of Anne Boleyn at her own trial, falls on ears not prone to be seduced again. Like Anne, who pleaded her innocence with “so wise and discreet answers to all things laid against her, excusing herself with her words so clearly as though she had never been faulty to the same” (Ives 387), Hermione is nonetheless ignored by her accuser, as is the Oracle that affirms her case.

Ignored, that is, until Leontes receives news that his son, “with mere conceit and fear / Of the queen's speed” (3.2.144-45), is dead. Here, then, is where Leontes begins to part company from Henry VIII, and where we have to gauge the effects of the play's slippage from a strict reproduction of 1530s events. Mamillius's resemblance to his father, along with the fact that he is a well-formed boy, not a monstrous fetus, bars Leontes
from Henry's strategy of declaring that his son could not possibly be his. Thus, whereas for Henry the death of his unborn son constituted evidence for condemning the witch and her offspring, for Leontes the death of his son is, at last, convincing evidence of his own tyranny (3.2.146-47). *The Winter's Tale* thus airs Henry's warped reasoning only to expose it as precisely that, warped: “I have too much believ’d mine own suspicion” (3.2.151). Unlike Henry, who at the time of Anne's trial had already made preparations to further his patrilineal ambitions with a new wife, Leontes admits the Oracle's judgment that “the king shall live without an heir, if that which is lost be not found” (3.2.134-36), and accepts Paulina's stricture that he not remarry. In this way *The Winter's Tale* shifts its topical perspective from a Henrician era to a Jacobean stance. In a post-Elizabethan light Leontes's family seems in fact to revise and reverse Henry's, so that Mamillius begins to resemble not Anne's malformed, stillborn son, but the lamented Edward VI, cut down in his youth; and the baby, presumed dead, whose recovery saves the nation, resembles Elizabeth herself, who underwent a kind of internal exile and near-martyrdom (as Foxe reminded his readers) in her years of waiting to assume the throne from her sister Mary Tudor.

This displacement of historical judgment forward in time, called attention to by Time's own displacement of events in act 4, accounts in part for the possibility of reading the play's treatment of queenly reputation in multiple layers: Hermione's plight is replicated and redeemed in her daughter's, just as Anne Boleyn's reputation came to be absorbed and recuperated in Elizabeth's, and subsequently shadowed in the next Elizabeth, the Stuart princess. We wish briefly to consider the consequences of reading the second half of *The Winter's Tale* in light of Elizabethan and Jacobean reconstructions of Anne's downfall, with the aim of suggesting that the play's refracted treatments of the case of the slandered queen eventually unmoor the play from concerns specific only to royal women.

At first blush, the sixteen-year-old Perdita seems to continue to recollect Elizabeth Tudor, this time as an adult seeking to reform her mother's reputation. Perdita's concern for her chastity—to whose loss she seems to be darkly alluding when she avers that, faced with the wrath of his father, Florizel “must change this purpose” of marrying her “[o]r I my life” (4.4.39-40)—coalesces with her hatred for the grafted flowers she calls “nature's bastards” (4.4.83); and her refusal to plant these artificed and hence whorlike flowers demonstrates her desire to mend, in her own childbearing, any hint of bastardy: “No more than, were I painted, I would wish / This youth should say 'twere well, and only therefore / Desire to breed by me” (4.4.101-03). In this fashion, Perdita recalls Queen Elizabeth's steadfast maintenance of her virginity, which, many historians surmise, may have been motivated in part by her wish to expunge the nation's memory of Anne Boleyn's disastrous childbearing career as well as her own sporadic illegitimacy. As Frye describes her, Elizabeth early in her reign in fact sounded a great deal like Perdita: her coronation entry symbolically promised a queen who would be both fertile and wise, while at the same time it emphasized Elizabeth as the legitimate product of a legitimate royal marriage (33-36). Later, of course, as it became clear that Elizabeth would not marry, the prospect of her fertility was dropped in favor of her sexual purity—and that virginity became a figure, as Peter Stallybrass has argued, for an inviolable England, an island nation defending its embattled borders against all comers. In the years leading up to and following the 1588 threat of Spanish invasion, Elizabeth's chastity admonished England to preserve its Protestantism and its sovereignty; together, England's religion and England's nationhood substituted for a child of Elizabeth's body as Elizabeth's “issue” (Sandler 164). And that admonition includes reminiscences of Anne Boleyn, converted (largely by means of Foxe's widely read *Actes and Monuments*) into a Protestant saint.

In this regard even a slight romance like Robert Greene's *Pandosto*, Shakespeare's source for the plot of *The Winter's Tale*, might be read as a recuperation of Anne's reputation, and in turn Elizabeth's. Indeed, *Pandosto* provides an interesting initial case for our suggestion that Anne's story might be revived and revised to fit changing historical circumstances. Published in 1588, the year of the Armada and one year after the execution of Mary Queen of Scots, *Pandosto* capitalized on a historical moment in which the sexual status of queens was under intense scrutiny: even while English propagandists continued to publish accounts of Mary Queen of Scots as not only treasonous but also licentious, Catholic propagandists responded by describing Elizabeth as
positively wolfish in her sexual appetites. Moreover, these Catholic accounts hurry to refer to Anne Boleyn as a means of further muddying Elizabeth's reputation.\textsuperscript{15}\textit{Pandosto}'s plot, in this milieu, seems to gather up English anxiety about the possibility of a sexual queen only to clear the queen's name.\textsuperscript{16}

\textit{Pandosto}'s continued popularity—it went through six editions before \textit{The Winter's Tale}'s first recorded performance in 1611 (Greene, \textit{Perymedes} xxx-xxxi)—might be attributable, at least in part, to the continued resonance of the issue of queenly sexuality even after Elizabeth's death. As Barry Weller and Margaret Ferguson have recently argued, in the second decade of the seventeenth century Anne Boleyn's reputation was still a matter of religious and literary controversy.\textsuperscript{17} Catholic polemicist Nicholas Sander's \textit{De origine et progressu schismatis Anglicani}, first published in 1585, had gone through its sixth European edition in 1610: this work promotes a perception of Anne as witchlike, detailing her prodigious promiscuity as well as her physical disfigurements (Warnicke 247). On the other hand, historian and Protestant apologist John Speed asserts in his 1611 \textit{History of Great Britaine}—a work Shakespeare consulted before writing \textit{Henry VIII} circa 1611-13 (\textit{Henry VIII} xxxv)—and thus may have had to hand as he was writing or revising \textit{The Winter's Tale}—that Anne Boleyn's “adulteries,” like Hermione's, were merely a matter of misread queenly benevolence: “I haue heard it reported that [George Boleyn, Viscount] Rochford the Queenes brother comming to her bed side to soliciite a suite, leaned thereupon to whisper her in the eare; which the Spials gaue forth that hee did so, to kisse the Queen” (771).\textsuperscript{18} Placing \textit{The Winter's Tale}'s plot in conjunction with a writer like Speed suggests a further displacement and revision of the slanderable queen in order to suit Jacobean circumstances. If the anticipated marriage of \textit{The Winter's Tale}'s Perdita indeed refers, as David Bergeron has argued, to the 1613 wedding of Elizabeth Stuart to the Protestant Elector Palatine (\textit{Shakespeare's Romances} 157, 160), then we might see Shakespeare's play as part of a national effort to recuperate Elizabeth Tudor as a new, less threatening Elizabeth, one who safeguards her chastity so that she may eventually deliver it into her husband's keeping.\textsuperscript{19} This reading metamorphoses Perdita into James's daughter Elizabeth Stuart, and Hermione into an amalgamated and purified Anne Boleyn and Elizabeth Tudor. Hermione's reputation is so thoroughly cleared that her own sexuality, upon her revival, entirely disappears: like Elizabeth Tudor the Protestant martyr, her concern is only for the welfare of her daughter, the future of the nation.

In the end, though, \textit{The Winter's Tale}'s centrifugal movement away from Anne Boleyn's historically limited case also moves the play beyond merely a study of queens' susceptibility to sexual slander. A focus solely on royal women past and present would allow \textit{The Winter's Tale} to be a play more like \textit{Henry VIII}—that is, a play whose final emphasis is on England's unsullied national lineage and national reputation, in which “when / The bird of wonder dies, the maiden phoenix, / Her ashes new create another heir / As great in admiration as herself” (5.4.39-42). And admittedly \textit{Pandosto}, which contains all of the plot elements of \textit{The Winter's Tale} that we have discussed so far, would be a sufficient text for our consideration of reputation in connection to queens. However, \textit{The Winter's Tale} does not restrict its representation of slander and female criminality to a creative reworking of Anne's and Elizabeth's sexual and reproductive careers. As queens, these women experienced lives quite different from those of other women in the early modern period. Yet queens were also considered exemplary, just as the accusations that Hermione, Perdita, and even Paulina suffer are versions of those which many women had to face. \textit{The Winter's Tale}'s two departures from \textit{Pandosto}'s plot—the voice of Paulina, and the revival of the queen—prove crucial to our consideration here. Particularly in the context of these two original additions to Greene, Shakespeare's play pointedly returns its female characters to circumstances familiar to slandered early modern women of all classes; in other words, the play departs from allegories of queens into fictions of law. But in the process, the play also radically reinvents early modern legal culture in order to reread positively the nexus of female sexuality and authority that is so troubling to the patriarchal order, both of the play and of early modern England.

David Underdown explores the “crisis of order” in early modern England in terms of gender strains resulting from women's economic independence, suggesting that public anxieties about scolds, witches, and physically or sexually rebellious women, increasingly expressed between 1560 and 1660, are different manifestations of a similar response to opportunities for female economic autonomy (121, 135-36). Interestingly, Underdown
does not consider Elizabeth's rule as a potentially contributing factor to this phenomenon. As a woman authorized to rule over men, she is the scold *par excellence,* and capable of obliquely but emphatically asserting her superiority to a male Parliament, as in her 1566 speech on marriage and succession, where she twice exclaimed that “it is monstrous that the feet should direct the head” (Rice 79, 81). It was precisely this specter of female regiment that was punished when scolds were “enthroned” on cucking stools, or “cuckqueans,” and ducked in water (Boose 190, 195). Lynda Boose's remarks on the scold's nexus of verbal and sexual transgression are useful to contrast with our current discussion:

… the talkative woman is frequently imagined as synonymous with the sexually available woman, her open mouth the signifier for invited entrance elsewhere. Hence the dictum that associates “silent” with “chaste” and stigmatizes women's public speech as a behavior fraught with cultural signs resonating with a distinctly sexual kind of shame.

(196)

*The Winter's Tale* explicitly counters this nexus, within the context of a recuperation of Elizabeth's heritage and authority, by showing female outspokenness as compatible with and appropriate to female virtue and chastity, linking instead male speech with shame and the disruption of patriarchal succession.

Breaking the link between women's authority and their sexual malfeasance, however, requires *The Winter's Tale* to represent slanders against women, such as the imputation of scolding, as crimes with negative consequences for the social order, a representation that runs counter to most legal understandings of the problem in early modern England. First, it would be difficult to imagine that a king's accusations, regardless of their veracity or his motivations, could ever have been construed as constituting defamation. And even if this were possible, Leontes's words against Hermione would probably not have constituted defamation according to the ecclesiastical definition, because he believes the truth of his statements; he apparently does not speak them out of malice, and he pursues his allegations against her through legal channels (Ingram 295). In only one limited and anomalous legal arena would sexual slanders against early modern Englishwomen have been understood as resulting in monetary loss or social unrest: the court of Star Chamber, in which a husband might complain that he, his wife, and the community at large were damaged by sexual slanders against her. Although the Star Chamber apparently takes cognizance only of a threat to a husband's reputation, it nevertheless registers that, since his reputation substantially depends on his wife's, sexual slander against her has a serious impact. Only the court of Star Chamber, then, acknowledges the dilemma sexual slander poses for the patriarchy: even while it may circumscribe a woman's sexual behavior, it may also dismantle the family name.

*The Winter's Tale* raises this legal exception to the status of legal commonplace. In the world of the play, the horns of this patriarchal dilemma are exposed in the king's desire to protect his own honor while exposing the queen's dishonor. He asks Camillo,

Dost think I am so muddy, so unsettled,  
To appoint myself in this vexation; sully  
The purity and whiteness of my sheets,  
(Which to preserve is sleep, which being spotted  
Is goads, thorns, nettles, tails of wasps)  
Give scandal to the blood o' th' prince, my son,  
Without ripe moving to 't?

(1.2.325-32)
The answer to this question, given Leontes's dislike of his wife's persuasive power over Polixenes, is yes: his accusations against her immediately defuse her influence in court. But despite his status as king and his belief in his own allegations, Leontes's imputations against Hermione are clearly marked as slander causing widespread social damage. Paulina most evidently articulates the harm caused by threats to female reputation:

... for he,
The sacred honour of himself, his queen's,
His hopeful son's, his babe's, betrays to slander,
Whose sting is sharper than the sword's. ...

(2.3.83-86)

Strikingly, she focuses on the fact that his accusations harm not only his wife and children, but his own honor. The slander against Hermione transforms into a self-slander: “this most cruel usage of your queen / ... will ignoble make you, / Yea, scandalous to the world” (2.3.116, 119-20). Even the king acknowledges early in the proceedings, if for the wrong reasons, that his animus against Hermione and her alleged co-conspirators only serves to damage him: “The very thought of my revenges ... / Recoil upon me” (2.3.19-20). Later, Leontes is indeed shown that his slanders have serious consequences for his own reputation, his happiness, and the stability of his rule (3.2.185-202). Similarly, the false imputation of sexual impropriety that Polixenes makes against Perdita, and that threatens to replay the tragedy of her mother, is shown to wreak damage on the speaker, not the victim. Responding to his father's violent rebuke and sexual slander of Perdita, Florizel resolves to himself,

... then
Let nature crush the sides o' th' earth together,
And mar the seeds within! ...
From my succession wipe me, father. ...

(4.4.478-81)

Polixenes will face the same loss of an heir and the same uncertain succession that Leontes is grappling with; in both cases, sexual slanders against women are shown to pose dangerous national consequences. But they also endanger, if on a higher social register, the legitimacy and respectability on which even middling classes depended for credit relations and for securing property transfer through inheritance.22

The play's rereading and transformation of the process of contemporary slander law for women is similarly employed in its representation of female criminality generally. Hermione, Paulina, and Perdita all are essentially defamed to the extent that they are falsely accused of a considerable number of transgressions; their manifest innocence serves not only to discredit the speakers of the imputations, but also to call into question the construction of commonly defined popular notions of women and crime. Paulina's role in particular broadens the play's scope to consider a number of slanders commonly directed toward women. Leontes consistently deploys the rhetoric used to describe scolds in his attempts to delegitimate and silence Paulina's speech. She is a “callat / Of boundless tongue, who late hath beat her husband, / And now baits me!” (2.3.90-92); her rebelliousness moves beyond her husband and threatens her king. He asks Antigonus, “canst not rule her?” (46), and charges he is “woman-tir’d, unroosted / By thy Dame Parlet here” (74-75), a “lozel, ... worthy to be hang’d / That wilt not stay her tongue” (108-09). Antigonus, however, rejects the charges by responding in kind, but with a difference: “When she will take the rein I let her run; / But she’l1l not stumble” (51-52). The punishment of “bridling” was often imagined as a fit fate for early modern scolds (see Boose); Antigonus invokes this punishment only to demonstrate its inapplicability to the current circumstances. Paulina is also called a witch (67), a bawd (either a prostitute or a purveyor of prostitutes) (68), a traitor (81), and, by implication, a heretic (113-15); these, or similar charges of sexual or hierarchical transgression (including bastardy), are also laid at the feet of Hermione and/or Perdita. But these accusations are already
defused before they are spoken, since not only the play's audience but also the other characters within the play are aware of their baselessness.

The irrationality of these imputations begins to put pressure on the logic of patriarchy itself. When Leontes remarks disparagingly that Antigonus “dreads his wife,” again evoking the specter of the scold, Paulina retorts, “So I would you did; then ’twere past all doubt / You’d call your children yours” (2.3.79-81). The popular ideology that held women physically, intellectually, and morally inferior to men depends on the proposition that wives are more susceptible to sinning and cannot be trusted. In The Winter's Tale, in contrast, a husband who looks up to rather than down on his wife can trust that her integrity will keep her faithful to him. Paulina emphasizes the stupidity of Leontes's jealousy, by way of insisting on the legitimacy of his second child, in her catalogue of his similarities to his newborn daughter. She concludes:

And thou, good goddess Nature, which hast made it
So like to him that got it, if thou hast
The ordering of the mind too, 'mongst all colours
No yellow in 't, lest she suspect, as he does,
Her children not her husband's!

(2.3.103-07)

J. H. P. Pafford, the editor of the New Arden edition of the play, brings in a Leontesian note on these lines by suggesting that Paulina says the opposite of what she means here, “i.e., that it is the deliberate expression by Shakespeare of the kind of mistake which an excited woman might easily make” (49n106-07). But the absurdity here is not Paulina's, but Leontes's: as Pafford alternatively glosses, Perdita's doubting the fatherhood of her own children would be just as irrational as her father's baseless fears.

It is interesting to note that while slanders against women were relegated to the less powerful and the less lucrative jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical courts, slanders by women (often against men) were given the separate category of scolding that received disproportionate attention in popular literature and vigorous initiative in the means of communal punishment (see Boose, Underdown). Strikingly, the play also departs from social and legal practice in vindicating Paulina's “scolding.” At the moment when her charges appear to cross the line dividing truth and slander, when she comes closest to fitting the stereotype of a scold, Leontes justifies her speech. “Go on, go on: / Thou canst not speak too much; I have deserv'd / All tongues to talk their bitt'rest” (3.2.214-16). In contrast to Henry VIII's licensing defamations against Anne and Elizabeth to deflect infamy from himself, here the king licenses, in effect, defamations against himself as punishment for the infamy he has brought on his wife. While a bystanding lord chastises Paulina, and she remorsefully berates herself for showing “too much / The rashness of a woman” (220-21), Leontes insists on the validity of her words: “Thou didst speak but well / When most the truth: which I receive much better / Than to be pitied of thee” (232-34). Paulina's speaking is recuperated at its most radical and potentially most criminal moment, suggesting the need to reevaluate the category of scolding and the motivations behind its punishment.

Similarly, the charges of witchcraft leveled at Paulina in act 2 are dismissed at the play's end precisely when they are most credible. Leontes invokes the dangerous discourse of witchcraft in remarking on the astonishingly lifelike figure of Hermione:

There’s magic in thy majesty, which has
My evils conjur’d to remembrance, and
From thy admiring daughter took the spirits,
Standing like stone with thee.

(5.3.38-42)
All of the statutes legislated against witchcraft in the sixteenth century particularly forbid the invocation of evil spirits; here, in contrast, the conjuration is marvelous and cathartic, reminding Leontes of his past deeds and uniting the spirits of Perdita with those of her mother. Leontes's licensing of the magic that here commences is all the more remarkable considering that Paulina, again the focus of anxiety over female authority, again expresses that anxiety herself, anticipating that others will make the charge of witchcraft against her:

I’ll make the statue move indeed; descend,  
And take you by the hand: but then you’ll think  
(Which I protest against) I am assisted  
By wicked powers.

(5.3.88-91)

She refers twice more to the possibility that some will suspect “it is unlawful business / I am about” (96-97, 105), even while making use of language associated with witches' practices as she addresses the statue: “Come! / I’ll fill your grave up … / Bequeath to death your numbness; for from him / Dear life redeems you” (100-103). The witchcraft act passed by Parliament in 1604 forbids anyone to

use practise or exercise any invocation or conjuration of any evil and wicked spirit … ; or  
take up any dead man, woman, or child out of his, her, or their grave, or any other place  
where the dead body resteth, … to be employed or used in any manner of witchcraft, sorcery,  
charm, or enchantment.

(1 Jac. I c. 12, qtd. in Rosen 57)

With the threat of female transgression once more hanging in the air, Leontes steps in to validate the transgression itself: “If this be magic, let it be an art / Lawful as eating” (110-11). He is still not sure if magic is behind the revivification of his wife, but even so, he insists on the legitimacy of Paulina's actions.

The slanders spoken against Hermione, Perdita, and Paulina in the course of The Winter's Tale give a sense of how female criminality was understood at the time, but these accusations are shown, ultimately, to be constructs of male anxiety without basis in reality. The qualities associated with female transgression in early modern society are instead presented as valuable; rather than destabilizing the social order, Paulina's "offenses" serve, ultimately, to restore order and succession to Leontes's realm. This is not to say that disruptions to the social order do not occur in the play; damage is done, however, not by the women accused but by their male accusers. All three women suffer losses as a result of masculine defamations in the play, but perhaps the biggest loser, from a patriarchal perspective, is Leontes himself. If early modern patriarchal wisdom finds value in a less than vigorous redress of slanders against women, the play insists on the severity of those slanders' damages, not only to Hermione, Paulina, and Perdita, but especially to Leontes and his entire kingdom in the loss of a male heir.23 The danger here lies not in female criminal behavior but in criminalizing female behavior.

We are suggesting that The Winter's Tale takes a feminist stance in relation to early modern law, though by "feminist" we do not mean the kind of thoroughgoing overthrow of patriarchal principles that would be indicated in a late twentieth-century use of the term. Rather, the play proposes women as integral and morally reliable caretakers of the patriarchal project of lineal inheritance; proposes that women's sexual reputations are to be treated as equal before the law to men's economic livelihoods; and, perhaps most audaciously, proposes that women have the authority to define those sexual reputations for themselves. However, Paulina's repeated, almost anxious iteration of the lawfulness of her actions serves as a reminder of women's tenuous stance before the law in early modern English society. After all, the radical claims that we argue The Winter's Tale
advances are made within a play whose title suggests its very fictionality as well as its superannuation. This improbability is further stressed by the play's disruption of the classical unities of action, place, and, most self-consciously, time. Time's choric appearance draws attention to the artificiality of his role, but also to its legality:

I that please some, try all: both joy and terror
Of good and bad, that makes and unfolds error,
Now take upon me, in the name of Time,
To use my wings. Impute it not a crime
To me, or my swift passage, that I slide
O'er sixteen years, and leave the growth untried
Of that wide gap, since it is in my power
To o'erthrow law, and in one self-born hour
To plant and o'erwhelm custom.

(4.1.1-9)

The strange self-referentiality of this speech (3-4) intensifies its implausibility even as Time authorizes his capacity to make or break law. His ability to judge (with the pun on “trial” in line 1) is indicated, yet he also expresses the fear of slander (4). He has the power to determine or dismiss law, but he must ask permission of the audience to skip these years and apologizes for the inconvenience (15, 29-32). The ambivalence Time voices in this speech articulates the difficult project of the play. Shakespeare stages a tale “stale [to] / The glistering of this present” (4.1.13-14), the bygone gender controversies embedded in the lives and deaths of Anne Boleyn and Elizabeth Tudor, as a vehicle for the very lively and disruptive current debates over women in early seventeenth-century England. In cautiously revivifying dead queens—and Time's appearance suggests that this recuperation is dependent on the hiatus—the play opens up a space, if an uncertain space, within which to begin a critique of current gender politics. Whether this fantastical tale found fertile ground in the legal culture of the seventeenth century is a question that future scholars of women's legal history will need to explore and answer.

Notes

1. As J. A. Sharpe notes, “Female crime, except for witchcraft, perhaps, is a subject which has so far attracted surprisingly little attention, one facet of the regrettable undeveloped nature of the study of women's history in the early modern period” (Crime 108); he cites Carol Wiener's and J. M. Beattie's articles as exceptions. Since the appearance of these essays, some important inroads have been made into this field, such as the work by Boose, Cioni, Dolan, Erickson, Ingram, and Spring, to mention just a few studies pertinent to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. For a consideration of defamation and gender that often parallels the views of our essay, see Jardine.

2. The content of the words spoken and their results also determined the jurisdiction for redress, as the common-law and ecclesiastical courts divided responsibility for remedying this wrong. For a rigorous account of the historical development of defamation in both the ecclesiastical and common-law courts in England, see Helmholz.

3. In her chapter “Finding What Has Been ‘Lost’: Representations of Infanticide and The Winter's Tale” Frances Dolan points out that this crime usually associated with mothers is linked in Shakespeare's play to a father, who is then excused of the crime (159-70). Because it is not explicitly linked with female criminality in the play, we omit consideration of infanticide in our essay.

4. Treatments of Elizabeth as successfully wielding a masculine persona depend upon unskeptically accepting that the legal doctrine of the King’s Two Bodies served to expunge the monarch's political persona of all perceived weakness, including the weakness of being a woman. Such a belief has marred otherwise fine readings of, for example, Shakespeare's comedies (Marcus, “Shakespeare's Comic Heroines”) and Spenser's Faerie Queene (Miller); for more complex analyses, see Marcus's
revised account of Elizabeth's "composite" identity (Puzzling 51-105); Eggert, "Ravishment" (3-16); Frye (12-19); and especially Levin's chapter "Elizabeth as King and Queen" (121-48).

5. Such a representation of Elizabeth as defender of the faith could be used both for and against James I and Charles I; see Woolf.


7. One of the defining "incidents" determining redress of defamation in an ecclesiastical court was that the suit be "merely 'for the soul's health': in no circumstances could cash damages be awarded" (Ingram 296). Although in special circumstances offenders could request that their penance be commuted to a fine, these monies were paid to "poor relief and other pious objects," not to the victims (Ingram 336-37). While women were allowed to sue in common law for defamation if they could prove damages (Ingram 296; see the case of Davyes v. Gardiner, in which the competing jurisdictions are discussed [Baker and Milsom 627-28]), the vast majority of common-law slander cases list male plaintiffs. It should, however, be pointed out that most married women in the period did not have separate legal and, therefore, financial identities from those of their husbands (Baker 550-57).

8. Gowing claims that defamers "twisted [these materials] towards other ends than the original intention" (10). However, we would argue that both unauthorized and authorized commentators on female behavior, both slanderers and tract-writers, share the common aim of circumscribing female sexual behavior. See Kaplan for an exploration of slander's employment in general as a tool for punishment and humiliation. While the punishment for defamation in the ecclesiastical courts called for a humiliating public penance, it is clear from the small percentage of final sentences that many slanderers did not endure the same public embarrassment experienced by their victims (Ingram 336-37, 317-18).

9. As Bruce Boehrer explains, the charges of incest leveled against Elizabeth's parentage were by no means consistent: the same Catholic polemicist might call Elizabeth both the product of Henry's and Anne's incestuous marriage, and the product of Anne's incest with her brother George (47-48).

10. Richard Wilson also briefly notes the analogies between Hermione and Anne Boleyn in his discussion of early modern medical discourse and its shift toward male scrutiny and control of gynecological and obstetrical study and practice (134-35).

11. However, two of the five men charged were also suspected of sodomy. Buggery was also popularly implicated in early modern English discourses of incest and witchcraft, two of the charges against Anne (Warnicke 191-95). The homosexual transgression underlying accusations of the queen's "lovers" may be echoed by homoerotic tensions between Leontes and Polixenes in act 1 of The Winter's Tale.

12. The speaker is contemporary chronicler Charles Wriothesley, whose sympathy toward Anne is remarkable considering that he argued Catherine of Aragon's divorce to be unjust (Ives 387).

13. This was one emphasis made in Elizabeth's coronation procession through London; at Gracechurch, she was presented with "a stage of three tiers. … In the lowest were Henry VII and his Queen; in the next—happy sight after twenty-two years!—Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn; in the highest, Elizabeth" (Neale 61).

14. The 1587 edition of Holinshed's Chronicles, for example, after referring the reader to Foxe for a refutation of "the sinister judgements, opinions and objections of backebiters against that vertuous queene," digresses into Christopher Ocland's 1582 poem E Siue Elizabetha (miscited as another 1580s poem by Ocland, Anglorum prælia), which describes Anne as having a prophetic vision of her death and its ultimately triumphant Elizabethan consequences:

Anglorum prælia saith, that this good queene was forwarned of hir death in a dreame, wherein Morpheus the god of sleepe (in the likenesse of hir grandfather) appeered vnto hir, and after a long narration of the vanities of this world (how enuie reigneth in the courts of princes, maligning the fortunate estate of the vertuous, how king Henrie the eight and his issue should be the vyter ouerthrow and expulsion of poperie out of England, and that the gouernment of queene Elizabeth should be established in
tranquillitie & peace) he saith unto hir in conclusion by waie of prophesie, as our poet hath recorded:

Forti sis animo, tristis si nuncius adsum,  
Inesperata tuae velox necis aduenit hora,  
Intra triginta spacium moriere dierum:  
Hoc magnum mortis solamen habeto futuræ,  
Elizabetha suis præclarè filia gestis  
Nomen ad astra feret patris, matrísque, suümque.

(3: 797)

J. Sharrock's 1585 translation of Ocland's poem renders these lines as follows:

Be not in minde dismayde, though mestieue message I foreshow,  
The houre vnlookt for of thine end, with swift course on doth draw,  
For within thirtie dayes, thou shalt outgasp thys vitall breath.  
Howbeit this solace great, of me receaue, before thy death:  
Elizabeth through wondrous actes,  
to starrs shall lift the name,  
Both of her selfe, and mightie Sier, and most renowned dame.

(B4v-C1r)

Anne's vision of Elizabeth's stellification of her parentage helps to carry out, in the 1580s, the cultural work of national self-defense: even as the Armada approaches England, Elizabeth's reign is imagined as one of “tranquillitie & peace.” Small wonder that Ocland's poem was reprinted in 1589, just after the Armada year.

15. Adam Blackwood, in his 1587 Martyre de la Royne d’Escosse, declared that Anne “had buck teeth, six fingers on her left hand, and a large lump under her double chin; she was used as a whore by the principal courtiers of England and France, and was a Lutheran” (Phillips 174).

16. To our knowledge, Pandosto has not been given a topical reading in regard to events of the late 1580s, even though Greene was more than capable of capitalizing upon current events for the plots of his fiction: his Spanish Masquerado, for example, published the year after the Armada defeat, issues broadsides against the entire Spanish monarchy and military command, finally to conclude that England and its queen have been blest among nations. For Greene's canny expansion of his audience base for Pandosto via its combination of elite and popular literary forms, see Newcomb.

17. In their recent edition of Elizabeth Cary's Tragedy of Mariam, a play published in 1613 and probably composed at some time in the preceding decade, Weller and Ferguson argue that Anne Boleyn's story is a subtext both for Salome, the lascivious female villain of the piece, and Mariam, the virtuous and martyred second wife of the tyrant Herod (Cary 30-35); this refraction of the slandered queen into several personae is similar to the one we are describing in The Winter's Tale. The fact that a Jacobean writer like Cary, who eventually converted to Catholicism, might be ambivalent about Anne's moral status indicates, we think, the urgency of England's continuing cultural need to fix the queen's sexual reputation, even in the aftermath of queenship.

18. Suggestively, Speed marginally cites “Robert Greene” for his account of Anne's scaffold speech; however, we have been unable to discover a work in which Greene described Anne's death, or a speech from one of Greene's fictional imperiled women that would match the words Speed gives to Anne.

19. Katherine Eggert has argued the point of Hermione's desexualization of Elizabeth in an unpublished paper, “The Statue Is But Newly Fix’d: Remembering Queenship in The Winter's Tale (Or, the Queen's No Body).” Glynne Wickham suggests that Hermione's statue would have reminded the play's original audience of Elizabeth's and Mary Queen of Scots's recently installed effigies in
Westminster Abbey; Bergeron further postulates that the statue would have evoked memories of both Elizabeth's funeral effigy of 1603 and Henry Stuart's of 1612 (“Restoration” 132).

20. It should be emphasized here that, in all likelihood, Henry VIII also believed the charges he leveled against Anne (War nicke 235), and like Leontes, pursued his accusations through a court proceeding. But although Henry won his case, the sense of the potential similarity of his claims and the slanders spoken against Anne earlier in her marriage to him registers obliquely in the Second Succession Act quoted above.

21. A definition of criminal defamation or libel, usually a written detraction either of a prominent figure or of someone else whose slandering led to a breach of the peace, developed in Star Chamber in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; the court meted out damages and punishments in passing sentence (Holdsworth 5: 201-12; Baker 137). In a sampling of Star Chamber defamation cases litigated around the turn of the sixteenth century, five of the twenty-four cases Lindsay Kaplan examined included men complaining about sexual slanders against wives: P.R.O. STAC 243/26, STAC 172/6, STAC 88/11, STAC 304/36, and STAC 5/18.

22. According to common law, a bastard could not inherit property from his parents (Baker 558). David Harris Sacks has remarked in conversation with Lindsay Kaplan that in early modern England, a man's reputation for controlling his wife was taken in the community as a measure of his ability to manage his household economy. If this reputation or credit suffered, it was difficult for him to convince tradespeople to extend the credit necessary to run that household.

23. For the intense love the people bear toward Mamillius, see Camillo's conversation with Archidamus (1.1.33-45). Oddly, the death of Mamillius suggests the enduring life of his subjects, who would desire to live until the king has another son, something that the conclusion of the play suggests is unlikely to happen.

24. Coleridge remarks that “on the whole, this play is exquisitely respondent to its title” (217). Several other uses of the phrase in Shakespeare's works help piece together a definition of the winter's tale. In Macbeth it is synonymous with an old wives' tale: “O! these flaws and starts / (Impostors to true fear), would well become / A woman's story at a winter's fire, / Authoris'd by her grandam” (3.4.62-65). Richard II sees it as a tragic story of bygone times: “In winter's tedious nights sit by the fire / With good old folks, and let them tell thee tales / Of woeful ages long ago betid; / And ere thou bid good night, to quite their griefs / Tell thou the lamentable tale of me, / And send the hearers weeping to their beds” (5.1.40-45). In 3 Henry VI, Prince Edward dismisses the validity of Richard's taunting remarks about his parents by retorting: “Let Aesop fable in a winter's night; / His currish riddles sorts not with this place” (5.5.25-26). Mamillius offers his view on the matter in The Winter's Tale: “A sad tale's best for winter: I have one / Of sprites and goblins” (2.1.25-26). He proceeds to tell what promises to be a classic ghost story: “There was a man … / Dwelt by a churchyard” (29-30). The play itself incorporates all these elements in its tragedy, its suggestions of raising the dead, and its radical improbability.

The authors wish to thank Frances Dolan for her comments on an earlier draft of this essay; the members of Lindsay Kaplan's graduate and honors seminars in Women in Renaissance Law and Drama for their stimulating discussions of the essay's issues; and Laura Deal, Margaret Ferguson, Ralph Hexter, and Marjorie McIntosh for crucial scholarly advice.

Works Cited


Allen, William. An Admonition ... Concerninge the Present Warres. Antwerp, 1588.


**Criticism: Sexuality And Authority: Lynn Enterline (essay date 1997)**


*[In the essay that follows, Enterline examines Shakespeare's interpretation of Ovidian and Petrarchan rhetoric as a means of discussing the role of power and the female voice in The Winter's Tale.]*

Between Leontes's opening imperative, “Tongue-tied our queen? Speak you” (1.2.28), and the final act, where Hermione as living statue returns to her husband yet says nothing directly to him, *The Winter's Tale* traces a complex, fascinated, and uneasy relation to female speech.¹ A play much noted for interrogating the “myriad forms of human narration”—old tales, reports, ballads, oracles—*The Winter's Tale* begins its investigation of language when Hermione tellingly jests to Polixenes, “Verily, / You shall not go; a lady's 'verily' is / As potent as a lord's” (ll. 49-51), for Leontes's swift turn to suspicion hinges on the power of his wife's speech. Unable to persuade Polixenes to stay, he first expresses annoyance when Hermione is able to do so. Polixenes has just assured his boyhood friend “There is no tongue that moves, none, none i' th' world, / So soon as yours could win me” (ll. 20-21). Nonetheless, it is Hermione's tongue, not her husband's, that wins Polixenes. “You, sir, / Charge him too coldly,” she chides Leontes before persuading their friend to stay (ll. 29-30). Leontes therefore shifts quickly from “Well said, Hermione” (l. 33), to churlish acknowledgment of her rhetorical power. He understands her persuasive speech not as obedience to his desire—since he is the one who commanded “Speak you”—but as a force that eclipses his own:

Leontes Is
he won yet?
Hermione He’ll stay, my lord.
Leontes At my request he would not.

(ll. 86-87)

From Hermione's success, jealous deductions quickly follow. Indeed, the first hint that something is amiss in this marriage is this seemingly minor quibble over who speaks to better purpose and who is the better rhetorician. When he later broaches with Camillo Polixenes's decision to stay, Leontes confirms his suspicions on the basis of his own earlier failure to persuade:

Camillo You had much ado
to make his anchor hold,
When you cast out, it still came home.
Leontes Didst note it?
Camillo He would not stay at your
Outdone in rhetorical power by his wife, Leontes makes two interpretive moves to reassert control over her language. First, he reminds Hermione of her answer to his proposal of marriage—in fact, he quotes her words of assent, “‘I am yours for ever’” (l. 105)—and calls those words a “better” speech than the one to which Polixenes has yielded. And, second, he reads as evidence of infidelity the conversation he has himself induced between Hermione and his friend: “Too hot, too hot!” (l. 108). Making himself arbiter of Hermione’s language, Leontes approvingly quotes the words he prefers while giving a fixed, suspicious meaning to the ones he does not. The scene’s pronounced interest in acts of persuasion, one failed and the other successful, produces an odd effect: plunging into Leontes’s jealousy, the scene makes his unreasonable emotion appear to be the consequence of this rivalry between male and female speech. As the drama quickly unfolds, we watch the king turn a rhetorical anxiety—why do her words achieve the desired effect where mine do not?—into a sexual one, minimizing his wife’s superior rhetorical skill by interpreting it narrowly as the consequence of her erotic power. In Act 5, however, Hermione returns as a theatrical version of Pygmalion’s silent statue to the husband who was once so jealous of her tongue. Almost but not quite “tongue-tied,” she addresses herself to her lost daughter only. (I will return to her words to Perdita at the end of this essay.) After her theatrical metamorphosis, Hermione does not address the man who doubted her to the brink of annihilation. Having once triggered a terrible response with her voice, she now evades the problem by saying nothing to Leontes.3

I am tempted to say Hermione has learned her lesson. But as I hope to show, The Winter’s Tale defies an intuitive understanding of the difference between speech and silence—or, for that matter, the difference between agency and impotence, male and female, often allied with it. The elaborate Pygmalion fantasy offered in the last scene as a way to resolve the problems inaugurated by Hermione’s initially “potent” tongue tells us that before we can begin to hear the full resonance of her concluding silence, we must consider the relationship between, on the one hand, the trope of the female voice in the Ovidian-Petrarchan tradition that Shakespeare inherits and transforms in this play and, on the other, the quite specific rhetorical concerns through which The Winter’s Tale reads that tradition, turning it into theatrical metacommentary. Any reading of the play’s uneasy fascination with the female voice, that is, must take account of the complex literary legacy of Pygmalion’s obsession with his mute simulacrum. As this silent figure passes from Ovid to Petrarch to Shakespeare, it criticizes even as it perpetuates a mysterious tie between love of art and hatred for women. Narratives of rape and misogyny frame the figure of the animated statue, tarnishing the luster of a story that otherwise seems to be about love for beautiful form, visual as well as verbal. The literary legacy of Pygmalion’s statue asks readers, therefore, to think again about the consequences of the many kinds, and discourses, of love.

I should preface this analysis by noting that when I speak of a “female voice” in this play, I mean to designate a pervasive and seductive trope—a discursive effect, not a prediscursive fact. Through the sound of the very “female” voice that inaugurates Leontes's jealousy, I will argue, the play distances itself from the king's essentializing effort to dismiss Hermione's rhetorical power by understanding it as erotic power only. Of course the arbitrary force of Leontes's jealous interpretation of his wife's tongue raises troubling questions about the violence latent in such culturally pervasive ideas as those of “male” speech and “female” silence. Because The Winter's Tale was written for a transvestite theater, moreover, I do not presume a given—or, more important, an intelligible—phenomenon anterior to the language that gives it shape (for instance, “woman” or “the female subject”). Reading the way in which the voices of Hermione and Leontes affect and implicate each other, I hope to show, tells us that—like Echo and Narcissus or Salmacis and Hermaphroditus—female and male voices in this very Ovidian play are locked in a mutually defining,
differential embrace. An analysis of the “female voice” in *The Winter's Tale* is important precisely because it must change our understanding of that term.

Renaissance revisers of the *Metamorphoses* routinely adopt such stories as Ovid's Pygmalion as a way to comment on the medium of their appearance; Shakespeare is no exception. Ovid's own generic experimentation, his rhetorical and poetic self-reflexivity, and his habit of linking oral/aural dilemmas to visual ones encouraged in Renaissance imitators a highly self-conscious practice of borrowing. Erotic stories from the *Metamorphoses* became highly charged reflections on the power (and dangers) of the story's very medium—whether painting, poetry, music, or drama. Such self-conscious visitations prepare us for Shakespeare's much noted—and celebrated—effort to turn Ovid's story of Pygmalion into one about the transforming powers of theatrical representation, about a theater that succeeds where even Orpheus failed: “I’ll fill your grave up” (5.3.101). Because the idea of the living statue plays a crucial role in Shakespeare's claims for the theater and in our own critical reception of those claims, it becomes vital that we understand the epistemological and ethical consequences of the rhetoric of animation. For Shakespeare's final invocation of the living statue’s “magic” draws on a story that self-consciously proposes a close yet opaque alliance between aesthetics and misogyny. I will suggest that, in silence as in speech, the female voice in *The Winter's Tale* allows us to interrogate the terms and the limits of that alliance.

I. “SHALL I BE HEARD?”

To apprehend the burden Shakespeare assumes when he has Paulina tell Hermione to “bequeath to death” her “numbness,” we must remember the symbolic and libidinal economy that informs the Pygmalion story in the two chief texts that gave it such tenacity as a fiction about voice, masculinity, and desire: Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Petrarch’s *Rime Sparse*. As Leonard Barkan writes, Hermione's metamorphosis enacts “a kind of marriage of Pygmalion and Petrarchanism.” In the *Rime Sparse*, Petrarch draws on numerous Ovidian characters to represent his own situation of unfulfilled desire; and in a pair of sonnets that praise Simone Martini's portrait of Laura, he brings Ovid's story of Pygmalion into the cycle as a particularly compelling analogue for his own predicament. Two rhetorical issues are central to both Petrarch's and Shakespeare's versions of Ovid's Pygmalion: the trope of apostrophe and the language of praise or epideixis. By lamenting the picture's silence—“if only she could reply to my words!” (“se risponder savesse a’ detti miei!”)—Petrarch's apostrophe creates the fiction of his own voice; a second apostrophe accentuates the fiction of a voice and the language of epideixis at once: “Pygmalion, how much you must praise yourself for your image (“quanto lodar ti dei”) if you received a thousand times what I yearn to have just once!” (78.11, 12-14). In these concluding lines Petrarch rewrites Ovid's story according to one of the *Rime Sparse*'s controlling signifiers: *lodare*. He thereby refashions Ovid's Pygmalion in his own image, reading him as an artist devoted to praising himself for the excellence of his simulacrum. Petrarch derives the name Laura from the Latin *laudare* and, according to the *Secretum*, loves the name just as much as he loves the lady herself.

In *The Winter's Tale*, Shakespeare reads the tradition Petrarch's poetry inaugurated in precise rhetorical terms—in terms, that is, of the power of address and of epideixis. Long before staging his own kinds of address to a composite Ovidian-Petrarchan statue (“Chide me, dear stone” or “descend; be stone no more; approach” [5.3.24, 99]), Shakespeare fits the representation of Hermione (and Leontes's relation to her) into a meditation on epideictic speech. Where *The Rape of Lucrece* explores the violent consequences of Petrarchan epideixis—because “Collatine unwisely did not let / To praise” Lucrece to other men (ll. 10-11), rape is the consequence—*The Winter's Tale* gives us a Hermione who, in jest, offers herself as the beloved object of praise:

> What? have I twice said well? When was’t before?  
> I prithee tell me; cram's with praise, and make's  
> As fat as tame things. One good deed dying tongueless  
> Slaughters a thousand waiting upon that.  
> Our praises are our wages.
Understood in light of Shakespeare's critique of praise in *The Rape of Lucrece*, Hermione's pose as epideictic object for her husband while in the presence of another man should alert us that the rhetorical competition between Hermione and Leontes may already have entered the troubled world of Petrarchan verbal exchanges gone awry. Indeed, Hermione's very participation in a rhetorical competition with one man to vie for another man's ear alerts us that culturally dominant alignments of gender and rhetoric do not pertain. Her “potent” rhetoric disrupts received expectations for epideictic speech. And so in this play, terrible consequences attend Hermione's speaking, even though Leontes is the character whom her playful remarks about praise might lead us to believe will follow Collatine as ill-fated epideictic rhetorician. Instead of hearing more from Leontes, however, we hear from Hermione; and what she speaks about is her own power of speech. Her balanced syntax hints to the jealous ear that, just as they are matched in her discourse, the two men may be equivalent objects for her exchange: “I have spoke to th’ purpose twice: / The one for ever earn’d a royal husband; / Th’ other for some while a friend” (ll. 106-8). As if following her lead into the language of payment and exchange, Leontes begins to angle for proof by changing Hermione's equation of the two men into a marketplace where she is *their* commodity: “Hermione, / How thou lov’st us, show in our brother's welcome; / Let what is dear in Sicily be cheap” (ll. 173-75). While the rest of the play may seem to return to expected discursive convention by making Hermione (and her fidelity) the enigmatic object of others' discourse—in praise and in slander—that predicament, we should remember, is initiated in Act 1 by the unexpected power of her persuasive tongue.

The play's most striking debt to the Petrarchan tradition, of course, emerges in the final scene when a stony lady comes to life. Both Ovid and Petrarch use what Kenneth Gross aptly calls “the dream of the moving statue” as an erotic, synesthetic investigation of the status of the human voice and the consequences of rhetorical speech. In both, as in Shakespeare's play, this investigation occurs by way of a meditation on the success or failure of an *address*. In each of the three texts, this address draws our attention to the way that all parties present are implicated in and defined by the verbal event. Before looking more carefully at Petrarch's version of Pygmalion, however, we must first understand the complex connections between rhetoric, voice, and sexuality which he inherited from Ovid's poem.

In the *Metamorphoses*, Pygmalion's wishes come true because he addresses words of prayer to Venus. The story of animation, the event of the statue's motion, offers an erotic version of a rhetorician's dream. The scene's action and considerable dramatic effect (waiting for a statue to move) derives from a pun on the desired end of rhetorical speech. Drawing on the contemporary word for rhetorical power—the power, that is, to “move” (*movere*)—the narrator tells us that in his statue, Pygmalion believes he has an audience who “wants to be moved” (X.251). And because the narrator of the story is the grieving Orpheus, yet another compelling fantasy about the voice's power informs the ivory maiden's animation. Shakespeare, too, connects the stories of Orpheus and Pygmalion. After the “statue” moves, Paulina warns Leontes: “Do not shun her / Until you see her die again, for then / You kill her double” (5.3.105-7). Paulina's imperative deftly combines the story of Pygmalion's statue with that of Orpheus's Eurydice by implying two things: like the statue, Hermione has come to life; and because of this animation, she may, like Eurydice, die twice. Indeed, Golding's translation of Ovid's text may have suggested Paulina's wording. For Ovid's version of Eurydice's “twin” death—“stupuit gemina nece coniugis Orpheus” (X.69)—Golding renders, “This double dying of his wyfe set Orphye in a stound.”

The interwoven stories of Orpheus and Pygmalion seem, at first glance, to propose a familiar hierarchy between male verbal agency on the one hand and female silence and death on the other. Where the sculptor's prayer succeeds, the statue says nothing and has no name; where Orpheus's song momentarily takes over the narrative of the poem—thus predating Book X of the *Metamorphoses* itself on Eurydice's absence—Eurydice utters a barely audible “vale” before “falling back again to the place whence she had come” (X.63). As Petrarch realized, the first (male verbal agency) seems to depend on the second (female
silence and death). But trouble soon disturbs this too-sanguine version of male vocal power. Once able to move the inanimate world by “moving his voice in song” (“hoc vocem carmine movit” [I. 147]), Orpheus dies because Bacchic (female) noise drowns out his voice: the “huge uproar” of discordant flutes, horns, drums, “and howlings of the Bacchanals” overwhelms the sound of Orpheus's lyre (“ingens / clamor ... et Bacchei ululatus” [XI.15-18]). Once-listening stones turn to weapons, stones now “reddened with the blood of the bard whose voice was unheard” (“saxa / non exauditi rubuerunt sanguine vatis” [ll. 18-19]). And where Pygmalion succeeds in animating his beloved, his narrator fails. Having won Eurydice only to lose her again through his own action, Orpheus then sings a song in which we hear the story of yet another beloved woman given life through art. Orpheus's failure underwrites the story he tells, making the fantasy of the statue's animation part of the wishful fort-da game of his impossible desire. These interwoven narratives therefore tell us that power is fleetingly, intermittently, and only phantasmatically granted the male voice. And they tell us, moreover, that his voice may not be the only sound that matters.

Still, we must acknowledge that Eurydice's death and the unnamed statue's silence in the Orpheus-Pygmalion sequence conform to a larger fantasy, first proposed in Book I of the *Metamorphoses*, in which male vocal triumph requires female absence or resistance. Two stories of attempted rape—Apollo's pursuit of Daphne and Pan's of Syrinx—tell the origins of epideictic and pastoral poetry by presenting a rigid sexual division of labor in the production of song. Close on Daphne's heels, the god of poetry fails to persuade and so becomes himself *because* she eludes his grasp. And hard on the heels of that encounter follows Pan's pursuit of Syrinx, an attempted rape that repeats and intensifies the first. Where Apollo's breathing down Daphne's neck becomes the breath of poetry, Pan's breath turns into music as he sighs through the newly immobilized body of Syrinx: “the soft air stirring in the reeds gave forth a low and complaining sound” (“sonum tenuem similemque querenti” [I.708]). In the context of this violence, remember that yet other forms of misogyny underwrite the Orpheus-Pygmalion sequence. Grieving for Eurydice, Orpheus “shunned all love of womankind,” becoming the “author” in Thrace of “giving his love to tender boys” (“omnemque refugerat Orpheus / femineam Venerem ... ille etiam Thracum populis fuit auctor amorem / in teneros” [X.79-84]).

Pygmalion's “disgust” for female sexual behavior repeats his narrator's aversion: having seen the prostitution of the Propoetides, he creates a statue “better than any woman born” (“qua femina nasci / nulla potest” [ll. 248-49]) to eradicate the “faults that nature had so liberally given the female mind” (“vitiis, quae plurima menti / femineae natura dedit” [ll. 244-45]). For rejecting women, Orpheus will soon die at the hands of the Bacchantes. Ovid thus twice qualifies Pygmalion's seeming aesthetic triumph, suggesting that it is rooted in misogyny; aversion to women is its inaugural gesture. The Bacchic cry upon seeing Orpheus—“here is the man who scorns us!” (“hic est nostri contemptor!” [XI.7])—claims that revenge is the best this erotic-symbolic economy can expect.

Such misogyny was not lost on later writers. In “The Metamorphosis of Pigmalions Image” (1598), John Marston summarizes his reading of Pygmalion concisely:

Pigramion, whose hie love-hating minde
Disdain’d to yeeld servile affection,
Or amorous sute to any woman-kinde,
Knowing their wants, and mens perfection.
Yet Love at length forc’d him to know his fate,
And love the shade, whose substance he did hate.(16)

As Shakespeare's only other direct reference to the story suggests, he is more than familiar with this “love-hating” tradition. In *Measure for Measure* the phrase “Pygmalion's image” means “prostitute,” exactly recalling the reason for Pygmalion's creative act. “What, is there none of Pygmalion's images newly made woman to be had now, for putting the hand in the pocket and extracting [it] clutch’d?” (3.2.44-47). In this version of the story, the fantasy of animation is the moment of sexual penetration (i.e., “to make a woman” is to deflower a virgin). Both Shakespeare and his audience were well aware of the sexual and misogynist aspects of the story that are omitted in order to achieve closure in *The Winter's Tale*. If we ignore the negative
aspects of the Pygmalion tradition, we foreclose the possibility of thinking about the work and effects of repression in the play's last scene—or, for that matter, about the problem that Ovid's narrative so memorably posed: what, precisely, is the relationship between misogyny and art?18

In the first three acts Leontes's skepticism places the “truth” of Hermione's body (her innocence or her guilt) beyond the reach of words—beyond the reach, even, of oracular speech. Similarly, the final scene turns to a story in which evasion of the female body is representation's foundational premise: Pygmalion's statue is not mimetic; it is “better than any woman born.” From this disquieting gap between language and the world, Shakespeare aspires to a mode of representation that can move beyond the impasse. If, as most critics agree, the spectacle of Hermione's pregnancy troubles the play's language from the start (most obviously in Polixenes's opening reference to “nine months”), this spectacle works together with her potent tongue to spark her husband's suspicions. The final scene of animation therefore works to reclaim another, “better” mode of generation than the one that so disturbs Leontes's understanding of the world. In constructing this scene, Shakespeare tries to replace the animating power of the maternal body with the language and visual spectacle of the theater.19

The play's implied claim for theatrical power, then, derives from a literary history of aversion to female flesh. But this is not the only story the play tells about its own fiction. I want to suggest not only that Hermione's concluding silence criticizes the symbolic-erotic economy inaugurated in Book I of the Metamorphoses and developed in the Orpheus-Pygmalion sequence, but that this economy itself tells us something important about why Hermione's speech is so unexpectedly powerful. It is as if the first half of The Winter's Tale were asking of this legacy, what would happen if the stony lady actually did speak back? To understand the play's question, we need only remember that Pygmalion's statue is both nameless and speechless. Or that Eurydice, lost again, says only “farewell” before finally disappearing in death. Although the first book of the Metamorphoses initially proposes a sexual division of labor in the creation of poetry and the Orpheus segment adds death to rape as one of the possible roles for women in the process of inventing poetic song, readers may have heard the murmur of a story different from the one that emerges from a focus on the activities of Apollo, Pan, or Orpheus. For in the line I quoted about Pan's music, Ovid leaves unclear exactly whose voice is audible in these pipes: “Instead of [Syrinx] he held nothing but marsh reeds … and while he sighed in disappointment, the soft air stirring in the reeds gave forth a low and complaining sound” (I.708). Ovid lets us wonder, whose sound is this? The complaint seems as much Syrinx's as Pan's. The female voice troubles the Apollo-Daphne story, too, thus disturbing one of the Metamorphoses's most prominent narratives about the origins of poetry. Where Apollo's “imperfect” rhetoric (“verba imperfecta”) fails to persuade her to stay, Daphne's prayer to lose the “figure” that provokes such violence convinces her father to change her shape. Her words possess a persuasive force that Apollo's do not; they inaugurate one of the metamorphoses that are the subject of Ovid's poem. If Book I creates the expectation that the poem will focus on male vocal power, that expectation is soon thwarted. In a series of influential stories, Ovid ventriloquizes numerous women, obliquely yet consistently hinting that these female characters are violated by the very mode of representation available to them. Echo's mimicking voice, Syrinx's complaining reed, Philomela's severed tongue, and, I would argue, Medusa's fearsome face mark female experience in the Metamorphoses as a struggle against the restrictive conditions within which they must represent themselves.20 To return to the case in point: Daphne's metapoetic plea—that she lose her “figura”—tells us that the figural quality of language betrays her just as surely as her bodily form makes her vulnerable to Apollo's violence.21 For when Daphne prays to lose her figure and is turned into a tree, she may not have meant to lose her human form: when used to signify the body rather than language, figura designates not only general shape but also a person's beauty.22 What Daphne means to ask is to become less attractive, but what she actually says prompts her father to alter her human figure altogether. The relief brought her by the unintended power of her prayer is just as constraining as the figural language with which she must speak—language that departs “from the straightforward and obvious”23 and whose obliquity therefore condemns her to be “immobilized” or “stuck fast” with “sluggish roots” (“pigris radicibus haeret” [l. 551]). Her voice may do more than Apollo's, her words may achieve greater effects, but their action eclipses her intention. And this sense of violation by language, I believe, forms

472
the basis of Ovid's insistent alliance of the origin of poetry with rape.24

This aspect of Ovid's poem—in which female voices such as Daphne's are betrayed by the very words they speak—helps us to understand Hermione's courtroom protest that she stands somehow outside the restrictive terms of Leontes's accusation: “Sir, / You speak a language that I understand not” (3.2.79-80). To the woman who will later be restored to life as a version of Pygmalion's statue, her husband's “language,” like his jealousy, violates her sense of herself. Hermione's ensuing remark about the deadly effects of fantasy—“My life stands in the level of your dreams, / Which I’ll lay down”—then provokes Leontes's most concise statement of his Pygmalionlike revision of womankind: “Your actions are my dreams” (ll. 81-82). As both Apollo's desire and figurative language ensnare Daphne yet give her voice an unforeseen efficacy, so the collusion between language and male fantasy frames Hermione yet does not utterly deprive her voice of power. The Winter's Tale may mark her words as insufficient to tell the truth or command belief, yet it also gives her voice the power to unhinge her husband's sense of the world itself: “Is this nothing? / Why then the world and all that's in't is nothing” (1.2.292-93).

And the corollary aspect of Ovid's poem—in which female voices suggest that male voices are not so powerful as the stories of rape or of animation might lead one to believe—illuminates why Leontes, once he has lost the rhetorical competition with his wife, spends much of the play trying (and failing) to control his own language and the language of others. For Leontes the fact that tongues other than his own can speak becomes an increasing source of irritation. When his lords voice their initial opposition to his accusation of adultery, Leontes snaps: “Hold your peaces” (2.1.139). He then dismisses their comments as an infringement of his power:

Why, what need we
Commune with you of this, but rather follow
Our forceful instigation? Our prerogative
Calls not your counsels ...
We need no more of your advice. The matter,
The loss, the gain, the ord’ring on’t, is all
Properly ours.

(ll. 161-70)

Leontes always speaks as if his voice alone should be heard. When accusing Hermione, he leans on the implicit power of his own voice: “I have said / She’s an adul’tress, I have said with whom” (ll. 87-88, my emphasis). The mere existence of a king's saying, he believes, should be enough to establish facts. Where Orpheus tried and failed to use his voice to master death, Leontes tries and fails to use the power of his tongue to master truth.25 In both cases women's bodies become the signifiers of that desire. Leontes, moreover, pairs his sense of his own linguistic prerogative with a declaration designed to preempt all other voices whatsoever: “He who shall speak for her is afar off guilty / But that he speak” (ll. 104-5, my emphasis). To Leontes anyone else's discourse is but a further sign of guilt. This is so, I submit, because Leontes, like an Orpheus singing alone in the woods, can bear to hear only the sound of his own tongue.

The king aspires to order all linguistic exchanges in Sicily, but Hermione's voice teaches him that any such ordering properly belongs to no one. Just as she obeys his command, “Speak you,” in Act 1 only to challenge Leontes's sense of authority over acts of persuasion, so in Act 2, scene 1, Hermione speaks in obedience to his command with words that prompt Leontes to assert that his voice has again been eclipsed. Although Leontes has just ordered “Away with her, to prison” (l. 103) and his order is obeyed, by the end of Hermione's speech, Leontes protests that he has somehow gone unheard. Hermione addresses herself to the attendant lords in words that obey the king's command and yet seem to him to undermine it:

Hermione ... Beseech
you all, my lords,
With thoughts so qualified as your charities
Shall best instruct you, measure me; and so
The King's will be perform'd!

Leontes

Hermione Who is't that goes
with me?

(ll. 112-16, my emphasis)

Hermione cedes the power of action to Leontes's word, but her token of obedience makes that word ring hollow. The act of “go[ing]”—an act that follows the letter of the king's order—begins, in her mouth, to sound like a declaration of alliance: “Who is’t that goes with me?” To counter her question, Leontes can do no more than repeat himself as he tries to reassert power over one word: “Go, do our bidding; hence!” (l. 125).

Indeed the play as a whole instructs Leontes that the linguistic marketplace he hopes to master cannot be negotiated by the careful parsing out of what he calls “the loss, the gain.” He finds that it cannot be ordered by the logic of equivalence at all: language, in this play, repeatedly exceeds Leontes's demand. Certain that the oracle will prove him right, Leontes finds himself instead proclaimed a “jealous tyrant” (3.2.133-34). Responding to the charge with “this is mere falsehood” (l. 141), Leontes is confronted with the news of Mamillius's death, a death that results from Leontes's having doubted oracular speech. Or so Leontes understands it: “Apollo's angry, and the heavens themselves / Do strike at my injustice” (ll. 146-47). And so Leontes finds himself, like Ovid's Orpheus, brought low by the clamorous noise of a crowd. In Shakespeare's interrogation of the fear of losing one's rhetorical power, however, Leontes's distrust of other voices turns into an imaginary scene in which he is encircled by “whisp'ring” gossip rather than Bacchic cries: “They're here with me already, whisp'ring, rounding: / ‘Sicilia is a so-forth.’ ‘Tis far gone, / When I shall gust it last” (1.2.217-19).

It is the tongues of Hermione and Paulina together, however, that most distinctly instruct Leontes in what I take to be the lesson of Orpheus: that power resides only fleetingly in one's voice, even if it be the voice of a poet or a king. In the scene of Hermione's arrest (2.1), the queen notifies her husband, as she did indirectly in the first act, that he cannot bring all language—even his own—under control. Though Leontes may claim that “the matter” and “the ord’ring” of his accusation of adultery is “all / Properly ours,” she teaches him otherwise. Once published, Hermione reminds him, a text will go its own way. It can be controlled by no mere speaking:

When you shall come to clearer knowledge, that
You thus have publish’d me! Gentle my lord,
You scarce can right me thoroughly, then, to say
You did mistake.

(ll. 96-100)

Unable to master the truth by mastering other voices, Shakespeare's Orpheus/Leontes soon finds himself heavily beset by the tongue of Paulina. In her, Leontes contends with a voice that resists all ordering:

Leontes [What] noise there,
ho?
Paulina No noise, my lord, but
needful conference
About some gossips for your Highness.
Leontes
Away with that audacious lady! Antigonus,
I charg’d thee that she should not come about me:
I knew she would.

(2.3.39-44)

Like an Ovidian bad penny, Paulina returns to avenge her mistress. “A callat / Of boundless tongue, who,” Leontes claims, “late hath beat her husband” (ll. 91-92), Paulina plagues Leontes with her “noise.” A domestic version of the Bacchic horde, Paulina has a tongue that no man controls. Thus the harassed Leontes rebukes her husband, “What? canst not rule her?” (l. 46). Paulina, the somewhat softened spirit of a revenging Ovidian woman, goes about her work with a tongue that will, after sixteen years, cure Leontes rather than kill him.

II. “NOT GUILTY”

We have seen that when Shakespeare adopts the imagined scene of speaking to a stony lady as a way to repair the devastation caused by Leontes’s jealousy, he turns the conflict between male and female verbal power into a meditation on Ovidian and Petrarchan rhetoric in general and on the role of the female voice in that literary legacy in particular. Before looking more closely at the telling role female voices play in The Winter’s Tale, however, we must examine the vicissitudes of the voice in the Rime Sparse, particularly for those Ovidian characters whom Petrarch borrows as so many figures for his own situation. Like many of his literary contemporaries, Shakespeare frequently juxtaposes Ovidian rhetoric with Petrarchan in order to derive a flexible lexicon of figures for sexual experience, whether erotic or violent. Recall, for instance, that Marcus greets the mutilated Lavinia, Shakespeare’s Philomela, with the conventional language of a blason in praise of her beauty and talent (Titus Andronicus, 2.4.22-47). Similarly, the narrator of The Rape of Lucrece sets his critique of Petrarchan epideixis in an explicitly Ovidian context, rewriting the story of Lucretia from the Fasti in terms of several other Ovidian characters: most notably, Philomela, Orpheus, and Hecuba. Understanding the Rime Sparse and Ovid’s presence in it will help clarify why the female voice occasionally exercises such disruptive force in a play that ends with yet another version of Pygmalion’s address to his statue.

In Sonnet 78 Petrarch’s apostrophe to Ovid’s Pygmalion epitomizes the rhetorical and erotic concerns of the Rime Sparse, bequeathing strategies, tropes, and effects to one of the most influential modes of Renaissance self-representation, and allowing the poet ample room to compare the relative merits of visual and verbal figuration. Because Petrarch, as a second Pygmalion, cannot make the picture speak, the speaker’s desire for words replaces Ovid’s scene of desire for a new and improved woman. Words, not sex, become the focus of the poet’s longing: “if only she could reply to my words!” From Petrarch’s repression of Ovid’s bluntly sexual scene, verbal fetishism is born.26 And so, too, is an imaginary conversation—not between Petrarch and Laura but between Petrarch and Pygmalion (“Pygmalion, how much you must praise yourself for your image …”). Laura’s muteness, of course, is the necessary condition for this all-male conversation about aesthetic merit. And her silence deeply influenced English Petrarchanism: Barkan recalls Daniel’s figure of the “marble brest” and “stony heart” and Marston’s distinctly lascivious use of the metaphor. Indeed, the power relations implicit in the convention of the poet pleading with his silent mistress fuel Marston’s satire of Petrarchanism: “O that my Mistres were an Image too, / That I might blameles her perfections view.”27

Despite Marston’s telling barb about the erotic advantages of female silence, however, and despite Petrarch’s rhetorical turn in Sonnet 78 to speak to another male artist about her silence, the distinctions of power implied by such figures as Pygmalion’s statue are not absolute in the Rime Sparse. The seemingly silenced female voice does, on occasion, interrupt Petrarchan self-reflection. First, the persona who takes Apollo’s story as his own also represents himself as “Echo,” exiled by the very language in which he represents his fate. Like Echo or Daphne, the poem’s speaker is betrayed by his own speech; in canzone 23 his echoing song angers Laura as Diana, who imprisons the poet in stone (ll. 13, 64-66, 138-40). As with both Ovid’s and Shakespeare’s reflections on male and female voices, Petrarch’s trope of echo implicates the fate of one voice in that of another. The male voice leans on various female voices from Ovid’s text in order to define itself.28 Echo’s may
not seem the kind of verbal power an aspiring Apollo would want to claim, since it disrupts any sure sense of intention or origin; yet it remains a kind of power nonetheless. Like Echo, the poet is never able to make his pain “resound” sweetly or softly enough so as to persuade (“né mai in si dolci o in si soavi tempre / risonar seppi gli amorosi guai / che ’l cor s’amiliasse aspro et feroce” [23.64-66]). But such failure finds its Apollonian solace in the aesthetic pleasures of Petrarchan autobiography: “every valley echoes to the sound of heavy sighs which prove how painful my life is” (“et quasi in ogni valle / rimbombi il suon de’ miei gravi sospiri, / ch’ acquistan fede a la penosa vita” [23.12-14]).

Second, though Laura rarely speaks in the Rime Sparse, her few words wield authority. As Diana, she utters the taboo against speaking that subtends the cycle: “make no word of this” (“Di ciò non far parola” [23.74]). Her prohibition enables Petrarch to portray himself as one driven by compulsion to write about what is forbidden. Laura's sentence against his speech becomes, paradoxically, the positive condition for Petrarch’s appearance as the speaking subject in exile. Like the undertone in the complaining sound that issues from Syrinx's reed, Laura's spoken taboo is that without which we would not hear Petrarch's voice. Indeed, in the Rime Sparse as a whole, Laura's voice, when heard, carries the force of prohibition or revelation. “Soft, angelic,” and “divine” (“in voce … soave, angelica, divina” [167.3-4]), it attracts her lover like “the sound of the sirens” (“di sirene al suono” [207.82]). I therefore understand the seeming polarity between male speech and female silence in Petrarch's rendition of the Pygmalion story in light of the larger fantasies about the poet's own symbolic and erotic condition, which give the female voice, though infrequently heard, an unsettling power.29

This voice articulates the specific rhetorical concerns that preoccupy Shakespeare as he transforms this Ovidian-Petrarchan legacy into a figure for the theater. Act 1, scene 2, the scene of rhetorical competition, opens with a brief meditation on the power and limits of a particular speech act: Polixenes complains of the imbalance between “thank you” and the time it takes to say it.

Nine changes of the wat’ry star hath been
The shepherd's note since we have left our throne
Without a burthen. Time as long again
Would be fill’d up, my brother, with our thanks,
And yet we should, for perpetuity,
Go hence in debt. And therefore, like a cipher
(Yet standing in rich place), I multiply
With one "We thank you" many thousands moe
That go before it.

(1.2.1-9)

Leontes's reply, however, only reopens the debt that Polixenes's “I multiply” was meant to close: “Stay your thanks a while, / And pay them when you part” (ll. 9-10). Polixenes's verbal maneuvers open a rhetorically self-conscious play in which Shakespeare continues to test language's power as a mode of action rather than mere vehicle of representation, to search for a kind of voice that can effect the changes of which it speaks. Moreover, the verbal power that Polixenes desires in this scene and Paulina finally stages in the last raises the same question—the question of language's ability to transcend time. As the concluding scene's greater success suggests, Shakespeare asks this question most pointedly through the sound of the female voice—Leontes's less than “tongue-tied” queen and the “boundless tongue” of her faithful Paulina. He does so in such a way, I submit, that the (barely) suppressed undercurrent of illicit sexuality in Polixenes's opening references to nine months and “standing in rich place” comes to define the very notion of time.

Let us examine exactly how this happens. Beginning with Polixenes's desire for words that can discharge a debt—for some kind of verbal action—the play's rhetorical concern is precisely delimited by its often-repeated doublet, “to say” and “to swear.” Preoccupied with the inability of any statement to prove
Hermione innocent and the concomitant failure of all speech to persuade Leontes of the truth, the first three acts of *The Winter's Tale* continually present us with this pair, “to say” and “to swear.” The doublet appears early: in the first scene of rhetorical and sexual competition, Hermione says of Polixenes, “To tell he longs to see his son were strong; / But let him say so then, and let him go; / But let him swear so, and he shall not stay, / We’ll thwack him hence with distaffs” (ll. 34-37). Similarly, when Leontes charges Hermione directly, “‘tis Polixenes / Has made thee swell thus,” she responds: “But I’d say he had not; / And I’ll be sworn you would believe my saying, / Howe’er you lean to th’ nayward” (2.1.61-64). This iterated pair of verbs draws a distinction similar to the one made by J. L. Austin in his theory of the difference between constative and performative utterances, between *saying*—words that “describe’ some state of affairs … either truly or falsely”—and *swearing*—words in which to say something is “to do it.”

In *The Winter's Tale* oath-taking and swearing faith take on the peculiar urgency of futility, since neither utterances that aspire to state the truth nor words conventionally designated as actions exercise any force.

Indeed we might say that this pair, saying and swearing, precisely distinguishes the two halves of the play. In Act 3, Paulina is the first woman whose spoken words command belief: “I say she’s dead; I’ll swear’t. If word nor oath / Prevail not, go and see” (3.2.203-4). Before Paulina’s oath no proof or belief attended woman’s word. For women, according to Leontes, “will say anything” (1.2.131). After Paulina’s oath Leontes views female speaking differently: “Go on, go on,” he says to her, “Thou canst not speak too much” (3.2.214-15).

But just as Leontes invokes the evidence of sight without ever having visual proof—Hermione’s adultery “lack’d sight only” (2.1.177)—Paulina’s imperative makes the “fact” of Hermione’s death, like the “fact” of her innocence, a kind of metatheatrical crime: the one thing the audience cannot do is “go and see.” The truth of Hermione’s body—its innocence and its death—is always held from view; all that remains is the evidence of “word” and “oath.” Where neither “word nor oath” allow Hermione to testify to the truth of her innocence, Paulina’s oath marks the moment when a woman’s words do finally work—but only to testify to a lie. Only a lie—Hermione is dead—establishes the trust in Leontes necessary for her to live as innocent. Only this lie to the audience, moreover, allows Shakespeare the surprise ending of the living statue that claims such powers for the theater. Between Hermione’s vain though truthful swearing of innocence and Paulina’s successful yet false swearing of death, *The Winter's Tale* uses the female voice to point beyond truth or falsehood, beyond a conception of language as transparent description. Instead it asks us to consider the effects of language—particularly female language but also theatrical language—in relation to the fugitive truth of the female body and the “old tale” it tells.

In the courtroom scene, saying and swearing come together at the moment of their failing. The oracle, for instance, is truth-telling’s last chance. That telling is supposed to be secured by another performative, for the officers, swearing “upon this sword of justice” that they have been “at Delphos, and from thence have brought / This seal’d-up oracle,” open it and read: “Hermione is chaste, Polixenes blameless, … Leontes a jealous tyrant,” and so on (3.2.124, 126-27, 132-34). Leontes merely declares, “There is no truth at all i’ th’ oracle” (l. 140). But in this scene, it is Hermione’s voice in particular that puts performative language on trial by stressing its failure and, at the same time, connecting that failure to the central problem of the play. For her commentary on her own speaking, like Paulina’s false oath that Hermione is dead, connects the transformation of language into action with the play’s two chief preoccupations: the “truth” of the female body and the effects of theatrical representation. Brought forward to testify, Hermione declares her innocence by commenting on her own lack of vocal power. She quotes the one performative for which she longs but which, in this context, will not work:

> Since what I am to say must be but that<br>Which contradicts my accusation, and<br>The testimony on my part no other<br>But what comes from myself, it shall scarce boot me<br>To say, “Not guilty.”

(ll. 22-26)
Quoting the performative that in her mouth and in this place must misfire, Hermione's meditation on the inefficacy of saying “Not guilty” does two things. First, it constructs Leontes as tyrant for bringing her forth in a courtroom where no words can acquit her. Commenting on her own inability to speak, Hermione claims that her predicament, viewed by a higher, divine witness, “shall make / False accusation blush, and tyranny / Tremble at patience” (ll. 30-32). The necessary misfiring of Hermione's “Not guilty” becomes the verbal event that marks Leontes, against his hopes, as “tyrannous” (l. 5). Second, Hermione's meditation on the necessary failure of her “Not guilty” recalls an earlier “Not guilty.” This one is first spoken offstage, but it defines the time of the play as the fallen time of sexuality. In Act 1, Polixenes remembers a prelapsarian idyll of male bonding. Of his boyhood friendship with Leontes he remarks,

We were as twinn’d lambs that did frisk i’ th’ sun,
And bleat the one at th’ other. What we chang’d
Was innocence for innocence; we knew not
The doctrine of ill-doing, nor dream’d
That any did.

(1.2.67-71)

Had this edenic state continued, he claims, “we should have answer’d heaven / Boldly, ‘Not guilty’; the imposition clear’d, / Hereditary ours” (ll. 73-75). In the decidedly less than innocent time of the play, “Not guilty,” though boldly declared, will not clear “the imposition.” Instead the immediate action of a prelapsarian performative is nullified by the sight of the female body:

Hermione
By this we gather
You have tripp’d since.

Polixenes
O my most sacred lady,
Temptations have since then been born to ‘s: for
In those unfledg’d days was my wife a girl;
Your precious self had then not cross’d the eyes
Of my young playfellow.

(ll. 75-80)

Like Leontes's suspicious interpretation of her pregnancy, of course, Polixenes's comments on Leontes's fall from innocence mark Hermione's body as a sign of transgression. But the echoing of “Not guilty” across the play turns the female voice, too, into another mark of transgression. For the possibility of saying a “Not guilty” that performs the action of absolution belonged to a world without women. When young men answered to heaven, there was no human convention to be violated and so deprive these words of efficacious action. With a language so natural as that of lambs bleating, heaven automatically witnesses and ratifies all performatives; the one who enters a plea simultaneously delivers his own verdict. Between the two very different circumstances for saying “Not guilty,” Shakespeare defines the play's time as one of broken linguistic conventions—conventions broken, moreover, around the question of sexual guilt. Turning what Shoshana Felman calls the scandal of the “speaking body” into the scandal of the speaking maternal body, Shakespeare sets The Winter's Tale in a time when woman's performative “Not guilty” cannot act.33

The failure of Hermione's “Not guilty” is implicit in Austin's definition of the performative. As Felman demonstrates of Austin's work, the performative is “defined only through the dimension of failure.”34 That failure is, however, not simple; it produces further effects. If the conventional rules governing a performative utterance are not in effect—if, as Austin writes, when we say “I do” in a marriage ceremony, “we are not in a position to do the act because we are, say, married already”—that does not mean that “I do” will be “void or
without effect.” Instead, “lots of things will have been done”: for instance, “we shall most interestingly have committed the act of bigamy.” What other effects, then, follow from Hermione's meditation on the impossibility of saying “Not guilty”? As we have already seen, the inevitable misfiring of her “Not guilty” turns Leontes's court into a mockery, the use of a tyrant who has already determined the verdict. Within the fictions of the play and of Leontes's justice, Hermione's refusal to enter a plea defines, by rhetorical means, the extent of the king's tyranny.

But more radically still, the self-reflexivity that defines all performatives reminds us, suddenly, that we are not only in the mock courtroom of a tyrant. We are also in the mock courtroom of a play. Of such a fictive situation, Austin observes that “a performative utterance will … be in a peculiar way hollow or void if said by an actor on the stage.” I do not cite Austin's observation here in order to endorse his distinction between a “non-serious” theatrical use of language and a “serious” or “ordinary” use of language. Jacques Derrida, Barbara Johnson, and Shoshana Felman have amply demonstrated that such a distinction is untenable. But each of these critics argues, as well, that Austin's failed distinction is extremely revealing. When Austin writes that something “peculiar” is at work onstage or in a poem, his choice of words reminds us that his work is “often more fruitful in the acknowledgment of its impasses than in its positions.” I recall Austin's unsuccessful distinction, rather, because of the considerable theoretical work on the status of the speaking subject which it has enabled. For Derrida, Austin's attempt to exclude “non-ordinary” poetic or theatrical language from his theory of performative action turns on a foundational belief in consciousness or intention: “the conscious presence of the intention of the speaking subject in the totality of his speech act.” Derrida argues that this exclusion allows Austin to avoid acknowledging the “general citationality” or “general iterability” that is the “risk” or “failure” internal to all performative intentions—their “positive condition of possibility.” It is not that the “category of intention will disappear,” only that intention will no longer “govern the entire scene and system of utterance”: “the intention animating the utterance will never be through and through present to itself and its content.” Derrida therefore argues that an “absence of intention” is “essential” to performative utterances; and he calls such absence the performative's “structural unconscious.” In The Literary Speech Act, Felman elaborates the full psychoanalytic resonance of such a phrase, discussing the consequences of the performative's “structural unconscious” for her understanding of the condition of the speaking subject. Reading Austin together with Lacan, she rephrases Lacan's “deliberately superficial” notion of the unconscious in terms of a poststructuralist theory of the failure necessary to performatives. “It is precisely from the breach in knowledge … that the act takes its performative power: it is the very knowledge that cannot know itself, that [in the speaking subject] acts.”

In order to specify what such a definition of the “structural unconscious” of performative utterances means for Hermione's courtroom speech, we must remember one further comment about what Austin finds so “peculiar” in a performative uttered onstage. As Barbara Johnson succinctly puts it, when Austin tries to distinguish between ordinary language and theatrical language for the purposes of his theory, he is “objecting not to the use of the verb but to the status of its subject.” For in a poem or on the stage, “the speaking subject is only a persona, an actor, not a person.” A theatrical performative is “peculiar” insofar as it reveals how all performatives put personae in place of persons. It reminds us that the necessity of speaking in persona—intrinsic to the conventionality of all performatives—opens up a difference within the speaker. Johnson evokes Hamlet to illustrate her point: “the nonseriousness of a performative utterance ‘said by an actor on the stage’ results, then, not from his fictional status but from his duality, from the spectator's consciousness that although the character in the play is swearing to avenge his dead father's ghost, the actor's own performative commitments lie elsewhere.”

In the case of the trial scene in The Winter's Tale, Shakespeare presents us with an escalating succession of performatives. The series opens with the somber tones of an indictment that, because it is uttered in a play, divides its speaker from himself: “Hermione, queen to the worthy Leontes, … thou art here accused and arraigned of high treason, in committing adultery,” and so on (3.2.12-14); the messengers follow suit, swearing that they have fetched the oracle and left it unopened (“All this we swear” [l. 130]). And it
culminates in an oracular message that should provide the last word by enacting the verdict it announces. In the case of Hermione, who explains why she can and will not utter the words “Not guilty,” the play's rhetorical move here is pointedly and internally citational: she repeats Polixenes's phrase, thereby reminding us that he, in turn, was quoting a conventional utterance despite the fantasy of his youth as an originary moment prior to language. Hermione's quotation, then, makes us uncertain of the status of the subject who is giving her voice to these deeply conventional words by elaborately refusing to say them. The conceit of her impossible “Not guilty” tells us that “Hermione” is at once a (persuasive) character terribly wronged by her doubting husband and an actor “whose own performative commitments lie elsewhere.” Hermione evanescently evokes the action her words cannot achieve if uttered, reminding us that this is so, in part, because we are listening to an actor speak in a play. Hermione's words do pass into action but not the act she intended and certainly not the one that the character “Hermione” could know. What she knows—that these words will fail—and what she does—reveal herself through these words as an actor playing a falsely accused Hermione—do not coincide.

Hermione protests that she has been “proclaim’d a strumpet” and “hurried / Here to this place, i’ th’ open air” to proclaim innocence in vain (ll. 104-5, my emphasis). It is “here” in “this place” that Hermione puts “Not guilty” in quotation marks. Her deictics refer us, within the fiction, to Leontes's mock courtroom. As if underlining the self-reflexive nature of performative utterances, however, they also refer us to the story's frame—to the “here” and now of “this” stage on which Hermione speaks.43 The disjunction or misfiring that happens in “this place” of the theater is what Felman might call the unconscious action of The Winter's Tale, a “knowledge that cannot know itself” and therefore hollows out the speaking subject, Hermione, from within her own voice. Further still, Felman's psychoanalytic view of the import of theatrical performatives suggests that we must examine the relation between the play's unsettling rhetorical performance and its story of sexuality. I have argued that Hermione's “Not guilty,” echoing Polixenes's “Not guilty,” colors the entire question of performative misfiring through Leontes's obsession with female sexual guilt; only in the prelapsarian world inhabited by male twins do plea and verdict coincide. But if we read Hermione's rhetoric in light of the material conditions of the theater for which her lines were written—the here and now of the English transvestite theater—we are confronted with a division within the speaking subject called Hermione that is peculiar indeed. We are reminded not merely that Hermione is an actor, but that the voice speaking these lines was that of a boy-actor playing a falsely accused wife and mother. Leontes's suspicions may reduce Hermione's tongue to her body; similarly, the story attached to the two versions of “Not guilty” may define Hermione's voice through a story about the necessary link between the female body and sexual guilt. But the material practice of the English Renaissance stage, to which the rhetoric of Hermione's speech also refers, would tell a far different story about Hermione's body, one in which the alleged difference between two sexes is in fact a difference within one. The hollowness or duality of “her” voice, then, mirrors a division internal to the play's representation of gender. That is, the metatheatrical echo implicit in the performative and Hermione's deictics reminds us, as I suggested at the opening of this essay, that Shakespeare's representation of a “female” voice—what it can or cannot say and what effects it achieves—is a dramatic trope. It is, quite literally, a “travesty” of womanhood, a femininity-effect rather than a revelation of anything essential to what it continues to call the “female” tongue.

We might understand the tropological status of what counts as female in this play in one further way. As we have seen, what Felman calls an unconscious “breach in knowledge” is marked by the misfiring of “Not guilty.” The precise content of this phrase will not let us forget that for Shakespeare a specific sexual story deeply informs what might otherwise seem a strictly rhetorical failure. Indeed, Felman's discussion of the affinities between Austin and Lacan suggests something further about the mysterious female body in The Winter's Tale. Through its constant meditation on the failures of its own language to reveal the truth or to act as intended, the play turns the secret of “female” sexuality—the question raised by Hermione's pregnancy—into what Lacan calls the missed encounter. Disjunction defines the subject's mediated, eccentric relation to “the real.” One might say of the play's relation to Hermione what Lacan says of the speaking subject's relation to the real: “Misfiring is the object.”44 On such an understanding of the discursive limits to
knowledge, we might comprehend what Stanley Cavell aptly calls Leontes's skeptical “annihilation of the world” in other terms—as the vanishing of the maternal body before the joint pressure of language and of fantasy. That is, Shakespeare is exploring the (Cartesian) problem of radical doubt by representing a specific body—the maternal body—as the privileged object that resists the play's knowledge and its verbal action. A psychoanalytic perspective, moreover, reminds us that it is not a philosopher's idea about a deceptive, malignant deity but a husband's idea about a deceptive, pregnant wife which sets the process of skeptical annihilation in motion. Foundational to the way the play rhetorically defines the limits of knowledge, the female body remains, nonetheless, forever fugitive.

III. “BE STONE NO MORE”

The literary figure to whom Shakespeare turns to explore such a vexed relation to the world is Ovid's Pygmalion. For both skepticism and projection join hands to fashion Leontes's misery (e.g., “Your actions are my dreams”). On David Ward's persuasive argument for retaining the punctuation of the First Folio and for remembering the contemporary meaning of “co-active” as “coercive” or “compulsory” (and not merely “acting in concert”), Leontes's speech about “affection” is stressing “the coercive nature of affection,” its “action upon the ‘nothing’ it generates in the imagination” (as Ward parses it, “Affection … Thou … Communicat'st with dreams … With what’s unreal: thou co-active art, / And fellow’st nothing”) [1.2.138-42]). In addition, it is through Ovid's Orpheus-Pygmalion sequence—particularly as given the influential contours of Petrarchan linguistic self-consciousness—that Shakespeare can explore the subject's missed relation to that (maternal) object not as a process of doubting alone but as a meditation on the simultaneously productive and aberrant effects of rhetoric—on language conceived not merely as a representation of the world but as a mode of action in the world. As I suggested above concerning Hermione's vain yet truthful swearing of innocence and Paulina's successful yet false swearing of death, such action, precisely by distinguishing the two halves of the play, turns the relation between the subject and the world of which it speaks into a recurrent misfiring. On the one hand, neither saying nor swearing reestablishes the faith in Leontes required for Hermione to live as herself, outside Leontes's “dreams” or beyond the “language” of male fantasy she “understands not.” And on the other, when Paulina's words do have effect, they do their work through a lie. That such misfirings as these or Hermione's impossible “Not guilty” are inaugurated by the mere sight of her pregnant body or the sound of her voice I understand as the symptom of a deeply entrenched—though not necessary or inevitable—collision between the representational and libidinal economies of patriarchal culture.

When the truth of Hermione is the object of representation, representation fails, drawing attention to the opacity of language rather than the clarity of truth. And when Hermione speaks, something happens that she does not intend: though she intends to persuade Polixenes to stay, her words trigger Leontes's jealousy; though she intends to speak of her innocence, her speech about the failure of “Not guilty” in her case declares her an actor and the scene the space of the theater. That a failed performative still has power to act despite having dislocated language's action from intention becomes vividly clear when the scene ends. For this self-reflexively theatrical trial produces further unintended effects. We hear that Mamillius, “with mere conceit and fear / Of the Queen's speed” in this staged trial, has died (3.2.144-45). And the report of his death becomes, in turn, words with the power to kill: “This news is mortal to the Queen” (l. 148). Hermione's unintended act—the “Not guilty” that produces the effect of theatricality—and the lethal effects that attend the play's reflection on its own fictive enactment darkly underline Shakespeare's attempt to evoke consciously and artistically controlled theatrical effects through Paulina's staging of Pygmalion's statue. That story works through yet another woman's voice to rein in the action of a now-benign theater in which language appears to perform the act it intends: “Music! awake her! … descend; be stone no more” (5.3.98-99).

Paulina's imperative to the statue, we should note, is not literally a performative utterance. Rather, her command represents an idea about language as performance. Shakespeare inherits this idea from Ovid's Orpheus and calls it “magic”: the dream of a voice so persuasive that it can effect the changes of which it
speaks. It is the dream of a language that, when it acts, “fills up” the grave, makes good our debt to time. Paulina's spectacle of Hermione-as-statue offers more than a meditation on the desire to see in the theater: it becomes a visual analogue for the play's desire for a truly performative language. The long-awaited verbal event—signaled by such performatives as “Not guilty,” the incessant taking of oaths, and the search for oracular truth—finds its culminating visual icon in the event of Hermione's “animation.” Drawing on verbal and visual fictions, Shakespeare nonetheless accentuates the power of the voice in Paulina's heavily weighted moment of invocation and, eventually, in the much-desired event of Hermione's speech. Although Leontes declares himself content to be a “looker-on” (l. 85), thus inscribing the audience in the theatrical circuit of his desire, and though Paulina apologizes for the effects of the “sight of my poor image” (l. 57), what everyone waits to hear is Hermione's voice. As the doubters in Paulina's audience demand, “If she pertain to life let her speak too” (l. 113) and “Ay, and make it manifest where she has liv’d, / Or how stol'n from the dead” (ll. 114-15). The scene, however, both claims and disavows the Orphic power for which it longs. Availing itself of a language at once oral and visual, this theater seems to “steal” Hermione, like Eurydice, “from the dead.” At the same time, we hear a warning, through Paulina, that the Orphic story of life, were it “told … should be hooted at / Like an old tale” (ll. 116-17).

The acts that words do in the courtroom scene exceed intention and, by so doing, turn the theater into the space of these unpredictable effects. The final scene attempts to control verbal action through Paulina's careful stage management, her magically effective voice. Yet such an attempt may all too easily recall Leontes's disastrous desire to master the world by controlling all language. It therefore does not go unqualified. On the one hand, when Paulina proclaims “descend; be stone no more,” a woman's successful voice in The Winter's Tale appears to replace Pygmalion's successful prayer to Venus in the Metamorphoses. On the other, just as Hermione once reminded her husband that even his own language exceeds his control, so now her voice is the one to remind us that the play's seeming animation is only a fiction. Despite the ruse of death, she has “preserv'd” herself somewhere else (l. 127). Hermione, moreover, says nothing to the man who now longs to hear her speak. She seems poised to speak to him—“Still methinks / There is an air comes from her. What fine chisel / Could ever yet cut breath?” (ll. 77-79)—but does not. Leontes's lines should remind us that throughout the Metamorphoses “breath” is the etymological root for Ovid's interest in speaking voices and poetry as “song”: Apollo's “breath,” the “wind” streaming through Daphne's hair, and the Orphic “vox” telling the story of the statue's animation all derive from the narrator's fascination with the vicissitudes of speech, with the uneasy relationship between voice and mind. For the anima in animation—meaning “the mind,” “consciousness,” and “breath”—is derived from the Greek anemos for “wind” internal and external to the body. In this image of the chisel that can “cut breath,” Leontes signals his, and the play's, desire for a rhetoric of animation, for a theatrical version of the “l'aura” or “breeze” that blows through the figures of the Rime Sparse or the “breath” that Ovid asks the gods to bestow on his song (I. 1-3).

What Hermione does and does not say in this scene tells us something about the cost of that desire. Given the gendered relations of power passed down through literary history as the “air” that seems to “come from her,” very much indeed hangs on Hermione's voice. I take the fact of Hermione's silence toward Leontes—and the fact that, after she moves, Leontes never asks her a direct question—to be Shakespeare's way of acknowledging the problems raised by her voice in the first three acts. Nothing she says to Leontes diminishes the force of his projections; the language she “understand[s] not” limits the field of her possible responses; and any answer she makes must still be read by him, a reading she cannot control. This awareness of the limits that Leontes's fantasy places on the stony lady's possible reply stems, in part, from Shakespeare's understanding that, in Ovid as in Petrarch, the stories of Pygmalion and Narcissus are deeply intertwined. Leontes has, of course, always viewed others through the mediating screen of his own form. Observing his son in Act 1, he begins testing his theory about his wife's guilt according to whether or not Mamillius is his mirror: “Looking on the lines / Of my boy's face, methoughts I did recoil / Twenty-three years, and saw myself unbreech'd” (1.2.153-55). Even Leontes's admission of culpability in the final scene, prompted when he gazes on the “statue,” surreptitiously imports Narcissus's story into Pygmalion's. Repentant though he may be, Leontes still reads Hermione as a version of himself: “does not the stone rebuke me / For being more stone
than it?” (5.3.37-38). To Leontes even her stoniness is not “hers.” If anything of the world is to return to Leontes that does not stand at the level of his dreams, it cannot do so within the reflexively binary terms proposed by Petrarchan rhetoric. Rather, Paulina’s intervention tells us that if Hermione is to be restored to Leontes and not fade away again before the force of fantasy and doubt, it is on the condition that she not respond to his words only, that she not conform utterly to his language and his desire. Therefore a third party (Paulina) must manage this meeting from outside the restrictive frame of Pygmalion’s desirous yet annihilating address.

And finally, what Hermione does say—precisely not to Leontes but to her lost daughter—offers a telling index of how constraining have been the terms of that address. What Pygmalion loathes, what his phantasmatic love for his simulacrum pushes aside, Ovid tells us, is not simply female sexuality but “the female mind” (“menti / femineae” [X.244-45]). So one final allusion to the Metamorphoses tells us something about that mind. Hermione’s allusion prompts a question that seems never to occur to Petrarch: what does she want? The shift from Petrarchan autobiography to Shakespearean ventriloquism marks a subtly but crucially different return to Ovidian narrative. In The Winter’s Tale, Shakespeare animates Petrarchan tropes in order to perform an ethical critique of them, particularly the animating rhetoric of address and its role in Petrarch’s story of love and the self. When Shakespeare listens once more to Ovid’s female voices, he shifts the emphasis away from the otherness within the self (Petrarch’s “exile” of blindness, obsession, and forgetting) to pose, instead, a question: the question of the other’s desire. And for a moment that “other”—the Petrarchan stony lady—has something else in mind than “responding” to the speaker whose apostrophe restricts them both (“se risponder savess a’ detti miei!”). What “moved” Hermione, her last words tell us, were thoughts of Perdita. Turning to a daughter who has already coded herself as Proserpina at the moment of dropping her flowers, Hermione models herself on Ceres as a mother unable to forget her lost, though still living, daughter:

Where hast thou been preserv’d? where liv’d? how found
Thy father’s court? for thou shalt hear that I,
Knowing by Paulina that the oracle
Gave hope thou wast in being, have preserv’d
Myself to see the issue.

(5.3.123-28)

Hermione’s question to Perdita—“Where hast thou been preserv’d? where liv’d?”—obliquely recalls Ovid’s story of violent rape and maternal grief by making her reason for living the hope of reunion with her daughter. Where the suspicion of female sexual guilt defines the relation between time and language’s action in the first half of the play, in this final scene both are redefined by another story—that of rape and maternal grief. Hermione’s allusion to Book V of the Metamorphoses, of course, echoes the title, place, and time of The Winter’s Tale. For Ceres’s grief over Proserpina’s rape brought winter into the world. Golding’s translation of that grief brings the story of Ceres closer still to that of the animated statue in Act 5. When the nymph Arethusa tells Ceres why her daughter has vanished, Golding renders Ovid’s lines as follows: “Hir mother stoode as starke as stone … And long she was like one that in another worlde had beene.”

It is left to Shakespeare’s Hermione to return from that “other world” of stone in order to be reunited with her Proserpina. Alongside Pygmalion’s prayer and Orpheus’s suppliant song, then, we must also remember Ceres’s curse. In Ovid’s text we find yet another story, often less well remembered, about a voice that can bring about the changes of which it speaks. Orpheus’s mother, the muse Calliope, tells us that when Ceres saw Proserpina’s girdle floating on the surface of the pool, she “reproached all the lands loudly, calling them ungrateful … but Sicily above all other lands, where she had found the traces of her loss. … She ordered the plowed fields to fail in their trust and spoiled the seed” (ll. 474-80). Setting his “old tale” of Leontes’s winter in Sicily, Shakespeare invokes but finally turns attention away from the fantasy of the animated statue. He thereby suggests that Pygmalion’s self-reflexive fantasy so narrowly constricts female speech that there is, quite
literally, nothing Hermione can say. Yet by recalling Proserpina's rape and Ceres's powerful reproach, he grants her voice a different authority. Her last words to Perdita fleetingly testify to the violence against the female body that subtends such "old" and "sad" tales as that of an animated statue or the first appearance of winter.

Female voices in *The Winter's Tale* acquire an oblique but telling power: the power to point out that, in the Ovidian tradition, stories about poetic authority, creativity, or "voice," however purely "poetic" their claims may seem, nonetheless entail violence against the female body. Not necessarily conscious, that violence continues to emerge in the unlikely circumstance of metapoetic or metatheatrical reflection. Challenging Ovidian-Petrarchan tropes for male vocal power when they thwart Leontes's desire to control speech, the tongues of Hermione and Paulina recall Ovid's rhetorically self-conscious narratives of rape, misogyny, and female vengeance that form the background for Orpheus's descent into the underworld. When Shakespeare returns to Ovidian narrative in this play, therefore, he reminds us that if we isolate Pygmalion's story from Orpheus's, or Proserpina's from Ceres's, we fail to notice the ethical dilemmas woven into the very fabric of Ovid's rhetorical self-consciousness in the *Metamorphoses*. Investigating the causes and effects of rhetorical speech through these seemingly disparate figures, and inviting reflection on the connections between language and sexuality proposed by their interwoven stories, Shakespeare reveals the cost to women of Ovid's foundational tropes for poetic authority. It is in the voices of Hermione and Paulina that we catch something of the sound of that cost. In their voices *The Winter's Tale* stages a cautionary story about the uncanny returns of cultural inheritance, one that attests to the often unconscious—yet no less lethal—consequences of representing such things as love, voice, and beauty in the Ovidian tradition.

**Notes**

4. For an overview, see Barkan, *The Gods Made Flesh: Metamorphosis & the Pursuit of Paganism* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale UP, 1986). As Barkan comments of "Diana and Actaeon," Titian turns Ovid's story of Actaeon's visual transgression into a painting that comments on the act of looking at a painting. Actaeon, poised "on the threshold," lifts a curtain to gaze on Diana; therefore "the bath almost becomes a picture within a picture. The result is a powerful identification between the viewer and Actaeon as both participate in the visual, the voyeuristic, and the visionary" (200-201). One could make similar comments about the resonance between Petrarch's many allusions to Ovid's stories about the human voice and the characteristic fiction that a lyric poem is a spoken utterance—particularly in light of its favored trope, apostrophe. Such aesthetically self-reflexive allusions to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* are not a purely "Renaissance" phenomenon. On Dante's poetically self-conscious appropriations of Ovidian narrative, for example, see Rachel Jacoff and Jeffrey T. Schnapp, eds., *The Poetry of Allusion: Virgil and Ovid in Dante's "Commedia"* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1991).
5. Barkan, ""Living Sculptures,"" 660.
7. I have here modified the translation of Robert M. Durling in *Petrarch's Lyric Poems: The Rime sparse and Other Lyrics* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard UP, 1976) to capture the rhetorically specific sense of the verb *lodare*, “to praise.” Elsewhere in this essay translations of Petrarch are Durling's. Barbara Johnson distinguishes between the two apostrophes in Shelley's “Ode to the West Wind” in a way that is useful for reading Petrarch's two sonnets: the first, emotive “if only” lays stress on the first person, and the second, vocative “Pygmalion” on the second person. The typography of Shelley's poem marks this difference as one between “oh” and “O,” a difference Johnson allies with the one between Roman Jakobson's emotive function, or “pure presencing of the first person,” and his conative function, or “the pure presencing of the second person” (Johnson, *A World of Difference* [Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins UP, 1987], 187).


10. Quotations of the *Metamorphoses* follow the text translated and edited by Frank Justus Miller (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1927), though I have made a few silent emendations to Miller's translations.


12. The association between the stories of Orpheus and Eurydice and Apollo and Daphne is commonplace. The most influential Renaissance commentator on Ovid's poem, Raphael Regius, claims that Orpheus is Apollo's son, adding that the singer received his lyre from Apollo as a gift (*Metamorphoses* [Venice, 1556], X.1). The first edition of Regius's commentary appeared in 1492.

13. Despite the frequent representation of polymorphous desires in the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid's narrative almost always brings homoerotic moments such as this one back into the orbit of a controlling heterosexual imperative. Thus Iphis's love for Ianthe, which immediately precedes the story of Orpheus, is refracted through a missing penis; the phallus becomes the sign, therefore, that the love of one woman for another is “more mad” than the love of a woman for a bull (IX.668-797). Similarly, although Orpheus may be the “author” of love for boys, that love is represented as the effect of, and only in relation to, his love for his dead wife; the jury of avenging Bacchic women in Book XI then judge his love again as merely the sign of his feelings about women. Because of this frame (and its repetition in the hands of Pygmalion, Orpheus's surrogate), the song in Book X about the many kinds of transgressive love has little to say about male-male eroticism on its own terms.


15. Leontes signals an awareness of this punitive possibility. But he does so in the domestic register, containing the threat no sooner than uttered: “Chide me, dear stone, that I may say indeed / Thou art Hermione; or rather, thou art she / In thy not chiding; for she was as tender / As infancy and grace” (5.3.24-27).

For a history of this misogynist tradition, see Barbara Rico’s “From ‘Speechless Dialect’ to ‘Prosperous Art’: Shakespeare's Recasting of the Pygmalion Image,” Huntington Library Quarterly 48 (1985): 285-95. Except for the two works I discuss here—the last act of The Winter's Tale and Petrarch's paired sonnets (77 and 78)—the Pygmalion story is generally not a positive one in the Middle Ages or the Renaissance. Misogynist diatribes inform it, and the story of prostitution, too, clings to it: John Marston uses Pygmalion to adjudicate between the “wanton” and the “obsceane” (252), and George Pettie's A Petite Pallace (London, 1586) alludes to the story of the statue in overtly misogynist ways. Jonathan Bate, in a book otherwise dedicated to tracing the minuitiae of Ovid's presence in Shakespeare's poetry, oddly dismisses the relevance to The Winter's Tale of the misogynist genealogy in Ovid (Shakespeare and Ovid [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993]).

17. It seems to me no accident that the artist Shakespeare chose for his Pygmalion, Giulio Romano, was known not only as a painter but as a pornographer. The nature of Shakespeare's reference to Romano has been much debated. For a useful summary of the debate as well as an account of a contemporary English conduct book for young women which refers to the excellent work of “Jules Romain,” see Georgianna Ziegler, “Parents, Daughters, and ‘That Rare Italian Master’: A New Source for The Winter's Tale,” Shakespeare Quarterly 36 (1985): 204-12. For Romano's notorious, if rarely seen, collaboration with Aretino (the so-called posizioni), see David O. Frantz, Festum Voluptatis: A Study of Renaissance Erotica (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1989), 46-48 and 119-23; and Frederick Hartt, Giulio Romano (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1958), 29. As Hartt points out, Romano's prints, though suppressed, were also widely copied and widely destroyed; Frantz notes that when Perino del Vaga and Agostino Carracci imitated Romano, they did so in an Ovidian vein, calling their own versions of the “posizioni” the “loves of the gods” (123). It is the rumor of Romano's work, rather than an actual copy in England, that seems to me important to Shakespeare's reference.


19. For a persuasive reading of the way language violates Philomela as surely as her rape—particularly Ovid's meditation on the severed “lingua” (both tongue and language more generally)—see Elissa Marder's recent “Disarticulated Voices: Feminism and Philomela,” Hypatia 7 (Spring 1992): 148-66. My claim about Medusa lies outside the scope of this essay; I take up her story in greater detail in my next book, The Rhetoric of the Body in Renaissance Ovidian Poetry.

20. Figura signifies in both grammatical and rhetorical registers and designates the material aspects of writing as well. It can specify a written symbol or character or refer to the form, spelling, or grammatical inflection of a Latin word; it is also a rhetorical term for trope.


22. Figura, definition 11, OLD, 1:700.

24. Here we should remember that, according to Ovid, Medusa became the Gorgon because she was raped, and her beheading produced the fountain of poetry. Pegasus arose from the Gorgon's blood, and the Heliconian fountain, in turn, arose from the “beating of his feet” (both the horse's feet and the feet of poetic meter). The origin of poetry's fountain is therefore “the blood of the mother,” the raped Medusa (“vidi ipsum materno sanguine nasci … est Pegasus huius origo / fontis” [V.259-63]).

25. For an analysis of the role that bodies—especially female bodies—play in the relationship between desire and “the drive to know” in modern narrative, see Peter Brooks, Body Work: Objects of Desire in Modern Narrative (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard UP, 1993). Leontes's devotion to speaking about the fantasized “truth” of Hermione's body might usefully be considered part of what Brooks calls “epistemophilia,” a project in which we tell stories “about the body in the effort to know and to have it” and which results “in making the body a site of signification—the place for the inscription of stories—and itself a signifier, a prime agent in narrative plot and meaning” (5-6).

26. I adapt the phrase “verbal fetishism” from John Freccero (“The Fig Tree and the Laurel: Petrarch's Poetics” in Literary Theory/Renaissance Texts, Patricia Parker and David Quint, eds. [Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins UP, 1986], 20-32, esp. 22). My understanding of the nature of fetishism in
Petrarch and the literary filiation from which it derives differs from Freccero's and is outlined in my “Embodied Voices.”

27. Marston, 246.

28. Petrarch uses both female and male Ovidian characters to suggest that he is alienated from his own tongue; the story of Actaeon, as well as of Echo and Daphne, appears in canzone 23 for this purpose. For further comment on Actaeon, see my “Embodied Voices.” As we have seen, Ovid no sooner proposes the story of male poetic control over language than he dissolves it; this dissolution subtends Petrarch's poetic self-portrait. Although Ovid and Petrarch after him suggest that alienation from one's own tongue is the condition of having a voice—male or female—in both poets the trope of a female voice appears strategically, as the place in the text where one can hear the greatest strain on such cherished illusions about artistic vocal power as those proposed by Apollo, Pan, Pygmalion, and Orpheus. It is the diacritical function of the female voice, its ironic juxtaposition to such ostensibly “male” fantasies, that is important for understanding Shakespeare's representation of the tongues of Hermione and Paulina.

29. Heather Dubrow has recently argued that we must attend carefully to the complex and often contradictory role of Laura's voice if we are to understand the “relationship among speech, power, and gender” in the Rime Sparse and beyond; see her Echoes of Desire: English Petrarchism and its Counterdiscourses (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell UP, 1995), 40-48, esp. 42.

30. J. L. Austin, How to do things with Words, ed. J. O. Urmson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), 1 and 6. Austin lists swear (along with such other verbs as promise, give my word, pledge myself) as part of a class of “commissive” performatives in which conventional phrases are deployed to “commit the speaker to a certain course of action” (156-57). Over the course of his lectures, Austin renders problematic his “provisional” performative/constative distinction; he eventually rejects any absolute dichotomy between the two, finding that constatives may well have a performative aspect (91). My point here is simply to note that in The Winter's Tale, Shakespeare is exploring a distinction analogous to Austin's provisional one—between statements that report some state of affairs truly or falsely (in this case, the “state of affairs” in question being Hermione's fidelity) and other, conventional statements (such as “I swear”) in which saying and doing explicitly converge. For a study of performatives in Shakespeare with an emphasis on cultural and institutional authority, see Susanne L. Wofford, “‘To You I Give Myself, For I Am Yours’: Erotic Performance and Theatrical Performatives in As You Like It” in Shakespeare Reread: The Texts in New Contexts, Russ McDonald, ed. (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell UP, 1994), 147-69.

31. Since, unlike the audience, the characters in the story can “go and see” the dead body of Hermione, Paulina's lie is dramaturgically more complicated than my presentation of it. Leontes describes scenes that the audience does not observe, and his words give playgoers every reason to believe that he will verify for us the fact of Hermione's death: “Prithee bring me / To the dead bodies of my queen and son. / One grave shall be for both. … Once a day I’ll visit / The chapel where they lie, and tears shed there / Shall be my recreation. … Come, and lead me / To these sorrows” (3.2.234-43). Critics have argued that these lines, coupled with Antigonus's report in 3.3 of the appearance of Hermione's spirit, suggest that when Shakespeare wrote Act 3, he still intended to follow his source, in which the dead wife does not return. Whatever Shakespeare's intentions, the play's refusal to clear up ambiguities about Hermione's possible death and resurrection provides a compelling link between the play and the Orpheus/Eurydice story.


32. In thinking about the relationship between performativity and sexuality, I have drawn on several important discussions: Judith Butler, Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex” (New York and London: Routledge, 1993); Shoshana Felman, The Literary Speech Act: Don Juan with J. L. Austin, or Seduction in Two Languages (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1983); Lynne Huffer, “Luce et

33. Felman, 94-96, esp. 94. Analyzing performative language in relation to the stories of Don Juan and of Oedipus, Felman's work is equally telling for the central dilemma of *The Winter's Tale*: the relationship between theatrical representation and the female body or, more generally in Ovidian narrative, between body and voice. Felman writes that “the problem of the human act,” in psychoanalysis as well as performative analysis, “consists in the relation between language and body … because the act is conceived … as that which problematizes at one and the same time the separation and the opposition between the two. The act, an enigmatic and problematic production of the *speaking body* …, breaks down the opposition between body and spirit, between matter and language” (94). She reminds us of Austin's comment that “in the last analysis, doing an action must come down to the making of physical movements with parts of the body; but this is about as true as … saying something must … come down to making movements of the tongue” (as quoted in Felman, 94).


35. Austin, 16-17.

36. Austin, 22.

37. Derrida, 10.

38. Derrida, 14 and 17.


40. Felman, 96.

41. “If one considers the conventionality of all performative utterances (on which Austin often insists), can it really be said that the chairman who opens a discussion or the priest who baptizes a baby or the judge who pronounces a verdict are persons rather than personae? … The performative utterance thus automatically fictionalizes its utterer when it makes him the mouthpiece of a conventionalized authority” (Johnson, *The Critical Difference*, 60). Or one could say, as well, that read rhetorically, the performative utterance may uncover the *theatrical* nature of such “ordinary” social actions.


43. In light of the duality of Hermione's deictics, we might read the specification “i’ th’ open air” within historical context as well. The stage in London's earliest commercial theaters projected into a yard and therefore placed actors “i’ th’ open air.” On the physical conditions of London's public amphitheaters and private halls, see Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987), 13-48. Most critics believe the play to have been written for the closed theater of Blackfriars. But a note on the play by Simon Forman tells us that at least one contemporary remembers having seen *The Winter's Tale* performed at the Globe (on 15 May 1611).


45. Stanley Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge in Six Plays of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987), 193-221, esp. 214. Cavell is, of course, most concerned with Leontes's doubts about his son and his paternity. But in light of Janet Adelman's work on the play, one is led to wonder, when poised between these two powerful essays, why it is the *maternal* body that sparks Leontes's radical doubt. I would add to Adelman's analysis only that it is Hermione's language—the effects of her voice—as well as her body that unsettle her husband's sense of himself. To Cavell's approach, similarly, I would add only that the play explores the action of Leontes's doubt through the action of both language and thought. For the scandal of what cannot be known—the truth about Hermione—turns, as we have seen, into an interrogation of the power and the limits of theatrical representation as well as of two
kinds of discourse: saying and swearing.

46. It is perhaps worth remembering, as Jonathan Bate points out, that Shakespeare's contemporaries understood him to be the inheritor of Ovid. Drawing on the very rhetoric of animation at issue here, Francis Meres observed that “the sweete wittie soule of Ouid liues in mellifluous and hony-tongued Shakespeare” (<i>Palladis Tamia</i> [1598], as quoted in <i>Elizabethan Critical Essays</i>, G. Gregory Smith, ed. [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1904], 317). For further comment on Renaissance Ovidianism, see Bate, 1-47; and <i>Ovid Renewed: Ovidian influences on literature and art from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century</i>, Charles Martindale, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988).

47. David Ward, “Affection, Intention, and Dreams in <i>The Winter's Tale</i>,” <i>Modern Language Review</i> 82 (1987): 545-54, esp. 552. Ward offers a precise discussion of Leontes's “affection” in relation to sixteenth-century faculty psychology, particularly in medical discourse. Looking at discussions in Hooker and Burton, Ward suggests that with this word Leontes is designating a “disease of the mind” linked to the faculty of the appetite rather than to the will or to reason; for Hooker, affection is both involuntary (“Wherefore it is not altogether in our power”) and a desire for the impossible, for “any thing which seemeth good, be it never so impossible” (as quoted in Ward, 546). For Shakespeare, Ovid's combined stories of Pygmalion and Orpheus give a distinctive mythographic and erotic turn to the involuntary aspect of affection (revulsion from womankind out of grief or disgust) and its connotation of a desire for the impossible (for art to conquer death).

48. See Howard Felperin, “‘Tongue-tied our queen?’: the deconstruction of presence in <i>The Winter's Tale</i>” in Parker and Hartman, eds., 3-18. Although I clearly agree with Felperin's emphasis on the play's consciousness of its own failure to refer, it seems to me that, by framing the question in terms of the possibility that Hermione may be guilty, Felperin participates in the very logic he critiques; his reading repeats what it might otherwise analyze—the question of why language's misfiring should be represented in cognitive terms as the truth or falsity of the maternal body.

49. Ovid, of course, shared this dream: the final lines of the <i>Metamorphoses</i> claim that the poet will live (“<i>vivam</i>”), his name survive the “gnawing tooth of time” though his body does not (“<i>nec edax abolere vetustas</i>”), if his poem is “read on the lips of the people” (“<i>perque omnia saecula fama</i>”) [XV.871-79]). For my understanding of this scene, I am indebted to conversations with Thomas M. Greene on the relationship between poetry and magic. See his essays “The Balance of Power in Marvell's ‘Horatian Ode,’” <i>ELH</i> 60 (1993): 379-96; and “Poetry as Invocation,” <i>New Literary History</i> 24 (1993): 495-517.

50. Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott cite Hippocrates for the sense of wind in the body: derived from “-, ‘blow, breathe’, cf. [Sanskrit], <i>áni-ti</i>, ‘breathes’” (<i>Greek-English Lexicon</i>, 2 vols. [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951], 1:132). The primary meaning of <i>anima</i> is “breath” or “breathing as the characteristic manifestation of life,” and it thus connotes “the characteristic or quality whose loss constitutes death” (<i>OLD</i>, 1:132-34). It can also designate “a disembodied spirit, soul, ghost” (132), a hint of which meaning appears, perhaps, when Polixenes asks Paulina to “make it manifest where she has liv’d, / Or how stol’n from the dead” (5.3.114-15). For interesting comments on the ghostly undertone here and at other moments in this scene, see Gross.

51. Since Ovid handled the scene, the link became one of the mainstays of the tradition. The subjective and objective genitive in Marston's title, “The Metamorphosis of Pygmalions Image,” for instance, derives its power from this connection. Thus his Pygmalion is enamored less of the statue than of his own reflection in that statue: “Hee was amazed at the wondrous rarenesse / Of his owne workmanships perfection. … And thus admiring, was enamored / On that fayre Image himselfe portraied” (245, my emphasis). Pygmalion's resemblance to Narcissus was also central to the representation of the lover in the <i>Roman de la Rose</i>; for an overview, see Louise Vinge, <i>The Narcissus Theme in Western European Literature up to the Early 19th Century</i> (Lund: Gleerups, 1967). I learned to attend to the crucial role that Pygmalion and Narcissus play in the <i>Rime Sparse</i> from Giuseppe Mazzotta (<i>The Worlds of Petrarch</i> [Durham, NC, and London: Duke UP, 1993]).

52. Golding, 64v. Ovid uses the simile of turning to stone but says nothing of “another worlde”: “<i>Mater ad auditas stupuit ceu saxea voces / attonitaeque diu similis fuit, utque dolore / pulsa gravi gravis est</i>"
amentia” (V.509-11). For another reading of the import of Ceres's grief for the play, see T. G. Bishop, Shakespeare and the theatre of wonder (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), 125-75.

53. Golding, too, preserves the detail of Sicily in his translation: “But bitterly aboue the rest she banned Sicilie, / In which the mention of hir losse she plainely did espie” (64r). Understanding Hermione as a second Ceres may tell us why Shakespeare makes an otherwise puzzling change of location. Where Greene begins Pandosto in Bohemia and later moves to Sicily, Shakespeare opens the story of winter in Sicily only to move, in Act 4, to Bohemia's pastoral landscape.

A number of colleagues read and commented on this essay with care and acuity. I would like to thank them here: Ian Duncan, Kevin Dunn, Richard Halpern, William Jewett, Wayne Koestenbaum, Larry Manley, Jeff Nunokawa, Patricia Rosenmeyer, and Katherine Rowe. I owe the inaugural idea for this essay to a conversation several years ago with David Marshall.

**Criticism: Sources, Influences, And Ideologies: William R. Morse (essay date 1991)**


*In the essay below, Morse examines The Winter’s Tale in order to reveal the shortcomings of New Historical criticism, and finds the ideology of the New Historicist conception to be “simplistic” and “misconceived.”*

New Historical criticism of Renaissance literature over the past decade has not only effected a revolution in the way that critics read the literature and its relation to the culture that produces it, but has helped us to reconceive the nature of culture itself. Nevertheless, if the great strength of the school's approach has been the fertility and subtlety of its analyses of the cultural density which produces and is produced by literature, the theoretical models by which it has organized its reading have at times seemed inadequate, and thus misleading. The prevalent New Historicist conception of a dominant absolutist ideology centered in the court, in particular, seems in some ways simplistic, in others misconceived, and has generally tended towards a hegemonic conception of the nature of “dominant ideologies” that misrepresents in its totalizing impetus the inevitably multiform pressures of any culture understood not as historical object but rather as evolving process. There is a critical *aporia*, a hidden teleological hindsight at work, for instance, in the elaboration of a theory of cultural containment, the appropriation of all discourse by a unitary dominant ideology, that progressively rejects the autonomy, and thus ultimately the reality, of all subversion. More significantly, the prevalent New Historicist analysis of the dominant Renaissance ideology, the absolutist court of Elizabeth and James, is certainly oversimplified, and perhaps misconceived in historical terms. Given the comments by Anthony Easthope on the ideological implications of the rise of iambic pentameter, the analyses by Jonathan Dollimore and Catherine Belsey of the inscription in Renaissance drama of the liberal subject, and most especially the analysis of the emergence of “the discourse of modernism” by Timothy Reiss, the whole question of the degree to which absolutist ideology was dominant, and indeed of whether it is best conceived as a residual element of an older discourse, or the first articulation of an emergent modern one, remains open.

Beyond this specific problem lies a larger question, for the totalizing tendencies of the New Historicism could be seen to follow from a synchronic hypostatization of historical process. As Raymond Williams puts the issue:

> In what I have called “epochal” analysis, a cultural process is seized as a cultural system, with determinate dominant features. … This emphasis on dominant and definitive lineaments and features is important and often, in practice, effective. But it then often happens that its methodology is preserved for the very different function of historical analysis, in which a
sense of movement within what is ordinarily abstracted as a system is crucially necessary, especially if it is to connect with the future as well as with the past. … Such errors are avoidable if, while retaining the epochal hypothesis, we can find terms which recognize not only “stages” and “variations” but the internal dynamic relations of any actual process.

(121-22)

Exactly insofar as the New Historicism fails to address these dynamics of culture, and begins to totalize the “dominant feature” of its “epochal analysis”—the hegemony of the court—thus far it is actually ahistorical in an important sense.

Related to this confusion is a certain imprecision in the use of the key term “ideology” itself. A number of recent critics, including Williams, have followed Louis Althusser’s lead in complicating and extending the conception of ideology in response to the question of its relation to culture. Althusser develops the argument that, since “ideology has a material existence,” we must distinguish between on the one hand the traditional understanding of particular ideologies, implemented “by a ‘clique’ … who are the authors of the great ideological mystification” (165) and on the other “ideology in general … omnipotent and transhistorical” (160-61), of which it can be said that “there is no practice except by and in an ideology” (170). Although Williams uses the distinct terms “ideology” and “hegemony” in discussing these two senses of ideology, he develops a similar understanding based on Gramsci’s distinction between “rule” and “hegemony”:

“Rule” is expressed in directly political forms and in times of crisis by direct or effective coercion. But the more normal situation is a complex interlocking of political, social, and cultural forces, and “hegemony” … is either this or the active social and cultural forces which are its necessary elements. … Hegemony is a concept which at once includes and goes beyond two powerful earlier concepts: that of “culture” as a “whole social process” [shaped by individuals] … and that of “ideology” [as] the projection of a particular class interest.

(108)

From this distinction he comments that “it is in just this recognition of the wholeness of the process that the concept of ‘hegemony’ goes beyond ‘ideology’” (108-9).

It is on the basis of Williams’s work that Dollimore distinguishes between the “cognitive view” of ideology, “the view of ideology as a process of conspiracy on the part of the rulers and misrecognition on the part of the ruled,” and a “materialist view,” which identifies the incompleteness of the cognitive view by stressing “the extent to which ideology has a material existence; that is, ideology exists in, and as, the social practices which constitute people’s lives. … Ideology becomes … the very terms in which we perceive the world, almost … the condition and grounds of consciousness itself” (9). Dollimore, following Williams, makes the valuable argument that the two articulations are “inextricably related” (10), and both are necessary to a full understanding of Renaissance culture. Nevertheless, he emphasizes the broader definition in his own analysis. This “materialist” analysis of ideology is at the heart of his reading of Renaissance drama as “radical tragedy,” and at the heart, too, of the materialist disagreement with New Historical readings of the “dominant ideology” of Renaissance England. A good deal of the recent debate can be traced to a confusion of these two distinct senses of the term, for a focus on cognitive rather than material ideology is the source of the emphasis on the hegemony (using the term now in the New Historical rather than in Williams’s sense) of the absolutist court.

A consideration of even so seemingly apolitical a play as Shakespeare’s _The Winter’s Tale_ can help in representing the openness, the contingency, the play of culture and its inscription in the literary text, that are at work in this particular historical moment; not only does the text raise questions about the dominance of the court ideology in relation to the emergent modern discourse (this new discourse is itself clearly inscribed in
the play), but it suggests ways in which the playwright is, if himself shaped by the culture's discourse, also consciously critical of it.\textsuperscript{4} We may accept Fredric Jameson's dictum that we must “always historicize!”—that we must respect “the priority of the political interpretation of literary texts [and] the political perspective not as some supplementary method, not as an optional auxiliary to other interpretive methods current today … but rather as the absolute horizon of all reading and all interpretation.”\textsuperscript{5} It doesn’t necessarily follow, however, that the drama can be reduced to the monolithic organ of Jacobean court ideology described by Leonard Tennenhouse\textsuperscript{6} or to Stephen Greenblatt's radically contained “voice of subversion” that is actually “produced by the affirmations of order,” nor that every aesthetic text addresses itself to the ideological in explicit, overt ways.\textsuperscript{7} We must attend as well to the more fundamental epistemological grounds or ideological \textit{structures} interrogated by these texts.

Language is the most obvious such structure. Reiss, for instance, carefully elaborates the complex ways in which discursive practices in the sixteenth century generally inscribe themselves within the consciousness of their particular practitioners. He comments nevertheless that at this historical moment the culture “teetered in the gap between an old discourse of analogies and a new one of analysis. But no longer were these presented as contradictory elements within a single class of discourse, or even as a class and a ‘subclass’ of emergent elements …\textit{a choice was possible}” (168).\textsuperscript{8} In the moment between the rising discourse's emergence from occlusion and its subsequent domination and suppression of the older orthodoxy, contradictions were briefly visible within the culture which both stimulated and authorized dissension. From this perspective Dollimore is correct to speak of “the period's developing awareness of ideology” (11).

Reiss argues that the distinction between an older analogical discourse of “patterning” and the modern “analyticco-referential” discourse is to be found in “a passage from what one might call a discursive \textit{exchange within} the world to the expression of knowledge as a reasoning \textit{practice upon} the world” (30).\textsuperscript{9} This suggests that absolutist culture itself, which deploys older, residual cultural elements in quite self-conscious ways, might more fruitfully be considered a preliminary manifestation of the newer discourse rather than the residual defender and champion of “custom and antiquity.” As Stephen Orgel puts it, courtly mythology “was a mythology consciously designed to validate and legitimate an authority that must have seemed, to what was left of the old aristocracy, dangerously \textit{arriviste}.”\textsuperscript{10}

From another perspective, Dollimore's insistence that Shakespeare's work be related to the skepticism of such figures as Machiavelli and Montaigne is especially promising because it emphasizes Shakespeare's self-conscious alienation from the absolutist discourse of the court; in raising the possibility that subversive tendencies of the Shakespearean drama might only be incompletely contained, he restores to the text a radical political openness. In particular, Dollimore cites the possibility of “the appropriation of dominant discourses” (27) by dissident elements within the culture, and his theoretical framework can clearly be applied not only to particular performances and texts but to forms of thought and expression as well.\textsuperscript{11} I would argue that at least the later Shakespearean romances provide a perfect example: the appropriation of a genre closely associated with the older metaphysical discourse in order to interrogate and recast that discourse. As in his earlier experiments with both comic and tragic form, Shakespeare's self-conscious and artificial use of romance produces a disengagement within his audience that works toward the demystification of authority through the deconstruction of the transcendent conceptions of metaphysics and rationality that privilege and sustain it. Indeed, the relevance of romance itself could be conceived of as a structural subversion of the dominant discourse, bringing to fruition in Paulina's and Prospero's art the ironic challenge discernible as early as \textit{A Midsummer Night's Dream} to all that “cool reason comprehends.”

At the same time, however, because Shakespearean drama enacts a materialist critique of metaphysics, it is equally antagonistic to the emergent analyticco-referential discourse. While Franco Moretti has persuasively argued that Shakespearean tragedy actively participates in the historic deconsecration of the absolutist monarch that eventuates in the execution of Charles I in 1649, the subversive implications of these works reach well beyond the status of the monarchy in itself. Moretti suggests that Renaissance tragedy defines the
absolute monarch precisely in terms of an absolute disjunction between reason and will, will expressed in the
power to act free of all rational restraint (11-12), thus effectually demystifying the monarch's metaphysical
authority. But Shakespearean drama is preoccupied quite generally with that power of the human will
subversive of all discursive reason, the power of the body of desire that is anterior to all rational purposing,
and Shakespeare's critique of essentialist rationalism cannot but be equally subversive of an emergent culture
whose fundamental empowering assumption remains, if reconstituted, human rationality.\textsuperscript{12} The appropriation
throughout the corpus of a dominant terminology of imagination, dream, and fantasy that inverts the
normative schemes of psychic hierarchy works insistently to bring into question the grounds of the emergent
discourse.\textsuperscript{13}

Not only in \textit{King Lear}, but in \textit{Hamlet, Troilus and Cressida, Macbeth} and \textit{Antony and Cleopatra} as well,
discursive rationality is cast in the role of self-serving and self-deceiving mask. The plays consistently invoke
the medieval image of “right reason,” Aquinas's \textit{ratio superior}, dramatizing its absence as the context for their
staging of the \textit{ratio inferior} or discursive reason, the political policy and calculation that pass for reason in the
emergent discourse of the Renaissance political world.\textsuperscript{14} Thus they insistently demystify not only the motives
but the vocabulary of this political landscape. The widespread current critical habit of reading Shakespeare as
a proleptic deconstructionist could be seen as a recognition of his recurrent staging of this will-ful ideological
world. If, in \textit{The Winter's Tale} for example, the Bohemian pastoral of act 4 draws its energy from a complex
interplay of the audience's attraction to and awareness of the pastoral vision, the earlier acts are equally
involved in eliciting a dual response to the more overtly political activity of Leontes.

From this perspective we might immediately note that the romances evolve within an ideological landscape
where the old regime has already been consigned to a residual position: far from addressing the absolutist
culture of the court as a dominant ideology to be subverted, \textit{The Winter's Tale} works on a theater audience's
evolving, if as yet unarticulated, sense of absolutism's tangential status as it proceeds to other issues. So far
from inscribing the mystifications of royalist idolatry within its presentation, the play actively assumes the
typicality of the royal family and its psychic drama.\textsuperscript{15} Leontes, the heir of Othello and Lear, is in need of no
deconsecration before he can play his role of jealous husband: as Moretti implies in his discussion of “the
birth of (the audience from the structure of) tragedy” (19-20), Renaissance tragedy has already created an
audience sufficiently self-assured in its ability to discriminate and judge that such strategies would be
superfluous. To read Leontes as an example of Moretti's tyrant is exactly to articulate the single most
conventional aspect of the entire play, a founding assumption rather than a vital issue.\textsuperscript{16}

This distance or disengagement of the audience from the character and fate of the stage monarch marks the
degree to which the culture's emergent subjectivity in both its materialist and essentialist manifestations has
already progressed. Whatever the commitment of the court faction around James I to the ideology of
absolutism, whatever their estimate of the hegemony of their position in 1610, the evidence of the drama
suggests that the emergent ideology is already achieving cultural dominance, consigning the absolutist culture
of the court to a residual status thirty years before political events confirm the shift. Indeed, Leontes can be
read much more coherently as a “man” than as a king, as a representation of the new essentialist individual
inscribed as a subject within a new discursive practice. Whatever emotional claims Leontes makes on an
audience stem not from his metaphysical confrontation with fortune or destiny, but quite distinctly from the
character's confrontation with his own self-representation as a subject. The impetus to jealousy is coincident
with the impetus to self-representation, and the need to particularize and denote that self within a rational field
of knowledge is the underlying motivation of the king's dementia. Belsey observes that “the subject of liberal
humanism is required to know … [and this] knowledge is knowledge of things and people” (55). This
observation coincides with the characterization of Leontes (as we shall see) and marks the play's participation
in the emergent discourse.

Criticism of the play has traditionally been vexed by a divergence in Leontes's characterization between the
emblematic and the realistic, most usually associated with a tension in the play between the demands of an
archaic genre and a realistic psychology. But if we conceive of the unrealistic aspects of Leontes's characterization—the abrupt onset and, later, rejection, of jealousy, the absoluteness of his positions, his blindness to the coherence of opposing arguments—as conventional romance elements that serve the playwright's purposes, effecting the disengagement of a more sophisticated audience, we are left with a characterization that seems to a modern sensibility psychologically acute exactly because it embodies the modern essentialist conception of an autonomous, independent consciousness. In particular, the characterization of Leontes is carefully grounded in habits of self-contained self-representation, a positivist appropriation of unproblematic and external “nature,” and most centrally in the valorizing of discursive rationality itself.

If the representation of the self is to be fixed or centered in the new ideology, independent of the medieval order of the world inscribed within a divine logos, external reality must be hypostatized within the domain of consciousness, and this is accomplished by the promulgation of a nature fixed and essential beyond the vagaries of mutability and metamorphosis. Leontes, like the new man, assumes the coincidence of the logical field of discourse and the natural order of the world. Speaking now of his self-perception rather than the dramatic reality, his characteristic mode of address to the world in the opening acts is both “realistic” and rational: he is realistic in his disposition to judge of events within the framework of a preconceived conception of nature and the natural in human nature, and he is rational in the course of deductions which issue from this realism. The evaluation of his position proceeds in the context of a worldly common sense (“there have been … cuckolds ere now, and many a man there is …” [1.2.190-91]), and his most characteristic rhetorical formula is the logical dichotomy: “I have trusted thee, Camillo, … but” either “thou art not honest; or, if thou inclin’st that way, thou art a coward …” (1.2.235-43).

Leontes's preoccupation with rationality is a particular effect of the character's place in a discourse of essentialist individualism: reason becomes a crucial concept within the play because it represents an authorizing ground for the individualism that Leontes pursues, fixing the play of significance within language and culture in order to stabilize the position of unified subject. In the romances more generally reason is revealed as a key ideological concept in the occlusion or suppression of those elements of cognition and self-knowledge resistant to the articulation of the essentialist subject. On the one hand the property of individuals, the locus of self-consciousness and a prime source of the stability and authority of the individual, on the other it serves to demonize and peripheralize other elements in the individual's consciousness such as fantasy and desire that would blur or undermine the sense of coherence. As a species of Galilean lens it distances the individual consciousness from the world of observable phenomena, thus resisting the metamorphic play of language that would work to draw the self into the world.

Leontes's madness—his surrender to the delusions of his sexual jealousy—is best understood in the context of this rationalist ideology. Because the basis of the rationalist project is a thoroughgoing hypostatization of primal reality, a transformation of mutable nature into conceptual field, change or flux is itself not merely inaccessible to reason, but fundamentally antipathetic to it. The power of Polixenes's edenic recollection in act 1, scene 2 grows not only from its asexuality, but from its evocation of unending constancy:

Two lads that thought there was no more behind
But such a day to-morrow as to-day,
And to be boy eternal.

(1.2.63-65)

At the first onset of doubt Leontes contains the possibility of inconstancy by reconceiving inconstancy itself as the unchanging rule of reality: “all's true that is mistrusted” (2.1.48) follows immediately upon his curse “Alack, for lesser knowledge!” Since mutability can only be accepted by fixing it through conceptualization, Leontes is driven to reinvent his world: “Physic for’t there’s none. / It is a bawdy planet, that will strike /
Where 'tis predominant” (1.2.200-202). Rejecting all belief at the first qualm of doubt (and here we recall that the new discourse elaborates itself from within the vacuum of a crisis in belief), Leontes recreates his world on a parodic ideal of “nothing.” His fundamental question to Camillo, “Is this nothing?” (1.2.284), echoes Lear's materialist confusion over the slippery complexity of the negation; as with Cordelia's love, so is this affair “no-thing.” But whereas Lear's question is carefully inscribed within a medieval metaphysic implicitly delimiting Lear's materiality by emphasizing the reality of that no-thing, The Winter's Tale works quite otherwise. From Leontes's perspective as centered subject this no-thing of the phenomenal world becomes real in the moment of conception. Of course, this recreative invocation is carefully juxtaposed to the external reality that contradicts it, thus foregrounding cognitive representation as the central issue of the play:

Why then the world and all that’s in’t is nothing,  
The covering sky is nothing, Bohemia nothing,  
My wife is nothing, nor nothing have these nothings,  
If this be nothing.  

(1.2.292-96)

The paradox of a rational identity based on “nothing” is, of course, richly ironic, and provides the tensive power of the first three acts: while Leontes's mistake is self-evident to others, within the conceptual frame of his own world his conception remains absolute:

Swear his thought over

By each particular star in heaven, and  
By all their influences, you may as well  
Forbid the sea for to obey the moon  
As or by oath remove or counsel shake  
The fabric of his folly, whose foundation  
Is pil’d upon his faith, and will continue  
The standing of his body.  

(1.2.424-31)

Nevertheless, the omnipresence of mutability makes any mastery of it ephemeral; so fearful of metamorphic reality, Leontes is pursued, like an Actaeon, by metaphor itself—the vital, aggressive insistence of his own supposedly rational language to metamorphose even as he speaks it.

Come, captain,  
We must be neat; not neat, but cleanly, captain:  
And yet the steer, the heckfer, and the calf are all call’d neat  
—How now, you wanton calf,  
Art thou my calf?  
Thou want’st a rough pash and the shoots that I have,  
To be full like me.  

(1.2.122-29)

Thus Leontes's subjectivity (in all its senses) is the fulcrum on which the drama decenters the emergent ideology of the subject: having deconstructed the metaphysical ground of its rationality, the dramatic action leaves exposed the occluded ground of affection that motivates such rationalizing, and Leontes becomes the effect of desire and fantasy:

Affection! thy intention stabs the centre.
Thou dost make possible things not so held,
Communicat'st with dreams (how can this be?),
With what’s unreal thou co-active art,
And fellow'st nothing. Then 'tis very credent
Thou mayst co-join with something, and thou dost
(And that beyond commission), and I find it
(And that to the infection of my brains
And hard'ning of my brows).

(1.2.138-46)

The celebrated difficulty of this passage is entirely appropriate, for the pseudological character of the soliloquy starkly reveals to the audience Leontes's self-representation, his own impulse to rational subjectivity. If we apply Thomas Cartelli’s conception of subversive self-presentation in the Shakespearean set speech, “the foregrounding of orthodox ideological content in dramatic contexts that reveal the speakers’ self-investment in the positions they advance and undermine the validity of their pronouncements,” we have a very precise articulation of the effect of the audience alienation of which I have been speaking. Here it is the formal discursive properties of the speech rather than its content which is foregrounded, of course, for it appears in the midst of Leontes’s passion, but the speech patently reveals the way in which reason panders will. And, as Cartelli concludes about Ulysses and Troilus and Cressida, the effect of the alienation is to further “a habit of subversion that serves to demystify each of the drama's competing ideologies … which are revealed, in the end, to be equally imaginary, equally self-referential” (14).

At the same time, if taken ironically, that is, with Leontes's own rather than Hermione's presumed affection in mind, the passage brilliantly reveals both the state of Leontes's mind and the ideological implications of such a misordered representation of reality. His opening line invokes, via the cosmological metaphor of “the centre,” an ordered macrocosmic frame by which to judge the lack of such a dimension in Leontes's own psyche. Hearing in “centre” the premonition of the centered subjectivity we associate with modern discourse only emphasizes the illusory nature of such a self-conception. “Intention”—meaning both “tendency” and “intensity”—simultaneously reminds us of the fancy's roots in passion, and the extremity of Leontes’s case. Thus the line's overall impact is to reveal, even as Leontes turns his mind to analyzing his wife and friend, his impending self-destruction. The revelation that “thou [affection] dost make possible things not so held,” following as it does upon the destruction of his present world, inaugurates a new one, manifestly built upon Leontes's own affection. Ostensibly imputing lust to Hermione's dreams, “unreal,” and “nothing,” and thence to the “something” of Polixenes's person, Leontes of course now more clearly reveals the role of his own affection in the generation of a very world of nothing, an anti-world of unreality not merely detached from, but actively antithetical to, any more generative representation. The faulty logic is so dramatically manifest that, at the critical point where he reasons from “thou may’st” to “thou dost,” the move is marked by the utterly alogical connective “and.”

Thus, if the first three acts function especially to reveal Leontes's complete conquest by his own affection, the particular thrust of this conquest's representation is its ground in an essentialist discourse. And the thematic import of the instance will be emphasized by its doubling later in the play, when Polixenes, originally a victim himself of Leontes's self-delusion, repeats Leontes's experience. Polixenes reveals his rationality in a sound, if slightly trite, argument, only to be overcome by passion at the prospect of applying his logical dicta to his own affairs, in the person of his son. The parallel to Leontes is made explicit: Camillo first validates the lovers' natural inclination with his comment to Florizel that “this shows a sound affection” (4.4.380), and then casts the split between father and son in terms of reason. Polixenes's reason is as partial as was Leontes's:

Reason my son
Should choose himself a wife, but as good reason
The father (all whose joy is nothing else
But fair posterity) should hold some counsel
In such a business.

(4.4.406-10)

And Florizel emphasizes this by reminding us how partial Polixenes's reasons are:

But for some other reasons, my grave sir,
Which 'tis not fit you know, I not acquaint
My father of this business.

(410-13)

Such self-delusion is no different from Claudius's, from Lear's, from Macbeth's. The romances are tragicomedies, distinguished from the earlier comic world because we see in them not simply the heart's desire of the green world, but the emergent discourse's rational perversion of that desire by what Friar Lawrence termed “rude will” (Romeo and Juliet, 2.3.28).

But if our response to the tragic drama of Sicily is founded on the progressive deconstruction of an essentialist discourse, with the move to Bohemia and the advent of the chorus we clearly enter into the experience of a different discourse; indeed, the dramatic shift (in particular both its pastoral tone and spaciousness) is created largely by means of this distinct discourse. But while this second mode has many of the attributes of a residual orthodoxy, it deploys these elements in a highly self-conscious counterpoint to the analytical discourse of Sicily, producing a coherent critique of that discourse rather than merely constructing an alternative model for its own sake.

The antithetical modes of The Winter's Tale, if not this reading of their significance, have of course been not just a commonplace, but the basis of the humanist critical tradition's approach to the play, for which the orthodoxy of its metaphysical elements has represented its ultimate meaning. This critical tradition would have no reservations about reading the play in terms of Reiss's description of the residual discourse of patterning, in which “patterns … suggest an essence that escapes its enunciator as a whole must its parts … the greater the accumulation of such meanings, the nearer the approach to a wisdom conceived as knowing participation in a totality” (32).

Thus medieval discourse has an analogical-mythic structure foreign to analytico-referential discourse. The liberal tradition seizes upon just this mythical aspect of the older discourse in order to mark its alterity, its otherness, thus containing any challenge to its own hegemony. On the one hand, Francis Barker is correct in his judgment that a primary ideological function of modern literary criticism has been to maintain “the sign of the literary greatness of Shakespeare [which] has played a major part in remaking the late feudal world in the image of the bourgeois settlement that grew up inside it.”22 But an equally prominent strategy of containment has been to colonize the older discourse, identifying it as related but inferior, the primitive or imperfect forerunner of modern discourse, thus simultaneously drawing on its “religious” (that is, metaphorical or mythic) qualities to validate essentialist ideology even as it is denied the status of analytico-referential knowledge. This is possible because, as Dollimore makes clear, both discourses share an essentialist outlook on the human condition, each occluding the material conditions of human existence and centering “man” in its own way. If in its first stance humanist criticism has modernized and recuperated Shakespeare, most obviously by representing his characters as centered subjects, a complementary approach has been to impose on the text a “conservative Shakespeare,” archaized, mythic, and metaphysical in outline.

Any clear recognition of the ideological boundary represented by the historical rise of modern discourse immediately foregrounds the inconsistency of these two strategies, thus tending to reveal their ideological premises; the Shakespearean text itself provides the best ground on which to trace these ideological
inconsistencies. If in *The Winter's Tale* we have addressed the question of a centered subject in discussing Leontes, it remains to juxtapose to it the mythic Shakespeare, the romance Shakespeare, the conservative Shakespeare. This strategy of colonization has worked so well because the play is indeed demonstrably constructed from elements of the residual analogical discourse.

The play's most immediate appropriation of the older discourse is the evocation in a variety of ways of totality—a metaphysical universe. A Christian terminology of belief, redemption, and providence is prominent, most obviously in the final scene, where the requirement that “you do awake your faith” (5.3.95) is a precondition to the miracle of the final revelation or resurrection of Hermione. The Bohemian pastoral draws heavily upon both Greek mythology and English folk custom, with the two married in the figure of Autolycus. Humanist critics find in Paulina a Prospero-like figure of the Renaissance mage, and all these elements are drawn into a powerful seasonal rhythm shepherded by Time himself as chorus, and presided over by “great creating Nature” (4.4.88) as the centered and authorizing deistic presence. If eclectic and patched, this bricolage has nevertheless been comfortably inscribed for three hundred years within, first, the mediation of the genre of Shakespearean romance itself, and ultimately the essentialist idealism (if not the literal orthodoxy) of traditional theocratic culture.

Nowhere has the covert ideological agenda of Shakespearean criticism, however, been more at odds with its text than in this struggle to totalize such heterogeneous materials within *The Winter's Tale*. On the other hand, relocating the play within the epistemic rupture (to use Foucault's term) of two discourses helps to unveil this agenda by foregrounding rather than suppressing the play's heterogeneity, which is now revealed as the sign of an ordering of discourse alien to the older tradition, the sign of an authorial stance self-consciously manipulative of it. The development of metacritical theory in the past twenty years has conclusively documented that texts like *The Winter's Tale* are explicitly self-reflective, consciously engaged in exploring the form-imposing and thus world-constructing nature of all human cognition; if materialist critics have rightly objected that such metacriticism remains uncritically inscribed within the ideology of the liberal humanist subject, it is nonetheless true that such a theory of self-conscious metaphoricity has important ideological implications. For in appropriating and inverting the culture's peripheralized discourse of imagination, the text articulates an individual imaginatively and not rationally constituted; a discourse grounded in desire rather than thought; the opacity and density of a language that re-presents rather than the clarity of a language assumed to represent; and thus the decenteredness of the individual. Such a dramatic project corresponds exactly to the skepticism of the historical moment of Renaissance disorder when custom fails, revealing its constructedness and thus the contingency of cultural truth.

This play that is also a tale draws our attention throughout to the contingency and artifice of all human action. The romance genre makes natural the references to oracles, defenses, dreams, reports, ballads, old tales, statues, and plays, but can’t in itself explain the careful development Shakespeare gives to their appearances. Over against Mamillius's tale in the second act that, presumably, gives the play its name—the naivete of which does not preclude its immediately coming to life when Leontes enters following the opening words, “There was a man … dwelt by a churchyard” (2.1.29-30)—we find a careful orchestration of myriad forms of human narration, the stories in all their forms that cultures tell about themselves and their world. Antigonus ponders the truth of dream, Autolycus manipulates the truth of report, the clowns question Autolycus concerning the truth of ballads, gentlemen question the truth of news, and Leontes himself, that of the Oracle—the list seems endless.

Of course, from the perspective of analytic-referentiality this multiplication of narratives can be conceived of as merely a generic vice, typical of all romance in its pandering to popular culture, although in *The Winter's Tale* the play at least is credited with refusing to take itself too seriously, and shows a playful self-deprecation, especially in its last scenes:
Ballad makers cannot be able to express … such a deal of wonder. … This news … is so like an old tale, that the verity of it is in strong suspicion. … I never heard of such another encounter, which lames report to follow it. … Like an old tale still, which will have matter to rehearse, though credit be asleep.

(5.2.23-62)

But such a reading must carefully suppress the way in which narrative structure rounds on the rational perspective that would try to reduce it to benign similitude: “That she is living, / Were it but told you, should be hooted at / Like an old tale; but it appears she lives” (5.3.115-17). Within the rising incidence of encapsulated narratives, the instances that stand out are self-conscious. In opposition to the parodic world-destroying narratives of Leontes, Camillo and Paulina both submit themselves to the power of language and imagination, and from this submission gain the power to manipulate and direct this human habit of shaping towards satisfactory ends. The aggressively fictive narrations play against “a [modern] relation of narration … assuming some commented exterior whose existence as a knowable reality is taken as prior to that of discourse (the discourse of analysis and reference, of historicism, of experimentalism)” (Reiss, 29-30). Language itself, in its re-presentative function, insists on the resolution of the multiple actions that are revealed to be multiple narrations. What else is represented by the self-conscious manipulation of “antic fable” (A Midsummer Night's Dream, 5.1.3) that is Shakespearean romance than the reinscription of subjective analysis and reference within a culturally generated mythic realm of which it is, in reality, only an effect? Within the fiction that is the Tale, all narration is represented as “an ordering of the mind by the world” (Reiss, 30) rather than the reverse.

What are we to make, finally, of the last scene, one of the most compelling in drama? Certainly anomalous, it relies heavily on a participative engagement within the audience that dramatically contrasts with the disengagement or alienation that most of the play has sought to maintain. Although modern discourse will readily place the scene's wonder within an analysis of the conservative Shakespeare—the author is said to use spectacle to confirm the orthodox effects of the play—this is clearly inadequate, for realistic elements of explanation are carefully deployed simultaneously to complicate and even undercut the engagement already mentioned, provoking a conscious awareness of wonder in the audience even as it experiences this wonder. It would be an oversimplification to say that the playwright has language confront spectacle here. For instance, the conversation of the previous scene, in relating events offstage, clearly contributes to the “wondrous” engagement of the audience in several ways, while the spectacle of Hermione “like a statue” (5.3.20, s.d.) is initially subordinated to a discussion of the representational realism of the art of “Julio Romano” (5.2.97). Nevertheless, insofar as the spectacular is indigenous to a discourse of patterning that exists “within the world,” and conversely foreign to a discourse of analysis and reference situating itself beyond the world, the scene firmly participates in the critical project that informs The Winter's Tale from the first; while the vital engagement of the audience, almost against its will, strikingly dramatizes the poverty and shrunkenness of the emergent discourse of modernism, the simultaneous demystification of such spectacle precludes any simple identification with a discourse as irretrievably decayed as the world of Hamlet's father's “antiquity forgot” (4.5.105). In other words, the metacritical effects of the scene insist on the cultural production of meaning, denying alike the older discourse's mystification of custom and the emergent discourse's reductive knowledge.

Thus the play confirms its relative emancipation from the constraints of a dominant ideology even as it also diverges from an emergent one. The complexity of Shakespearean drama, then, testifies in a vital way to the seminal significance of the Renaissance as a scene of epistemic rupture which reveals the omnipresence of ideology via particularly acute disjunctions in it. Situated in a moment when the analogic universe of medieval discourse is already in decline, and the emergent discourse of analysis and referentiality has clearly, if incompletely, begun to emerge, Shakespearean drama reveals these epochal shifts in the dynamic tensions and energies of its own conflicting modes of representation. Far from being hegemonic, English Renaissance culture is only dominated to a relative degree by the Elizabethan-Jacobean court, and the play of signification,
as the play of power, is far more open than some New Historical criticism would suggest.

The important work of New Historical criticism in elaborating the complex relationships of literature to culture is far from complete, but to realize its radical potential it must evaluate its founding assumptions more carefully, and in particular its fascination with totalizing, hypostatized forms of the concept of hegemony. If it testifies to the hegemony of culture itself as the absolute horizon of all literary production, that is quite different from supposing culture ever to be coincident with any one historically determined structure within it. We need to return our attention to the historical contingency of all such dominations, the relativity of hegemony itself, and the unending play of power across the fissures and multiplicities that constitute the reality beyond any concept of culture.

Notes

1. Anthony Easthope, in *Poetry as Discourse* (New York: Methuen, 1983), discusses the ideological impetus of the instauration of iambic pentameter as the regulative norm of Tudor culture, implicitly raising the issue of the ways in which that culture already manifests elements of the emergent discourse; the texts featured by both Catherine Belsey in *The Subject of Tragedy* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1984) firmly root the discursive developments they address in Elizabethan culture. Timothy Reiss’s *The Discourse of Modernism* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1982) is the single most thoroughly researched and carefully articulated investigation now available of Foucault’s concept of “epistemic rupture” as it applies to the Renaissance; his project is an examination of aspects of the emergence and development, of the consolidation and growth to dominance, of modern Western discourse. … The book sets up a model to describe how one dominant discourse gives way to another. In particular, it shows the creation and development of the various elements fundamental to analytico-referential discourse, and it demonstrates at the same time the necessary occultation of other elements whose visible presence in discourse would subvert its overt aims. (9)

Reiss's elaboration of the development, over a period of almost two centuries, of a series of elements that eventuate in modern “analytico-referential discourse” greatly complicates any attempt to totalize the Tudor-Stuart political regime.

2. Dollimore (note 1) develops his concept of residual, emergent, and dominant cultural elements from Raymond Williams's discussion in *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1977), 121-27. Reiss's vocabulary of the “elements” of discourse corresponds exactly to Williams's perception, and his discussion of “emergent” elements is thus generally compatible with Williams's thinking.


6. Leonard Tennenhouse, *Power on Display: The Politics of Shakespeare's Genres* (New York: Methuen, 1986). Tennenhouse, in his introduction, first makes the astute comment that “political conflict does not exist somewhere outside of these texts, for it concerns itself with the struggle among competing ways of representing power,” but then immediately goes on to expel such “struggle” from the drama: “Mine is, in other words, an account of a hegemonic process. … The strategies of theater resembled those of the scaffold, as well as court performance … in observing a common logic of figuration that both sustained and testified to the monarch's power” (15). The sudden move of this line of thought from the multiplicity of “competing ways of representing power” to a “hegemonic process” is difficult to accept, as is the assumption that a single mode of figuration can comprehend the cultural practice of the time.

7. Stephen Greenblatt, “Invisible Bullets: Renaissance Authority and Its Subversion, *Henry IV* and *Henry V*,” in *Political Shakespeare*, ed. Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1985), 18-47. Greenblatt's brilliant argument for the ideological containment of subversion seems to recognize the possibility that the absolutist state is modern rather than medieval: in regards to the *Henriad* he comments that “the founding of the modern state … is shown to be based upon acts of calculation, intimidation, and deceit” (39). However, his totalizing tendency in arguing for the hegemony of the dominant discourse becomes clear in a statement such as “all kings are ‘decked’ out by the imaginary forces of the spectators, and a sense of the limitations of king or theatre only excites a more compelling exercise of those forces” (44).

Clark Hulse, in “Spenser, Bacon, and the Myth of Power,” *The Historical Renaissance*, ed. Heather Dubrow and Richard Strier (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1988), adapting a Bakhtinian model of “heteroglossia” to his discussion of the English Renaissance court, terms this adaptation only a “partial solution” exactly because it

tends toward a paradox dominated by the polar terms of authority and subversion, echoing perhaps a simplistic myth of modern politics and creating a duality that is almost as flattering to the central authority as an acknowledgment of total sway. … One must look beyond heterodox language to heterodox power. … One must move, that is, to a view of the power structure that gets behind the totalizing picture of the political myth to the network of local forces operating in any particular situation.

(317)


Shakespeare occupied a unique proto-professional position of economic
semi-independence between patronage and the market, while still under severe
ideological compulsion … caught in an ideological space between modified
absolutism and insurgent Puritanism. This position of relative economic
independence combined with relative ideological constraint was itself the effect of a
transitional alignment of classes.

(149-50)

From his Marxist position Kavanagh is reluctant to grant the corollary that ideological consciousness
might be a byproduct of this situation, but his own analysis implies at several points an authorial
consciousness about the political alternatives inherent in such a position.

9. The discourse of “patterning” is based on Michel Foucault’s “episteme of resemblance”:

Resemblance … largely guided exegesis and the interpretation of texts; it was
resemblance that organized the play of symbols, made possible knowledge of things
visible and invisible, and controlled the art of representing them. The universe was
folded in upon itself: the earth echoing the sky, faces seeing themselves reflected in
the stars, and plants holding within their stems the secrets that were of use to man.

(The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences, trans. A. M. Sheridan-Smith [New
York: Random House, 1970], 17)

Reiss (note 1) prefers “discursive classes” to “episteme” because he sees that although “one class is
dominant, there may well be others that are contemporaneous with it,” though these others may
consist in “activities … that escape analysis by the dominant model, that do not acquire
‘meaningfulness’ in its terms” (11). In effect, Reiss (as will Foucault himself in The History of
Sexuality) detotalizes the earlier Foucauldian concept in order to address the multifarious forces at
play within discourse.

11. Orgel (note 10) posits a distinctly similar understanding of the relation between the two sites of
figuration:

The relationships I have been describing [between court and theater performance]
sound fairly cosy; but in fact they are distinctly uneasy and involve a good deal of
tension. Theatrical pageantry, the miming of greatness, is highly charged because it
employs precisely the same methods the crown was using to assert and validate its
authority. To mime the monarch was a potentially revolutionary act—as both Essex
and Elizabeth were well aware.

(45)

12. Dollimore's use of the term “essentialist” clarifies the idealist continuities in the transition from a
medieval theocratic to a modern liberal-humanist discourse. From the perspective of a materialist
criticism, Dollimore finds modern discourse, that is the humanist and liberal discourse of the
individual subject that has defined Western culture since the Renaissance, to be as idealist in its
authorizing assumptions as was medieval analogical discourse. If the older is essentialist in Christian
terms, conceiving of a human soul defined by its relation to God, the seventeenth century turn towards
a conception of the individual as “self-determining, free, and rational by nature” is founded upon “the
idea that ‘man’ possesses some given, unalterable essence which is what makes ‘him’ human, which
is the source and essential determinant of ‘his’ culture and its priority over [the material] conditions of
existence” (250). In other words, in the face of an emergent Renaissance materialist subjectivity,
modern discourse comes to dominance in part by reestablishing an essentialist metaphysic now
suitably reinscribed within the subject himself. See Dollimore (note 1), especially 155-69 and chap.
16.


15. Certainly New Historical criticism is correct in focusing on the political dimension of the Shakespearean family. But the implications of the comment by Orgel quoted in note 11 are important here: if the metaphoric association of the crown with the head of the household is a prominent absolutist strategy, the significatory force of the association is always open to appropriation, and within the theater the crown must be domesticated even as it lends majesty to the patriarch.

16. In using *Gorboduc* to establish the paradigm, Moretti (note 7) comments that

> precisely what makes Gorboduc a sovereign—universality and self-determination—also proclaim him … a tyrant. The key to the metamorphosis comes early in the play, when Gorboduc expresses his intention of abdicating to his counsellors. Though the latter attempt to dissuade him with various “rational” arguments … Gorboduc never bothers in the least to confute them. He is king not because he can reason and persuade, but simply by virtue of the fact that he *decides.*

(10)

The comment applies exactly to the most conventional elements of the representation of Leontes in the opening acts.

17. Reiss comments that

> during the period of which I will be speaking, a discursive order is achieved on the premise that the “syntactic” order of semiotic systems (particularly language) is coincident both with the logical ordering of “reason” and with the structural organization of a world given as exterior to both these orders. This relation is not taken to be simply one of analogy, but one of identity.

(31)


20. So too we might apply Cartelli's comment that the set speech is often “an extremely stylized mode of expression that tends to direct itself to subjects that presumably mean as much to its auditors as to its speaker” (3), where here we see that the subject in question is discursive rationality itself, and thus the “mode of expression” is coincident with the discursive “subject.”

21. I assume here the legitimacy of both major interpretive traditions concerning the passage, which emphasize a reading of “affection” in relation either to Hermione's supposed lust, or Leontes's own psychic involvement with that supposition. The importance of the speech, of course, resides precisely in its linguistic indeterminacy, and our consequent awareness of both references. See the discussion by J. H. P. Pafford in the Arden edition of *The Winter's Tale* (London: Methuen, 1963), 165-67.


24. Thus Dollimore: “When epistemological and ethical truth was recognised to be relative to custom and social practice, then ideological considerations were inevitably foregrounded. Machiavelli, Montaigne and Hobbes all testify unambiguously to such recognition” (11).

**Criticism: Sources, Influences, And Ideologies: Robert Henke (essay date 1993)**


*In the essay below, Henke examines the relationship between Battista Guarini's tragicomic theory and Shakespeare's drama, particularly focusing on The Winter's Tale.*

Genre concepts significantly affect our understanding of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*. The play not only repeatedly calls attention to itself as fiction, but its tripartite tragical-pastoral-comical arrangement focuses our attention on three important dramatic genres of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries and the dialogic relationships between them. In *Pericles*, Shakespeare emphasizes the romance source by dramatizing John Gower and narrative itself, the radical of presentation most congenial to romance. “Romance” also aptly describes the story of *The Winter's Tale*: a more schematic, typological presentation of character than obtains in the tragedies, the (apparent) suspension of the laws of cause and effect, marvelous recognitions over large expanses of space and time, and an overall trajectory from woe to weal. But Shakespeare takes the romance material available to him in Robert Greene's *Pandosto* and separates it into the three dramatic genres that constituted an important new Renaissance form, the avant-garde Italian pastoral tragicomedy. The non-dramatic term ‘romance,’ used first in the late nineteenth-century by Edward Dowden in what we would now call a modal sense to convey the serene, beneficent attitude of the last plays,\(^1\) neither gets to the quick of *The Winter's Tale* as experienced by the theater audience nor speaks to our increasing sense of the conflicts between comic and tragic and pastoral visions in the play. ‘Tragicomedy,’ understood in the historical context of late Cinquecento dramatic theory and practice, better explains the dramaturgy (involving the transposition from romance story to staged play) and audience experience (mediated by genre concepts) of *The Winter's Tale*.

At the time of the composition of *The Winter's Tale*, few other Renaissance kinds had received so much recent theoretical and practical attention as had the controversial genre of Italian tragicomedy. In an acrimonious quarrel that eventually produced five documents between them, Battista Guarini defended and Giason Denores challenged the feasibility of tragicomic and pastoral drama.\(^2\) Taken together, Guarini’s responses to Denores reveal one of the most detailed and sophisticated dramaturgies in Renaissance drama, one acutely conscious of the ways in which genre signals mediate between playwright and audience by organizing various systems of signification, creating horizons of expectations, and eliciting various rhetorical effects in the audience. In the course of the entire quarrel, Guarini considers the technology of dramatic composition; the style, tone, set, action, and characters of his mixed genre; and its rhetorical performances. Although Guarini says that pastoral is incidental, not essential to tragicomedy, his account of the many ways in which pastoral
may function as a bridge between tragedy and comedy is richly suggestive for *The Winter's Tale* as well as for *Cymbeline* and *The Tempest*. The middle style of pastoral, its flexible emotional register, the capacity of the pastoral set to range from the pleasance of the meadow to the harshness of the *selva* (forest) or mountains, its typical actions, and the indeterminacy of social status in bucolic literature, all make it possible for pastoral to function both as a “theater” of genre experimentation and as a means of transforming tragedy into comedy. The tensions and potential harmonies between tragedy, comedy, and pastoral become the material of tragicomedy, which stages debate and interaction between its constituent kinds.

Interest in the latest theatrical theories and experiments was far from beneath Shakespeare. Although Shakespeare's direct knowledge of the drama of Tasso and Guarini can be demonstrated (and, through Marston and Fletcher, his indirect awareness of theories of tragicomedy), the most convincing evidence of international cross-fertilization can be mustered from a comparative examination of the Italian and Shakespearean plays themselves, which demonstrates the persistent appearance of common theatrical structures: character typology, *topoi*, actions, and genre systems. In particular, *Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale,* and *The Tempest* share with the late Cinquecento Italian hybrids a high degree of generic self-consciousness and a similar genre system constituted by tragedy, comedy, and pastoral. Although Shakespeare's direct knowledge of tragicomic theory was probably scanty, the Italian dramaturgical theory is so closely tied to actual theatrical practice that it should illuminate the “unwritten poetics” operative in Shakespeare's work, a work that shares with the late Cinquecento Italian drama similar generic alignments and some of the same dramaturgical strategies.

The contexts in which the Italian and Shakespearean plays were performed reveal other important analogies. Although the differences between the situations of Guarini's amateur courtly theater and Shakespeare's professional, largely popular theater are more striking than the similarities, the new sophisticated audience of the Blackfriars theater, which most critics agree exerted some influence on the last plays of Shakespeare, resembles the kinds of learned audiences out of which the generically self-conscious form of Italian tragicomedy emerged: it is an audience of high “dramatic competence” that would have recognized, more quickly than the Globe theatergoers, the codes of genre variously manipulated in the last plays. To a greater degree than the outdoor Globe, the intimate, candlelit Blackfriars theater would have accommodated the fine nuancing of style and emotion upon which, as we shall see, Guarinian tragicomedy is based. Furthermore, the courtly Guarini's attempt to appropriate but severely control the bawdy popular theatrical energies of the newly emerging professional theater can be contrasted with the professional actor-playwright-shareholder Shakespeare's more fluid blending of learned and popular strains in plays performed at the Globe, the Blackfriars, and the court. Denores justifiably associates Guarini's generic experiments with those of the emerging *commedia dell’arte,* a theater from which Guarini was anxious to distance himself but which shared many of his assumptions about the flexible combinatory nature of genre. A professional actor himself, Shakespeare shared none of Guarini's disdain for the mercenary theater. But the fact that each of the *commedia*-like entertainers of the last plays—Stephano, Trinculo, and especially Autolycus—are chastened and diminished at the end of the play may reflect the changing and uncertain status of popular entertainment in the new environment of the Blackfriars and the Stuart court. In both Guarinian and late Shakespearean tragicomedy, the extremes of tragic horror and comic bawdry are “tempered” (this is Guarini’s term), and the fortunes of the marginal figures are rendered particularly precarious.

Most Anglo-American critics who have examined the relation of Guarini’s tragicomic theory to Shakespeare's drama have limited their reading of Guarini to *Il pastor fido* and an abridged translation of the last of the five documents in the Guarini-Denores quarrel, the *Compendio della poesia tragicomica.* Critics tend even to repeat the same passage in which Guarini enumerates the rules for the composition of tragicomedy. Because it lacks the tension of debate (Denores was dead by the time of its composition), the *Compendio* is in many ways the least interesting of the five documents. We need to consider the four earlier documents—Denores' *Discorso,* Guarini's first *Verato,* Denores' *Apologia,* and Guarini's second *Verato*—in order to understand more about Guarinian tragicomic dramaturgy. With the formulas and rules of the *Compendio,* Guarini parades
his Aristotelian orthodoxy before his neo-classical critics. The arc of the entire debate, however, suggests a more capacious, innovative genre and dramaturgy than has often been associated with Guarini. Via the dramaturgical idea of tragicomedy to be explored in these pages which can generate several kinds of tragicomedies, it is possible (and fruitful) to compare late Cinquecento pastoral tragicomedy with English experiments unlike it externally—experiments that we consider to be rather more dramatically successful.

Both Guarini and Denores are extremely self-conscious of generic codes and of the signifying and performative capacities of genre. Although they may disagree with the meaning or function of a given genre, Guarini and Denores share the assumption that literary genres are not just sets of rules but powerful and effective semiotic systems that produce certain effects upon their readers or audiences. Considering poetry to derive its principles from ethics, Denores claims that his three canonical genres—tragedy, comedy, and epic—are inherently political and concentrates on the didactic effects of poetry. Epic, according to Denores, presents images of virtue and teaches the nature of monarchy; tragedy warns against the dangers of tyranny and is governed by the principles of oligarchy; comedy is regulated by the principles of democracy and is designed to “disponergli alla vita populare” (“prepare [man] for democratic life” [Discorso II, 155-56]). In contesting Denores’ claim that pastoral is of no moral utility for city dwellers, Guarini does appear to make didactic claims for the genre: pastoral can depict the better nature of man, free from the corruption of city or court. Usually, however, Guarini counters Denores’ didacticism with an audience-centered rhetorical notion of genre that stresses the role of the emotions. For Guarini, poetry is a branch not of politics or civil philosophy but of rhetoric and cannot be said to have a primarily didactic function. Tragedy and comedy as well as other kinds of poetry may, however, indirectly adapt their audiences to the habit of virtue by their purgative, emotional capacities. The tragic purgation of fear, for example, does not eradicate fear but adjusts and moderates it. The fear of the “morte dell’anima” (“death of the soul”) produced by tragedy checks an excessive fear of bodily death (I Verato II, 251). The laughter and relaxation of comedy frees its audiences from melancholy and thus disposes them to the duties of public life (I Verato II, 262). The “instrumental,” or formal end of drama is to elicit delight by verisimilar and lively imitation; its “architectonic” or final end is to purge the audience of melancholy (the end of comedy and, according to Guarini, tragicomedy) or to purge the audience of pity and fear (the end of tragedy; I Verato II, 247). The differences, however, between Guarini and Denores may obscure what as a working hypothesis they share: an audience-centered theory of genre by which genres signify, create horizons of expectations, and affect their audiences in didactic or emotional ways.

An individual genre, then, constitutes for these theorists a distinctive semiotic framework (comprehensible by a reasonably competent audience) and performs a discreet rhetorical (be it didactic or emotional) operation. Furthermore, as in a linguistic system, a genre acquires meaning in relation to other genres as part of a genre system. Guarini defends a much more extensive genre system than Denores’ ternary epic-tragedy-comedy both in his account of ancient genres (the dithyramb, argues Guarini, was a distinctive genre [II Verato III, 57-70]) and in the new, modern genres he is willing to allow. If genres were forms by which one organized experience, “moderns” like Guarini believed that new genres like tragicomedy were needed to account for increasingly diverse and complicated experience even as the book revolution produced new texts and explorers discovered new lands. Mixed genres, in particular, constituted the nova reperta of literature according to the principle that “a large, inclusive utterance may require mixture of the kinds.” Now even in the reduced genre system of Denores we can see that genre systems provoke comparisons between genres: epic, tragedy, and comedy, for Denores, generate different political comparisons, based as they are on different forms of government (Discorso II, 155-57). To combine various genres in one work, as Guarini proposes, allows one genre to be viewed from the perspective of another; tragedy, for example, can be gauged from the perspective of pastoral. If genres constituted different interpretive frames on the world, mixed genres enabled “dialogues,” as it were, between genres and the different points of view they represent. Several late Cinquecento and Jacobean plays, in fact, began with actual debates between figures representing “Tragedy” and “Comedy,” and Guarini’s own Il pastor fido begins with what amounts to a debate between tragic Seneca and comic Terence.
The frequently excerpted passages from the *Compendio* appear to fix the genre by rules and definitions, but a reading of the two *Verati* reveals Guarini's openness to a great range of hybrid possibilities worthy of Polonius' notorious list. (Denores, indeed, taunts Guarini with Polonian litanies of dramatic hybrids [*Discorso II, 348-49*].) The amount of "tragicity" or "comicity" in a given play, in Guarini's view, can be adjusted according to an almost infinitely variable spectrum: "nella Tragedia il terrore più e men temperato costituisce i gradi del più, e meno 'Tragico; così il riso, più e meno dissoluto fa la favola più, e men Comica" ("in tragedy, terror that is more and less tempered constitutes degrees of more and less tragic quality; similarly laughter that is more and less dissolute renders the play more and less comic" [*I Verato II, 260-61*]). If the Aristotelian tradition establishes the emotions as a centrally defining feature of genre (pity, fear, etc.), such emotional nuancing as Guarini proposes can hypothetically generate an almost infinite number of genres. Furthermore, Guarini argues that new audiences shape the creation of new genres. Generic flexibility arises out of the need to respond to the changing nature of audiences: "E questa è la vera cagione delle differenze, e dei gradi, che sono nelle favole più, e men Tragiche, perciocchè i poeti vedendo i gusti diversi degli ascoltanti, alcuna volta componevano favole co’l fin lieto per rimettere in parte quella acrimonia" ("And this is the true reason for the differences and the degrees of more tragic and less tragic plays, because the poets, seeing the various tastes of their audiences, sometimes wrote plays with a happy ending in order to make them less harsh" [*I Verato II, 260*]). Now the mutual responsivity of genre and audience characterized, as Denores was quick to point out, the emerging and suspect *commedia dell’arte*; the *comici* were selling theatrical wares to the public, and the public responded to variety and mixture. Throughout the *Discorso* and *Apologia* Denores attempts to condemn Guarini's generic experimentation by associating it with the genre mixtures of the *commedia dell’arte*. Guarini, of course, vehemently rejected such company. As learned *comici* themselves did under attack from post-Tridentine ecclesiastics, Guarini claimed for his art a high degree of authorial control. According to Guarini, the playwright creates new genres like tragi-comedy by combining existing genres in various ways just as the metallurgist produces new compounds, as the painter mixes new colors from his palette, or as the politician or political philosopher creates a republic of mixed constitution such as Venice (II *Verato III*, 158-65). Such assertion of authorial control, however, may register Guarini's anxiety (and Denores' belief) that he has unleashed a Pandora's box of dramatic experimentation.

The most important interaction in Guarinian tragicomedy occurs between pastoral and tragedy. In order to establish a more flexible and interactive genre system, it is crucial for Guarini to demonstrate points of contact between the traditionally low genre of pastoral and the higher genres of tragedy and epic just as Tasso and many other late Cinquecento playwrights had done. For Denores, pastoral is a genre that cannot traffic with tragedy or epic. It is a humble, homogeneous, and circumscribed genre, pure in its portrayal of virtuous shepherds, not subject to the principles of civic and moral philosophy as are his three principal politically based kinds (*Discorso II, 201-02*). Citing many examples of high action and tragic experience in non-dramatic pastoral literature, Guarini argues that shepherds are capable of tragic errors and vulnerable to tragic suffering (*I Verato II, 293*). In its style, emotions, set, actions, and social organization, Guarini's pastoral is much more capacious than the soft pastoral of Denores and is thus comparable to the pastoral of Shakespeare's last plays.

"Happy is your grace," says Amiens to the exiled Duke Senior of *As You Like It*, "That can translate the stubbornness of fortune / Into so quiet and so sweet a style" (*II.i.18-20*). Now the harshly pastoral winter and rough weather described in *As You Like It* elsewhere takes the form, in *King Lear*, of actual tragic experience. *King Lear* even repeats the images and language of Duke Senior's speech: Gloucester's "I see it feelingly" (*IV.vi. 147*) echoes Duke Senior's "feelingly persuade" (*I.i.11*). According to Amiens, however, Duke Senior's sweet pastoral style transforms potentially tragic pain. So it is in Guarini's dramaturgy: the sweet (*dolce*) style proper but not unique to the pastoral mode tempers tragic experience. As Guarini puts it, "il dolce ... tempera quella grandezza, e sublimità, che è propria del puro Tragico" ("the sweet style tempers that grandeur and sublimity which are proper to the pure tragic style" [*I Verato II, 274*]). One literary kind, then, interacts with and transforms another. If the principle of generic decorum attaches a style to a genre, Guarini establishes a middle style for his hybrid, created by the careful mixing of the "polito," or polished style, and the "grave," or solemn style. For Guarini, the extreme "dimessô" (low) and the "magnificô"
(magnificent) styles cannot be mixed together, as they were in the commedia dell’ arte hybrids from which he was so concerned to distance himself (II Verato II, 274). But unlike what Guarini perceived (incorrectly) as the random stylistic juxtapositions of the mercenary theater, the technically sophisticated playwright of tragicomedy, in his view, consciously and carefully creates his style. As long as one avoids extreme mixtures, however, the playwright can create almost infinite stylistic gradations “a uso non di campane, ma di corde musicali” (“in the manner not of bells, but of musical chords” [II Verato III, 226]), or as the painter mixes colors and creates shades of difference. Tragicomic dramaturgy, then, explores various and finely nuanced shades of style.

According to Guarini, the emotional tonalities of pastoral temper the extremes of tragedy and generate a range of emotional experience as broad as the range of style. With dramatic genres, in the tradition of Aristotle, partially defined by the kinds of emotion they elicit in the audience, Guarini explores new emotional terrain for his genre. If the violence of tragic actions elicits terror and if the buffooneries of the emerging professional comedy generate dissolve relaxation, Guarini explores shades of feeling between terror and laughter. Tragicomic dramaturgy explores this intermediate tonal range in several ways. First of all, the passive suffering of pastoral figures in the face of meteorological, occupational, political, and amatory misfortunes elicits the emotion of pity without extreme terror—the right kind of emotion for the new genre, according to Guarini. The shepherd of pastoral is not essential to tragicomedy but can stand as a representative figure for the new hybrid because his strength relative to his world is inferior to figures of epic or tragedy. In most versions of Renaissance pastoral the shepherd's or countryman's strength consists in his passive endurance—as Denores puts it, the capacity “tollerar le fatiche con pacienza, il sofferrir il caldo, ed il freddo” (“to tolerate hard labor with patience, to endure heat and cold” [Apologia II, 364]). Secondly, the playwright elicits intermediate tragicomic emotion by carefully controlling and diminishing terror. Whereas, in the Compendio, Guarini proscribes any version of terror for his hybrid, in the Verati he accepts a greater complexity in the way the playwright may exploit terror: “E siccome ogni cosa terribile non purga il terrore … così ogni rassomiglianza del terribile non produce Tragedia, s’ella non vien condotta con l’alte necessarie parti, che ci concorrono” (“And just as every terrible thing does not purge terror … so every likeness of the terrible does not produce tragedy, if it is not accompanied by the other necessary and converging parts” [I Verato II, 259]). Like Prospero manipulating his audience with the terror of an illusory storm, the tragicomic playwright produces “rassomiglianze del terribile,” simulacra of terror, often diminished for being framed by the awareness of illusion. For Guarini, tragicomedy mutes terror because it contains a higher degree of fictionality than does tragedy: “Dunque la verità, che aiuta il verisimile, s’appartiene al poema Tragico, se noi crediamo ad Aristotele, e non al Tragicomico, che non ha bisogno di storia, per formar la sua favola, ma se la finge esso a suo modo, e talora con nomi noti, e talora con finti, secondo che più gli piace” (“Therefore truth, which contributes to the verisimilar, belongs to the tragic poem, if we believe Aristotle, and not to the tragicomic poem, which has no need of history to formulate its story but rather fabricates its story in its own way, sometimes with familiar names and sometimes with fictional names, according to its pleasure” [II Verato III, 189]). Late Cinquecento tragicomedies frequently stage fictional deaths that are meant to transform the internal audience of the play. In Tasso's Aminta, the false deaths of Aminta and Silvia are not gratuitously theatrical but are important for the rhetorical effects elicited in the lovers. In The Winter's Tale, Paulina stages the fictional “death” and “resurrection” of Hermione in order to transform her audience Leontes. The oneiric fictions of Il pastor fido, other Italian pastoral tragicomedies, and The Winter's Tale also diminish tragic terror. Denores argues that terror admits of no degree and claims that the terror induced by dreams is inferior to real terror. For Guarini, however, the terror of dreams constitutes a unique, diminished emotion appropriate for the new genre (II Verato III, 190-92). The terror of Montano's dream in Il pastor fido Liv is tempered by a comforting prophecy.17 In The Winter's Tale, the dream that Antigonus recounts before he relinquishes Perdita on the Bohemian sea coast similarly tempers terror with hope (The Winter's Tale III.iii.15-41).

In the two Verati, Guarini proposes for the third genre a generically flexible set capable of depicting experience of a greater range than that normally associated with the pleasance of the pastoral greensward. The pastoral set, as described by Sebastiano Serlio in De Architettura (and as realized in many late Cinquecento
pastorals), can include not only pleasant meadows and woods, but also mountains, rocks, deserts, and dark, labyrinthe woods reminiscent of the landscapes of Dante and Ariosto. For the titular heroine in Giovanni Battista Leoni's *Roselmina, favola tragisatiricomica* (1595) who wanders through Ireland, it is the confusion and discomfort of the *selva* (forest) and not the pleasance of the *prato* (meadow) that marks the landscape: “queste strane habitazioni di fiere e di gente selvaggia” (“these strange dwellings of beasts and savage people” [I.i]). At the beginning of *Il pastor fido*, Guarini's Arcadia suffers from a Sophoclean blight. The generically liminal pastoral set of *The Winter's Tale* III.iii—the stark, stormy Bohemian sea-coast in which men are mauled by bears and “things new born” are discovered—is then very like the late Cinquecento pastoral set in the polyvalence of its generic codes.

The “scena satyrica” as described by Sebastiano Serlio adds to its natural elements temples which incorporate the columns, marble, and classical sculpture of the court-based scenic architecture of tragedy (*Il Verato* III, 268-71). Anticipating the expected objection of Denores that the inclusion of such architecture constitutes a monstrous pastiche of different genres, Guarini argues for the possibility of shifting elements of one genre onto another generic frame. Whereas the royal palaces and sumptuous edifices of tragedy signal the splendor and ambition of courtly life, pastoral transforms classical magnificence into a religious decorum—in Guarini's imagination, shepherds built temples not for ostentation, but for primarily religious reasons. The most significant counterpoint to Leontes' court tragedy of Acts I-III, the description by Cleomenes and Dion of the solemn temple and reverent religious ceremony they had witnessed on the “fertile” and “sweet” isle (sic) of Delphos, can then be understood in terms of the communicative power of place codes in tragicoomic dramaturgy. The account of the temple lends a religious, reverent cast to the high decorum and prefigures the play's movement from tragedy to pastoral to what the Italians would call *commedia grave*. One could plausibly argue that, more so than the psychologically realistic development of character, the generically coded set itself (largely verbally invoked in Shakespeare's theater) performs the transformative work of the *The Winter's Tale*.

Guarini's pastoral transforms tragic actions. Insisting, against Denores, that tragedy tells not just the political stories of the falls of tyrants (the narrowest, most conventional Renaissance notion of tragedy), but the unfortunate stories of misaligned, often incestuous eros, Guarini establishes points of contact between tragedy and pastoral. Pastoral, whose precedent in the classical genre system as the “third genre” which Cinquecento theorists thought to be the libidinous satyr play, charts the eventually felicitous realignment of erotic energies. As is the case in the paradigmatic *Oedipus the King*, at the beginning of *Il pastor fido* unhappy eros has cast a blight on the land. Lucrina's rejection of Aminta has led to his suicide and the yearly sacrifice due to Diana. It is the new generation of lovers, Amarilli, Mirtillo, Silvio, and Dorinda, who must transform potentially tragic eros, reforming the erotic energies into a comic outcome. For Guarini, tragicomedy contains potential tragedy (“[tragedia in potenza]”) but does not actualize tragedy (“non [tragedia] in atto” [Il Verato III, 184]). Both *Il pastor fido* and its precursor *Aminta* present the rhetoric and possibility of tragedy (frequent references to pity and fear, the continual possibility of suicide, violence, and death) only to deflect towards tragicomedy. The new generation of lovers recapitulates but reforms the tragic eros of the earlier generation. Silvio begins the play casting himself as a hero in the high style of epic or tragedy, quoting Hippolytus from Seneca's *Phaedra*, and referring to the heroic itinerary of his ancestor Hercules as a generic paradigm (I.i). The play forces him, however to modulate in respect to both genre and gender. In the play's opening debate, Linco argues to Silvio that the genre-flexible Hercules also dressed in women's clothes and worked at the loom. Silvio's transformative moment comes to be not his slaying of the boar but his falling in love with Dorinda. Similarly, *The Winter's Tale*'s Florizel and Perdita, as the new generation, reprise and revise the actions of the previous generation, which had produced tragic issue.

For Guarini, the social and political range of shepherds allows pastoral to function as a bridge between comedy and tragedy. Guarini usually understands pastoral as what we would call a mode, not a genre; pastoral is used adjectivally, as in “pastoral tragicomedy,” and means that shepherds are the principal actors. A pastoral play is a “favola di pastori in forma o Comica o Tragica o Tragicomica” (“a story of shepherds in the
form of comedy or tragedy or tragicomedy” [II Verato III, 265]). Like Denores in his discussion of the politics of the various genres, many Cinquecento theorists interpreted Aristotle's remark that “[comedy] sets out to represent men as worse than they are, [tragedy] as better”\(^{20}\) in a social, not moral sense. Guarini shared Denores' assumption about the social referentiality of genre, but the more complicated genre system he proposes, in which the politics of pastoral plays a significant role, corresponds to more complicated political structures than those treated by Denores. Tragicomedy, argues Guarini, is like the Venetian republic of his day, a capacious, mixed form that synthesizes the apparently contradictory forms of democracy and oligarchy (II Verato III, 159-65). Guarini's tragicomedy, in the mode of pastoral, can respond to both oligarchic (tragic) and democratic (comic) claims because there is social difference in his Arcadia. Unlike Denores, Guarini distinguishes between shepherds and farmers, the latter with a more uniformly low social status. Among shepherds, there are not only servants but also owners (padroni) whose responsibility over their flock and their inferiors could represent the responsibilities of the Renaissance ruler. Shepherds, Guarini points out, have been priests and prophets, as in the Bible, and by what William Empson calls the fiction of a “beautiful relation between rich and poor,” disguised courtiers.\(^{21}\) The dramatized failures and successes of the courtiers Florizel, Polixenes, and Camillo, who cross social boundaries by disguising themselves as shepherds, Autolycus' social baiting of the naive shepherds after he suddenly receives Florizel's clothes, and the social passage of The Winter's Tale's shepherds to gentlemanly status (with a kind of revenge on the social vagabond Autolycus) in the final, synthetic part of the play should all be seen in the social-dramaturgical context of Italian pastoral tragicomedy.

The frequently noted fictional self-awareness of The Winter's Tale includes the consciousness of dramatic genre produced by the tripartite structure—an awareness of kind reminiscent of Guarinian tragicomedy. Shakespeare's analysis of the Greene romance story into the three genres of Italian tragicomedy yields a fundamentally comparative play. If Renaissance genres could provide interpretive perspectives on the world,\(^{22}\) The Winter's Tale invites its audiences to consider, for example, tragic problems of state and sexuality from a pastoral point of view. With place an important constituent element of Renaissance dramatic genres, the play generates comparisons by changing places (as the Italian tragicomedies normally do not do) and thus genres. The play begins in a court that soon becomes claustrophobically tragic, narratively evokes the serene, beneficent “isle” of Delphos in tonal opposition to Leontes' tragedy, moves to the generically liminal and pivotal “sea coast” of Bohemia, shifts to the less terrifying but not escapist greensward next to the shepherd's cottage for the long pastoral scene, and ends in a Sicilia transformed into comedy less festive than grave, solemnized by echoes of the masque in Paulina's “chapel.” The notorious geographical errors for the two important places alternative to the Sicilian court—the “isle” of Delphos and the “seacoast” of Bohemia—might be thought to reflect less Shakespeare's carelessness than their status as places of the imagination—“landscapes of the mind”\(^{23}\) that transform the original tragedy for both the internal and external audience.

Rosalie L. Colie has argued that the Polixenes-Perdita debate regarding natural purity and artificial mixture addresses the same issues taken up in the continental debate, with Polixenes (ironically) taking the Guarinian, and Perdita (against her wishes) assuming the Denorian points of view.\(^{24}\) It is not only Florizel the gentler scion and Perdita the apparently wilder stock that must be joined to restore the Bohemia-Sicilia bond but also the various genres and points of view in the play that must be mixed, with pastoral playing an important mediatory role. The purity and isolation of something like Denorian pastoral is invoked by Polixenes shortly before the tragedy begins; it is far less capacious and variegated than the pastoral actually enacted later on in the play:

Pol. We were, fair queen,
Two lads that thought there was no more behind,
But such a day to-morrow as to-day,
And to be boy eternal.
We were as twinn’d lambs that did frisk i’ th’ sun,
And bleat the one at th’ other: what we chang’d
Was innocence for innocence: we knew not
The doctrine of ill-doing, nor dream’d
That any did. Had we pursu’d that life,
And our weak spirits ne’er been higher rear’d
With stronger blood, we should have answer’d heaven
Boldly ‘not guilty’, the imposition clear’d
Hereditary ours.

(I.ii.62-65, 67-75)

With Denores and against Guarini, Polixenes remembers a pastoral of complete innocence, altogether bounded from the world of city and court and unable to converse with the “stronger blood” of sexuality and its potentially tragic consequences. The purity of such soft pastoral yields, as its dark side, the pure tragedy of jealousy, conspiracy, and revenge that Leontes—Othello without need of a Iago—attempts to impose on his court.

Paulina soon opposes Leontes' pure tragedy. She resembles the Guarinian tragicomic playwright in her use of a variety of genre-like rhetorical strategies aimed at transforming Leontes, her audience. Paulina opposes Leontes' tragic projections with biting satiric language and with the less dangerous perspective of comic typology, attempting to cast Leontes into the role of a comic tyrant and Antigonus into that of a hen-pecked husband. When, like Creon of Antigone, Leontes disobeys the oracle and completes the externalization of a tragedy which began as fantastical and unreal (I.ii.138-46), Paulina becomes, at III.ii.175-202, a tragic nuncio delivering a highly rhetorical (but none the less effective) account of Hermione's “death.” Paulina’s “tragedy” is important not for its referential content (which is false) but for the emotional effect that her speech immediately elicits in Leontes in the manner of Guarinian tragicomedy. She stages Leontes' sixteen-year penitence. Finally, adjusting herself and her audience to a very different generic decorum in Act V, Paulina carefully prepares and moves her audience (principally Leontes) in the solemn masque-like statue scene in her “chapel.”

Leontes' conspiratorial sexual tragedy, then, is not unalterable form but is affected by other genres or points of view in the play. Genres are dialogic and interactive, as Mikhail Bakhtin argues: they are developed in relation and dialogue with other genres. Neither the theater audience nor Leontes is bound to any single generic perspective. The complex, fluid generic system of The Winter's Tale tempers the two extremes Guarini was attempting to avoid in tragicomedy: tragic terror, and comic bawdry of the kind practiced by the commedia dell’arte. At the end of the play, Leontes' tragedy is over (though not forgotten), and Autolycus, a figure reminiscent of the itinerant professional entertainer, is a diminished thing.

The most important genre interaction in The Winter's Tale is that between pastoral and tragedy. In its style, emotional tone, symbolism of place, revisionary action, and social politics, the pastoral section of The Winter's Tale provides a reprise of matters that have had tragic issue in the first section and replays them through a different prism. The pastoral of Bohemia is a much tougher, more porous, and more heterogeneous genre than Polixenes' retrospective soft pastoral, and it is one that may converse with tragedy.

The old shepherd's “thou met'st with things dying, I with things new-born” announces the pivotal generic shift with a symmetrical balance befitting this tragical-pastoral-comical play. The sea coast of III.iii is especially liminal in regard to genre, well calibrated to intermediate stylistic and emotional registers; it is an eery, deserted place of storms, comically savage beasts, and death without terror. The popular, homespun style of the shepherds differs from Guarini's intermediate “sweet” style but follows the idea of Guarinian dramaturgy in that it tempers tragedy. The style of the pastoral speakers places sexuality in a new generic framework. The sight of the infant Perdita signifies illicit sexuality for the old shepherd, as it did for Leontes, but his homely
compound formulations reinterpret what had been a horribly particular sin for the Sicilian king into a new perspective, that of comic generality:30

Though I am not bookish, yet I can read waiting-gentlewoman in the scape. This has been some stair-work, some trunk-work, some behind-door-work: they were warmer that got this than the poor thing is here.

(III.iii.72-76)

The style and emotional register of the young clown also adjusts generic decorum in his account of the storm, the wreck, and the mauling of Antigonus. Guarini, we remember, carefully distinguishes observed tragicomic terror from participated tragic terror, whereas Denores argues for only one emotional register. Just as Prospero tempers Miranda's tragically coded reaction to the initial storm in The Tempest (she claims to experience fear and pity for figures of high station),31 the clown both registers an Aristotelian response (the poor souls utter a “piteous cry”; Antigonus is a nobleman) and compromises generic purity with the homeliness and humor of words like “corks,” “hogsheads,” and “flap-dragoning.” Every event and speech in the scene mark it as a no man's land between engagement and detachment, a place of diminished terror. Elevated diction, echoes of encounters in the epic underworld (“thrice bow’d before me”), and ritual patterning serve to link Antigonus' strange dream (III.iii.16-41) with epic and tragedy. And yet it is grave and sorrowful, not terrifying like the dreams and apparitions in Richard III, Hamlet, Julius Caesar, and other tragedies; tonally it is very like the enabling dream Montano has of his son in Il pastor fido (I.iv), the memory of which at the fateful moment of sacrifice deflects his sacrificial sword (V.v). As Guarini argues against Denores, a dream of a terrifying event need not reproduce terror tout court but can modulate terror into a different emotional and generic register.

The actions of the entire pastoral episode transform the actions of the first section of the play by both resembling them and differing from them. In both the tragic and pastoral sections of the play, dangerous kings, violently disrupting placid situations, break or threaten a male-female bond. Leontes opposes the mixing of Polixenes and Hermione (“To mingle friendship far, is mingling bloods” [I.ii.109]), and Polixenes, despite his official position in the debate, opposes the mixing of the “gentler scion” and the “wilder stock.” Both Paulina and Perdita (“The selfsame sun that shines upon his court / … / Looks on all alike” [IV.iv.445-47]) subversively undermine the kings, at least in word. In both sections Camillo “serves his master's highest interests by betraying him,”32 and the victims of both outbursts must traverse the dangerous but providential sea. However, although Leontes, driven by a misogynist fear of sexual impurity, had desperately wanted Mamillius to be “a copy” (I.ii.119-56), the new generation is not altogether identical to the older generation. Florizel does resemble the older generation in a Denorian pastoral idyllism that hides the dark side of Arcadia. His “Apprehend / Nothing but jollity” (IV.iv.24-25) stands in contrast to Perdita's more realistic reservations about their pastoral disguises, and his confident enlistment of the gods themselves as theatrical-sexual exemplars (IV.iv.24-35) ignores the reality of their rapes. On the other hand, if Leontes had conflated and condemned both sexual and theatrical play (“Go play, boy, play: thy mother plays and I / Play too; but so disgrac’d a part, whose issue / Will hiss me to my grave” [I.ii.187-89]), Florizel with Perdita redeems sexuality and theatricality. After Polixenes discovers him, Florizel first launches into tragic, Lear-like diction inappropriate to the pastoral decorum: “Let nature crush the sides o’ th’ earth together, / And mar the seeds within!” (IV.iv.479-80). More like a “faithful shepherd” than like a tragic hero, however, Florizel shows himself flexible enough to submit to Camillo's plan, trusting the waters of providence and Camillo's vision (IV.iv.548-54) of a comic outcome.

Perdita's debate with Florizel about the viability of his pastoral disguise anticipates the more familiar debate she has with Polixenes about the possibility of mixing a “gentler scion” and a “wilder stock”; these exchanges about the possibility of social mixtures echo the Guarini-Denores debates about the mixture of socially coded genres. In response to Florizel's breezy confidence in the social flexibility of pastoral, by which princes may become shepherds and shepherdesses goddesses, Perdita reaffirms social and generic boundaries:
To me the difference forges dread (your greatness
Hath not been us’d to fear): even now I tremble
To think your father, by some accident
Should pass this way, as you did: O the Fates!
How would he look, to see his work, so noble,
Vilely bound up? What would he say? Or how
Should I, in these my borrowed flaunts, behold
The sternness of his presence?

(IV.iv.17-24)

Perdita here affirms, as did Denores, the principle of theatrical, social, and sexual difference, in language proper to tragic discourse. The “stern” presence of the superior Polixenes and the awareness of the social differences that not even festival license erases elicit the emotions of tragedy: “dread,” “fear,” and “trembling.” Perdita maintains a horizon of tragic rather than providentially tragicomic expectations with her invocation of the “Fates.” But of course Perdita’s own career as a royal foundling as well as the plot and dramaturgy of the entire play affirm not Denores’ position in the debate but rather the social fluidity of Guarinian tragicomedy. The theatrical-sexual license of the pastoral festival centers on the freedom to explore various levels of social station; despite her verbal protestations, Perdita does mix with the gentler scion. Autolycus, the real hero of social metamorphosis in Act IV, plays a vagabond writhing in the road and, after the windfall of Florizel’s costume, “a most rare courtier.” And Polixenes’ royal suspension of the festive license of social disguise delays but does not forestall the marriage of Perdita and Florizel. Although the trick of pastoral romance may reaffirm aristocratic privilege (the shepherdess really has royal blood), the gentling of the shepherds after the first recognition really does constitute a social mixture following the lines of Guarinian dramaturgy. The young shepherd marvels at the new kinship relations of the pastoral-royal family: “I was a gentleman born before my father; for the king’s son took me by the hand, and called me brother; and then the two kings called my father brother; and then the prince, my brother, and the princess, my sister, called my father father; and so we wept; and there was the first gentleman-like tears that ever we shed” (V.ii.139-45). The translation of the shepherds from Bohemia to the Sicilian court heightens the generic status of pastoral—the very project of Tasso, Guarini, and other late Cinquecento dramatists. Autolycus, earlier the genius of social transformation in the subversive style of commedia dell’ arte, now is humbled before the new gentlemen. The emotional responses elicited by commedia dell’ arte, the relaxation and the laughter of farce, give way to the pathos-filled tonalities of Guarinian tragicomedy: “gentleman-like tears.” The status of Autolycus is diminished, with the result that not only the extreme of tragic terror but also that of farcical comedy is “tempered.”

In its implicit focus on dramatic genre, its genre dialogism, and its use of pastoral style, tone, set, actions, and social relationships to modify the extremes of tragedy and comedy, The Winter’s Tale exemplifies the “unwritten poetics” of tragicomic dramaturgy as most thoroughly articulated by Guarini but also as practiced by many contemporary Italian playwrights. Probably independently of direct influence, The Winter’s Tale realizes many of the dramaturgical possibilities articulated in Guarini’s work, especially in the two Verati. The relationships between the constituent genres, of course, involves much more conflict in Shakespearean tragicomedy than in Guarinian and in most other late Cinquecento tragicomedy. Although the status of the rough and tumble commedia-like Autolycus diminishes in relation to the newly-gentled shepherds and their more refined sentiments, he resists integration into the new order and maintains strong audience appeal. To “temper” or reformulate tragedy, to begin to heal its wounds, as Shakespeare surely does beginning with the liminal pastoral scene of III.iii, is not to defuse it entirely. The transformative power effected by Hermione’s fictional death does not efface the real deaths of Mamillius and Antigonus and the fact that the “wide gap of time” has sadly diminished the royal marriage, rendering Hermione disturbingly silent in the last scene. That Shakespeare handles tragicomic dramaturgy with innovation and complexity, however, is hardly surprising.

Notes

2. Guarini’s extremely popular and influential pastoral tragicomedy, *Il pastor fido*, was written between 1580 and 1585 and circulated in manuscript before its publication in 1590. In 1586, Giason Denores presented his theories of genre and criticized tragicomedy and pastoral, without explicitly naming Guarini, in his *Discorso di Iason Denores intorno à que’ principii, cause, et accrescimenti, che la commedia, la tragedia, et il poema heroico ricevono dalla philosophia morale, e civile, e da’ governatori delle repubbliche* (Padua, 1586). Guarini responded, anonymously, in his *Il verrato ovvero difesa di quanto ha scritto M. Giason Denores contra le tragicomedia, et le pastorali, in un suo discorso di poesia* (Ferrara, 1588). Denores sallied back in his *Apologia contra l’auttor del Verato di Iason De Nores di quanto ha egli detto in un suo discorso delle tragicomedia, e delle pastorali* (Padua, 1590). Guarini countered with *Il verato secondo ovvero replica dell’ attizzato accademico ferrarrese in difesa del pastorfido*, completed by 1591 but not published until 1593 (Florence, 1593). Finally, in 1601 Guarini published a work incorporating the major points of his two earlier treatises, the *Compendio della poesia tragicomica, tratto dai duo verati, per opera dell’ autore del pastor fido, colla giunta di molte cose spettanti all’ arte* (Venice, 1601). A good account of the quarrel has been given by Bernard Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance* (Chicago: Chicago Univ. Press, 1961), II, 1074-1105. The five exchanges of the quarrel, treatises relevant to the quarrel by Angelo Ingegneri, Faustino Summo, Giovani Pietro Malacreta, Paolo Beni, and Giovanni Savio, and Guarini’s principal literary works are collected together in a four-volume eighteenth-century edition: *Delle opere del cavalier Battista Guarini*, ed. Giovanni Alberto Timermani (Verona, 1738). All citations to the documents of the quarrel will refer to this edition; I list the treatise from which the citation is taken, followed by the volume and page reference in the Timermani edition.

3. Recently, the most thorough and convincing comparison of Cinquecento and Shakespearean drama has been made by Louise George Clubb in *Italian Drama in Shakespeare’s Time* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1989). G. K. Hunter has made the best case for the direct influence of Guarini on Shakespeare and Marston in his “Italian Tragicomedy on the English Stage,” *Renaissance Drama*, 6 (1973), 123-48. Tasso’s *Aminta* and Guarini’s *Il pastor fido*, printed together in London by John Wolfe in 1591, were well known among a select but important circle in London, and verbal echoes of the 1602 “Dymock” translation of *Il pastor fido* can be found, argues Hunter, in Marston’s *The Malcontent* and in Shakespeare’s *All’s Well That Ends Well* and *Measure for Measure*. Several English dramatists contemporary with Shakespeare demonstrated a keen interest in both the theory and practice of the new genre: Samuel Daniel, who attempted a close imitation of Guarini’s pastoral tragicomedy in *The Queene’s Arcadia* (1605); John Marston, whose 1604 *The Malcontent* (entered as “Tragicomoedia” in the Stationer’s Register) was appropriated by Shakespeare’s company and performed at the Globe; and John Fletcher, new playwright of the King’s Men as they began performing plays at the Blackfriars theater, future collaborator with Shakespeare, whose 1609 prologue to *The Faithful Shepherdess* demonstrates knowledge of Guarini’s theories.


6. Harley Granville-Barker has argued that the Blackfriars theater would have encouraged a more refined style of acting than that practiced in the outdoor theaters, by which “sentiment [would] become as telling as passion” (*Prefaces to Shakespeare*, [1930; rpt. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1946], 1, 470).

7. The standard version of Guarini that many critics use is that of Allan H. Gilbert’s abridged translation of the *Compendio*, found in his *Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden* (1940; rpt. Detroit: Wayne State

8. The passage most commonly quoted is the following: “He who composes tragicomedy takes from tragedy its great persons but not its great action, its verisimilar plot but not its true one, its movement of the feelings but not its disturbance of them, its pleasure but not its sadness, its danger but not its death; from comedy it takes laughter that is not excessive, modest amusement, feigned difficulty, happy reversal, and above all the comic order of which we shall speak in its place” (*Literary Criticism*, ed. Gilbert, p. 511).

9. All translations of the Italian texts are my own.


11. Denores, of course, could not but acknowledge ancient genres such as pastoral and lyric. Believing, however, that they were not governed by political and philosophical principles, he considered them much less important than the three major genres.


13. Ibid., p. 28.


15. Officially, however, Tasso stood on the side of the ancients on the question of genre mixture, for which see the discussion of Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance*, II, 1077. Concentrating on playwrights other than Tasso and Guarini, Clubb discusses the wide generic range of Cinquecento pastoral (*Italian Drama in Shakespeare's Time*, pp. 153-87).


26. Arguing against Denores' narrow notion of tragedy as exclusively political, Guarini points out the many domestic sexual tragedies in the Greek corpus—e.g., *Medea, Hippolytus, Alcestis*. See *I Verato* II, 242.
29. In a fascinating analysis of the genre-coded semiotics of animals in Cinquecento pastoral drama, Louise George Clubb argues that the generic ambivalence of the bear makes it appropriate for this liminal scene of the play (*Italian Drama in Shakespeare's Time*, pp. 140-52).
30. At one point in the tragic section of the play Leontes does, however, interject a note of comic generality that offsets his predominantly tragic rhetoric: “There have been, / (Or I am much deceiv’d) cuckolds ere now …” (I.ii.190-91).

**Criticism: Sources, Influences, And Ideologies: Mary Ellen Lamb (essay date 1998)**


*In the following essay, Lamb analyzes the role of women's folk tales and their influence in The Winter's Tale, Macbeth, and The Tempest.*

As Macbeth stares in terror at Banquo's ghost during a banquet for the Scottish lords, Lady Macbeth contemptuously compares his hallucination to oral narratives circulated among women:

```
O proper stuff!
This the very painting of your fear;
This the air-drawn dagger which you said
Led you to Duncan. O, these flaws and starts
(Imposters to true fear) would well become
A woman's story at a winter's fire,
Authoriz'd by her grandam. Shame itself,
Why do you make such faces?(1)
```

Framing her criticism with attacks against his masculinity—“Are you a man?” and “What, quite unmanned in folly?”—Lady Macbeth represents Macbeth's fearfulness as a degrading regression to the androgyny of childhood. Her anxious allusion to women's tales in this context suggests their continuing and threatening power, and the effeminizing attraction of the early bonds with women they signify. Paradoxically, Lady Macbeth's accusation becomes self-reflexive to the play which includes it. The “air-drawn dagger” which Lady Macbeth denigrates as appropriate only to women's tales places *Macbeth* squarely within this devalued oral tradition; so do its ghosts and its witches. *Macbeth* is not alone in its self-reflexive allusions to this early scene of narration. Passages within *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest* also invoke this oral tradition as
originary to their art. Together, these allusions expose the power of childhood tales as prototypes for the fictions of the stage.

From this distance in time, it is impossible to judge whether these stories were primarily “authoriz’d” by “grandams” or also composed and performed by men. The gender of their authors was, however, largely irrelevant to the reception of these tales by young children at the knees of the women who told them. Whatever the point of origin, the location of fiction within the special space shared between young children and the women who raised them contributed to what the narrative act meant. This space contained meanings specific to the early modern period. As Stephen Orgel has pointed out, within almost every early modern male there would have lurked a childhood memory of a self not fully distinguished from women. Whether male or female, babies and children at the breast were thought to imbibe femaleness along with their nurses’ other qualities. Gender was especially blurred through the custom of dressing little boys in coats until they were “breech’d,” sometime around the age of five. Within a one-sex gender system distinguishing gender by social markers, gender differences were not yet fully present in young boys dominated as well as nurtured by women. Not yet old enough to assume the social power defining their masculinity, boys younger than the age of seven were not yet considered fully rational, either; and so, much like women, young boys were perceived as creatures more of their bodies than their minds. Shared with the seemingly large female bodies surrounding them, this sense of bodiliness served as a primary marker of an early effeminacy which invested the narrative act with gendered meanings specific to the early modern period.

The gendered meanings of this early female-dominated environment, implicit within the narratives it circulated, may not have become apparent to a boy until, sometime between seven and thirteen, he was given to male tutors or schoolmasters to learn Latin in what has been characterized by Walter Ong as a male puberty rite. While scholars have recently debated the severity of humanist pedagogy, there remains little doubt that the standard exercises of intellect—the attainment of fluency in Latin, the ability to reason abstractly and to present logical arguments, the knowledge of classical cultures—created gender differences reinforcing the physiological differences between the sexes. According to Keith Thomas, further gender distinctions were created through the process of learning Latin—the rigorous routines and disciplines—which required of boys an “instinctual renunciation” through which they were to master their bodily passions as a condition of their future privilege. Underlying this version of masculinity was an analogical system which naturalized the subordination of the feminized body to the masculine mind. Reinforced by the masculinizing aura of the humanist schoolroom, the flight from the feminine became a flight from corporeality itself.

Nostalgia for this childhood period of effeminacy and its pleasures, including its narrative pleasures, could not be easily reconciled with a self built upon the rejection of the feminine and the corporeal. Humanist sentiment suggests that the highly intellectual form of masculinity achieved through the translation of classical texts within this literate culture did not easily accommodate the oral tradition of tales circulated among women at a winter's fire. Lady Macbeth's implicit opposition of the authority of grandams and pedagogues in her contemptuous juxtaposition of the words “grandam” and “authoriz’d” appears even more forcefully in Erasmus's similarly contemptuous dismissal of this vernacular oral tradition: “A boy (may) learn a pretty story from the ancient poets, or a memorable tale from history, just as readily as the stupid and vulgar ballad, or the old wives' fairy rubbish such as most children are steeped in nowadays by nurses and serving women.” Erasmus's expression of anxiety over these narratives as a source of female influence, and especially lower-class female influence, over children, was not isolated. It appears as well in childrearing manuals, which warned against the widespread existence of this oral tradition and its harmful potential as a means by which women—whether mothers or lower-class wet nurses—could exert permanent influence over young minds.

The often abrupt removal of boys from a feminine space to a masculinizing schoolroom environment posed a form of gender trouble to many early modern males of the middle or upper classes. Individual boys undoubtedly experienced the conflict between these contradictory cultures, as well as their own differently
gendered selves formed within them, with differing intensities, and they chose from a range of strategies available to manage these conflicts. While Erasmus dismissed this early environment and its narratives with contempt, John Aubrey expressed nostalgia for the vernacular tales of his own early seventeenth century childhood, when he had heard “old women and mayds” telling “fabulous stories nightimes, of Sprights and walking of Ghosts.” In several of Shakespeare's plays, the oral tradition shared between women and children implicates the narrative act composing the play itself. The responses to this form of female influence staged within these plays are complex and ambivalent, embracing nostalgia, horror, resignation, and perhaps even celebration. These gender conflicts arising from this sudden juxtaposition of highly gendered cultures remain central, I will argue, to the act of narration as represented in The Winter's Tale, Macbeth, and The Tempest.

1. THE WINTER'S TALE

With its title explicitly identifying itself as a part of this oral tradition, The Winter's Tale provides an obvious starting point for an exploration of the continuing powers of these tales. Tales told in winter were commonly attributed to women not only because many middle-or upper-class children experienced woman as their first storyteller. Represented as simple entertainment to pass away long evenings when the cold and darkness prevented other chores or distractions, tales told in winter also became a trope for tales without serious purpose. In this period before fiction had become sufficiently theorized, tales told on long evenings before a fire required a woman storyteller because, presumably, a man would have had something more useful to do. Stories told by women were of necessity without purpose; stories without purpose were most appropriately told by women. This sense emerges, for example, from Boccaccio's Genealogy of the Gods: “A maundering old woman, sitting with others late of a winter's night at the home fireside, making up tales of Hell, the fates, Ghosts and the like … to scare the little ones, or divert the young ladies, or amuse the old, or at least show the power of fortune.” In this context, Shakespeare's titling of the Winter's Tale reopens the question, circulating within his culture, not only of the power of this devalued tradition, but of the deeper purposes of writing fiction for pleasure.

As Mamillius tells his mother, “A sad tale's best for winter. I have one / Of sprites and goblins” (II.i.25-26), his creation of his own winter's tale makes the self-identification of The Winter's Tale with these oral tales of childhood explicit. The gender reversal of the expected audience and narrator further connects Mamillius' winter tale with the male-authored Winter's Tale, by showing their mutual appropriation of a tradition of “old wives' tales” usually gendered as female. Mamillius' tale demonstrates a debt to the easy intimacy staged in this play for the primarily female environment of childhood, as one of the queen's ladies offers to be his “playfellow” while another lets Mamillius tease her about her blue-painted eyebrows. This scene between Hermione and Mamillius suggests the centrality of this affective bond for the creation of Mamillius' own winter's tale, and by extension, of the play Winter's Tale itself. In her active role as audience, Hermione elicits his story, as she invites him to “Pray you, sit by us, / And tell 's a tale” (21-22). As she invites him again to sit down beside her, her praise for his ability reveals that this scene of narration has been enacted many times: “Come on, sit down, come on, and do your best / To fright me with your sprites: you're pow’rful at it” (27-28). This physical closeness to his mother forms a condition of his narration. As he offers to tell her his story so softly that “yond crickets shall not hear it” (30), Hermione asks him to “give’t me in mine ear” (II.i.32). In this scene, Hermione is more than a receptive audience; as he whispers the first words, “There was a man … Dwelt by a churchyard” (28, 30), Mamillius is composing not only a story but a self defined in terms of an intimate and very physical bond with his visibly pregnant mother as well as with her surrounding ladies, who care for him.

The Winter's Tale also reveals the threat posed by this bond which in some sense forms its source. The dangerous centrality of this relationship between mother and son is amply demonstrated by Mamillius' response to his mother's imprisonment. Removed from her presence, in “mere conceit and fear / Of the Queen's speed” (III.ii.144-45), Mamillius dies. Leontes's sudden separation of Mamillius from his mother replicates the potentially traumatic entry of boys into a masculine environment. Like the traditional removal of
boys from their early female-dominated environment, this sudden separation expresses rejection not only of the female, but of the female in Mamillius, as Leontes explains: “Though he does bear some signs of me, yet you / Have too much blood in him” (II.i.56-57). The business is completed in a few lines, as Leontes orders, “Give me the boy,” and “Bear the boy hence, he shall not come about her. / Away with him!” (59-60). Yet the rejection of Mamillius' inner femininity is not so easily accomplished for a boy whose name is derived from the Latin word for “breasts.” While, as Leontes notes, Hermione had not actually nursed Mamillius, her physical closeness is as important as that of any nurse to an infant. Mamillius' illness duplicates the classic symptoms of depression as he “threw off his spirit, his appetite, his sleep / And downright languish’d” (II.iii.16-17). The one grave in which both Hermione and Mamillius are allegedly buried signifies this symbiotic union and continues it beyond death.

Mamillius' death expresses the danger or even the impossibility of a complete transition from androgynous boyhood to adult masculinity. Even Leontes mourns the loss of his early effeminacy as, looking at Mamillius, Leontes succumbs to nostalgia, remembering himself at that age:

Looking on the lines

Of my boy's face, methought I did recoil
Twenty-three years, and saw myself unbreech'd
In my green velvet coat, my dagger muzzled,
Lest it should bite its master, and so prove
(As ornament oft does) too dangerous.

(I.ii.153-58)

Leontes's regressive identification with Mamillius conveys more than a conventionally Freudian desire to unite with the mother. Instead (or in addition), Leontes's reminiscences provide a window into a historically specific practice of childrearing now defunct. In representing that time when he still wore the coat also worn by girls, Leontes adds a detail unrecorded in histories of children's clothing: he remembers that he also wore a dagger, and that the dagger was muzzled.

If Leontes's memory reflects widespread early modern practice, then boys may have been somewhat differentiated from girls before breeching: perhaps even small boys displayed this highly visible sign of their masculinity. This instrument of aggression and/or sexuality was, however, muzzled and thus unavailable for their present use; it remained a promise of future potency. Leontes's description of his muzzled dagger as an ornament conveys a sense of its detachability, of its exteriority, of its nonessentiality. As an ornament, it could be laid aside, rendering the boy-Leontes again undifferentiated from girls. This passage raises questions critical to an understanding of early modern gender construction. If the dagger was in fact worn by young boys still in coats, when was it unmuzzled? During the breeching ceremony? If so, then the breeching ceremony itself constructed a boy's masculinity in terms of overt and possibly deadly aggression. While this passage points to the necessity of further research in children's clothing and the customs surrounding breeching, it seems clear that the term “muzzled,” appropriate to a dangerous beast, reinforces a sense of aggression implicit in early modern masculinity. Leontes's representation of his muzzled dagger of early boyhood implies that since that time, his masculinity, as represented by his now unmuzzled dagger/phallus, has become able to bite its master, to become an instrument of self-aggression rather than of love for another. The dangerous potential of his muzzled dagger has been irrevocably released. No longer only an ornament, his adult dagger/phallus has made the easy intimacy of boyhood no longer possible.

The destructiveness of Leontes's phallic masculinity is borne out as the first two acts of The Winter's Tale follow a conventional tragic plot. It is the miraculous unlikelihood of the last three acts in which The Winter's Tale most resembles the oral narratives of childhood, as it points to its own profound implausibility by twice referring to itself as an “old tale.” Relating the offstage reunion of Leontes and his daughter Perdita, the second Gentleman exclaims that “this news, which is call’d true, is so like an old tale, that the verity of it is in
strong suspicion” (V.ii.27-29). Similarly, the third Gentleman describes the bear's fatal mauling of Antigonus as “like an old tale still, which will have matter to rehearse, though credit be asleep and not an ear open” (V.ii.61-63). While neither gentleman designates the probable gender of the teller of such old tales, the evocation of garrulity unimpeded by disbelief, indifference, or even sleepiness draws on a stereotype of talkative old women. In their apologetic references to “old tales,” first and second Gentleman call on their listeners and by extension the audience, to move beyond the critical judgment of adulthood to be filled with the wonder of children again.

In *The Winter's Tale*, this wonder characterizes not only children, but country folk gullible enough to buy the absurd ballads sold by Autolycus. Like Mamillius, like the first and second Gentleman, perhaps like the playwright of *The Winter's Tale* himself, Autolycus becomes yet another male purveyor of improbable tales associated with women. While his given name derives from classical literature, his self-representation reveals his own androgynous identification with the female tradition of narratives. In his self-defense, “Why should I carry lies abroad?” he describes himself by an expanded version of the name he had improvised as the supposed author, a Mistress Taleporter (or “carrier of tales/lies”). “Her” story of the usurer's wife who gave birth to twenty moneybags derives its point from the astonishing capacities of the female reproductive body, used in this tale as an analogue of capitalistic profits, much as Autolycus performs the capitalistic miracle of making money from such women's tales/tails. This supposed Mistress Taleporter, who signed her name to verify the truth of this story, gains her authority from her role as midwife. In selling “her” story, Autolycus appropriates not only the tradition, but the physicality of women's narratives as the sign of their power over the life and death of infants and children. In this ballad, however, women's very physical powers are parodied rather than rejected; rather than eliciting horror, they promote sales.

Like Autolycus, Shakespeare appropriates the power of the female body to compose the miraculous conclusion of *The Winter's Tale*. As Hermione steps down from her pedestal, Shakespeare's stagecraft merges with Paulina's, for his audience is as ignorant as hers that Hermione still lives. Hermione's continuing love for Leontes represents perhaps the most wonderful implausibility of the play; and it is this statue scene, often associated with the power of the playwright, which makes of this play a “winter's tale.” Moreover, it is in this scene that a woman directly takes on a creative role. Like Mistress Taleporter's ballad, Paulina's stagecraft is also inseparable from the female body. Like the stories of early childhood, her “play” represents the culmination of her faithful attending to physical needs; for Paulina's visits to the statue “twice or thrice a day” (V.ii.105) were clearly designed to feed Hermione. In this sense, Leontes's representation of Paulina's art as “lawful as eating” (V.iii.111) has special point. Paulina's stagecraft is finally inseparable from acts of feeding and eating. Her art is also inseparable from the lives of those she cares for. Paulina cannot conclude her sixteen-year play until Perdita, the fruit of Hermione's visible pregnancy in Act I, is recovered.

Various critics have noted the psychoanalytic implications of Paulina's play, culminating in the statue scene. Murray Schwartz has read this final scene as expressing Shakespeare's acceptance and then renunciation of the “wish for fusion with the creative and destructive mother of infancy.” Adelman has pointed out that this scene figures “the loss and recovery of the world in the mother's body.” Erickson claims that “the play's final scene reenacts the symbiotic unity that Leontes now mourns.” These insights gain validity from a historical grounding of Paulina's play in childrearing practices. Overseeing Leontes's grief and enforcing his refusal to wed again until the oracle is fulfilled, Paulina uses her powers as playwright to return Leontes to the female dominance of boyhood. As Leontes puts himself in the hands of a woman he has called a “mankind witch” (II.iii.68), arguably both a nurse and a playwright, *The Winter's Tale* reenacts Macbeth's regressive receptivity to women's narratives with a difference. For Leontes, Paulina's narrative is redemptive. Under her direction, Leontes is in a sense permitted what was forbidden to early modern males: an extended period of mourning for “what was lost” in the transition away from the female environment of early childhood. And “what is found” is not only Perdita, not only Hermione, not only the Mother, but the bond with women inseparable from the “winter's tales” of childhood.
If the statue scene can be taken as a self-reflexive exploration of the playwright's art, what are its implications for *The Winter's Tale*? Does the gender of Paulina blur the outlines of the male playwright with a female caregiver of early childhood to reveal her influence even at the cost of exposing a humiliating dependency at the core of narrative? Or does it, as Abbe Blum argues, reveal a desire to “partake of an originary or originating moment” identified with the “preoedipal and the power of the mother,” only to circumscribe that “maternal power with that of the male playwright”? Either way this scene is read, the imagery of witchcraft in *The Winter's Tale* reveals that anxiety about women's influence over men, including male playwrights, is far from resolved. Paulina must draw careful lines around her stagecraft to distinguish it from demonic art. Cautiously placing her scene in a chapel, Paulina voices the fear that onlookers will “think (which I protest against) I am assisted by wicked powers” (V.iii.90-91). When Hermione steps down from her pedestal, Leontes expresses his sense of the miraculous by carefully marking off the differences between this magic from the unlawful kind (V.iii.109-11). These deliberate distinctions between sacred and demonic magic, designed to separate and contain the demonic powers of the witch-narrator, disclose the presence of the continuing threat of the power of women's tales. The nature of this threat is best explored in *Macbeth*, which collapses such distinctions to portray women's narratives as purely demonic.

2. *MACBETH*

In her contempt for “a woman's story at a winter's fire,” Lady Macbeth shows her attempt to unsex herself, as she identifies with a critical perspective outside this oral tradition. Paradoxically, Lady Macbeth's contempt for women's narratives partakes in the same cultural imperative expressed by Erasmus: to become fully masculine, males were to leave marks of female influence behind them. In this respect, the warrior culture of Macbeth was not unlike the humanist culture of the early modern period. In their strong constructions of masculinity, neither culture tolerated signs of boyhood androgyny in adult males. But in the circular doublethink of this play, Lady Macbeth herself authors a narrative of a murdered baby which profoundly motivates Macbeth to murder Duncan. Thus, Lady Macbeth's scorn for women's narratives within a play largely driven by women's narratives, including her own, dramatizes the impossibility of eradicating their power, or the power of the women who told them.

This power which could not be eradicated could, however, be demonized. As critics have noted, in their absolute power over the lives especially of male infants, Lady Macbeth and the witches enact a subjectivity lying outside the boundaries of patriarchy: they become demonic. It has not yet been noted that they become authors as well. While they themselves perform no murders, they achieve their will through the effect of these narratives—and the constructions of gender within them—on Macbeth. It is through women's stories that *Macbeth* stages the fantasy of maternal power which Macbeth cannot escape, which can only be escaped, in Adelman's memorable argument, by one “not of woman born.” It is through their compelling narratives that Lady Macbeth and the witches create their absolute authority over the infant that Macbeth in some sense becomes. Fleeing the effeminizing of his childhood, Macbeth acts out not only the desires, but also the magical narratives told by women who dominate him.

Participating in their patriarchal culture's dark fantasy of the overwhelming power and the demonic nature of the reproductive female body, these narratives told by women are, like Paulina's play in the *Winter's Tale*, inseparable from the female body. In their sheer corporeality, these narrative acts create *Macbeth* as a “woman's story” in their saturation with imagery of nursing, menstruation, and bloody births. The extent to which women's authorship is empowered by their dangerous biological functions is especially evident in Lady Macbeth's imagined murder of an infant nursing at her breast, which makes it chillingly apparent that women's power to nurture also bestows upon them the power to destroy (I.vii.54-59). Critics have noted the infantilizing effect of this speech on Macbeth in its recreation of his own vulnerability to a murderous mother now represented by his wife. He responds obediently by killing Duncan. But it has not been noted that Lady Macbeth is no more able than her husband to escape the power of her own maternal body. Her imagined divestment of her femininity paradoxically only makes her reproductive body more rather than less
abundantly present to the audience. As she asks her blood to be thickened, her menstruation or “visitations of Nature” to be stopped, her milk to become gall, her invocation confirms rather than denies her identification with the flesh (gendered female) rather than the mind (gendered male). Far from masculinized, her imagination invokes Night as performing the function of a sinister mother/nurse, pulling a blanket over Duncan's murder to prevent heaven from seeing the deed. This blanket of smoke is one of several images which make of Scotland a claustrophobic womb:

Come, thick night,
And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark
To cry, 'Hold, hold!'

(I.v.50-54)

While Lady Macbeth and the witches never meet, their narratives share a form of dangerous authorship permeated by female functions, especially nursing. Adelman has noted that the distinctions between Lady Macbeth and the witches blur in a common “image of perverse nursery” (135). Willis and Callagan have ably explored the ways in which the witchcraft persecutions manifested not only women's victimization but their symbolic power as mothers as well. This power was also invested in the lower-class nurses whose care of upper-class infants sometimes proved lethal. According to a larger patriarchal plot of the culture, the act of nursing opened up one strategy for exposing witches, as authorities searched even old women's bodies for signs of the “devil's teat,” the mark left anywhere on their skin to show where they provided suck to the devil or his familiars. This life-and-death authority demonizing mothers/nurses is evoked by a very physical form of authorship: the recipe of body parts included in the witches' womb-like cauldron. A smaller version of the “pilot's thumb” (I.iii.28), the “finger of birth-strangled babe / Ditch-deliver'd by a drab” gathers into the play a contemporary horror over infanticides committed primarily by desperate single mothers. The blood of the sow “that hath eaten / Her nine farrow” enacts a blurring of human and animal in a gruesome transformation of nursing into cannibalism (IV.i.30-31, 64-65).

This double capacity to destroy and create is especially displayed in the witches' authorship of the bloody babe script to the anxious Macbeth. In their staging of this scene, the witches have authored a highly equivocal play identified with the body. The blood (if it is his) signifies the baby's own vulnerability to physical injury and/or (if the blood is his mother's) his maternal origin. Both of these remain at odds with his advice to Macbeth, to “be bloody, bold, and resolute: laugh to scorn / The pow’r of man; for none of woman born / Shall harm Macbeth” (IV.i.79-81). Interpreted in terms of the blood on the babe, the injunction to “be bloody” becomes multivalent: it can mean at the same time to be cruel (as Macbeth takes it), to be wounded, and to memorialize his abject dependence upon his mother. In its ability to “mean” in various ways, the apparition of the bloody babe resembles nothing so much as a Shakespeare play.

It has not yet been observed, however, that the witches' incantations draw their power from another very physical connection to the bodies of the women of childhood. Verging on nonsense, the “magic” of spells is performed through their sounds, as in the hypnotic incantation “Double, double, toil and trouble, / Fire burn, and cauldron bubble” (IV.i.10-11). In their form and sound—their alliteration, emphatic tetrameters, frequent rhymes—these incantations present a striking resemblance to early modern nursery rhymes. In their exaggerated reliance on sound to make language “mean,” the witches' spells, like nursery rhymes, recapitulate a young child's early and very physical bond with nurses and/or mothers who rocked and bounced them to their sounds. This insistent linkage between bodily power and narrative gains further support from the writings of Julia Kristeva, who theorizes that poetry's nonsignifying practices, such as rhythm, rhyme, and alliteration, derive their “meaning” from what she calls the semiotic: the pulsations, rhythms, and tones which orient the preoedipal self to the mother's body. While Kristeva's theory applies with special intensity to witches' spells and nursery rhymes as archaic forms of poetry, it is not essential to an understanding of how
the rhythm of the heart and the repetition of the sounds in the mouth create a nonlogical assent for a couplet such as “Fair is foul, and foul is fair, / Hover through the fog and filthy air” (I.i.11-12). As Adelman notes, Macbeth's echo of the witches' rhyme in his first words, “So fair and foul a day I have not seen” casts doubts on “the very possibility of autonomous identity” of Macbeth from the witches. 39 This echo also casts doubts on the autonomy of Shakespeare's play from childhood nursery rhymes and from the women's bodies which gave them their primal meanings.

If this infantilizing and possibly even preoedipal material, closely tied to the female body experienced in childhood, forms the content of the cultural fantasy of the witches, what then is its function? Peter Stallybrass has explored the way Macbeth uses the witches to validate their antithesis, the godly rule of Banquo's heirs, including of course James I himself. 40 Macbeth undoubtedly functions in this way; this cleansing of Scotland of demonic female powers also reflects a liberating sense of James's rule in Great Britain after so many decades of the rules of his “mothers” Mary Stuart and Elizabeth. 41 But this use of the witches to legitimate a godly masculine alternative is not so clear-cut. Macduff's identity as “not of woman born” rests on a technicality. 42 No less than any other human, Macduff required his mother's body to conceive him, and a wet nurse's body to feed him. The meaning of his status as “not of woman born” is derived, finally, from an apparition staged by witches; and this women's narrative is as equivocal as Macbeth itself. Within Macbeth there is no clear escape from women's power, even in the political arena. James's own sovereignty, and even his life, remain contingent on the uninterrupted lineage staged in the witches' show of the eight kings descended from Banquo. The survival of Banquo's heirs still depends upon the terrifying and uncontrollable powers invested in the female reproductive body.

As a demonic version of women's authority experienced in childhood, the witches' narratives perform a yet more central function. In Macbeth, horror serves as an antidote to nostalgia. The sheer excess of the nightmare world of Macbeth suggests its defensive role as over-compensation, deriving from desire rather than revulsion for the childhood world of female dominance. This yearning for the closeness of childhood relationships with women surfaces in the heart-rending sweetness of the scene between Lady Macduff and her son, which radiates the same comfortable and comforting intimacy as the mother-son scene in Winter's Tale. The presence of this relationship between a mother and an actual child points to the emptiness of the cultural fantasy of regression staged in Macbeth.

Rather than nightmare horrors, the brief scene between Lady Macduff and her son provides the few moments of genuine intimacy the play affords. Theirs is a female-dominated environment; having joined Malcolm's forces, the father is noticeably absent, and Lady Macduff even pretends he is dead. Their interactions are marked by mutuality rather than dominance, so that the son can assertively answer his mother's question, “How will you do for a father?” with his own question, “Nay, how will you do for a husband?” (IV.ii.39-40). In easy collaboration, they author a fantasy, beginning with Lady Macduff's announcement of her husband's death, which her son does not believe, and ending with the son's humorous if morbid vision of the outnumbered honest men foolishly attempting to hang all the liars and swearers. Instead of the procreative functions permeating the narratives of Lady Macbeth and the witches, this fantasy touchingly evokes a sense of vulnerability and loss. But this scene of mutual and creative playfulness ends with the horrifying murder of the boy. Enacting a sudden and forced separation from his mother, his death, like that of Mamillius, recapitulates a potentially traumatic entry of boys into a masculine environment. While counterdiscourses also arose, the ethos of a warrior/humanist culture required androgynous boys to die into a newly formed masculine self.

3. THE TEMPEST

The subject of women's demonic authorship reappears in the Tempest, where the witchcraft of Sycorax defines, by opposition, the magic of Prospero. Prospero's allegation that Sycorax engaged in intercourse with the devil invests her bodily functions, like those of Shakespeare's other witches, with a power dangerously
outside patriarchal control. Sycorax's demonic maternity, like theirs, also permeates her art. The one magical act reported for this witch, dead before the play begins, was her confinement of Ariel in a “cloven pine” because he was “Too delicate / To act her earthy and abhorr’d commands” (I.ii.273-74). Her imprisonment of Ariel in a tree trunk, especially one “cloven” like a vagina, suggests a forced return to the womb. In the context of the anxieties about maternal dominance staged, for example, in Macbeth, Sycorax's punishment of Ariel was particularly horrifying; for this entrapment in the denigrated female body was precisely his object, and the object of any male in the early modern system, to escape. The twelve years of Ariel's suffering before he was rescued by Prospero points to this imprisonment as a misogynistic version of the early female environment; for boys were removed (or, from a humanist perspective, freed) sometime between the ages of seven and thirteen.

This demonic physicality of Sycorax's magic provides her with a dramatic function accounting for the otherwise puzzling prominence of her memorialization in The Tempest; for she is, to a much greater extent than Prospero's wife, given a name, a history, and a presence forcefully remembered by her survivors. The debasement of Sycorax's female black magic exalts Prospero's magic, and the theatrical spectacles he stages, as white and masculine. Deriving from an elaborate Neoplatonic system, the distinctions between Sycorax's black magic or “goety” and Prospero's white magic or “theurgy” articulate the split between body and mind organizing the Neoplatonic system. As described by Curry, the Neoplatonic cosmos was highly vertical, stretching from base matter at the bottom to Absolute Light at the top. Between these floated three forms of daemons classified by spiritual levels: the intellectual substances, the rational or “aereal” substances, and the irrational substances (175). The human soul was similarly verticalized between a higher or transcendent soul, able to unite mystically with the divine, and the lower or sensual soul, unable to survive separation from the body (176-77). Through the development of his upper soul, the theurgist could move beyond his body and its passions to participate harmoniously in the intellectual or divine spheres, which granted him the power to command the higher daemons. Motivated by the selfish passions of the lower soul, the geotist, on the other hand, disturbed the order of the cosmos with an inferior magic dependent on the lowest or irrational daemons. This magic further debased the geotist to the control of passion (180).

The plausibility of this Neoplatonic system depended on its rehearsal of the gendered relationships to the body accepted as “true” by early modern gender ideology. This ideology rendered legible, even predictable, the power of Prospero's theurgic art to transcend or deny the material body through the refinement of his higher spirit and the reading of learned books. The qualities empowering his magic also characterize the masculinity inculcated in boys in the humanist classroom: the transcendence of the body and the lower passions to engage in the exercise of reason and intellect. Sycorax's “earthy and abhorr'd commands,” on the other hand, identify her as a geotist, whose physicality is only exacerbated by her function as sinister Maternal. While Sycorax left little magic behind her beyond her punishment of Ariel, she did give birth to Caliban, “a freckled whelp, hag-born, not honor'd with / A human shape” whom she “littered” on the island (I.ii.282-83). Like his mother, Caliban is closely associated with his body and “brutish” passions. He is marginally human; Trinculo at first mistakes him for a fish (II.ii.24). Never proceeding farther than Miranda's elementary language instruction, Caliban presents a monitory example of a male too base to be inducted into schoolroom masculinity. While Caliban is hardly androgynous by modern definitions, his identity as “hag-seed” (I.ii.368) legitimates Prospero's domination, at least to Prospero. According to this system, Caliban's “female” bodiliness justifies his subjection to Prospero, just as Prospero's own body remains subjected to the rule of his masculine mind.

Demonstrating the masculinity as well as the sublimity of his art, Prospero's masterful transcendence of the material body is thoroughly exhibited by his successful use of Ariel, whose name identifies him with the rational substances inhabiting the “aerial” sphere. According to Agrippa, an ariel spirit was composed of pure intelligence, “free from all gross and putrefying mass of a body.” The plays Prospero produces through this daemon of intelligence, as Kermode notes, are designed to “liberate the soul from the passions.” Addressing the court party as “three men of sin” (III.iii.52), Ariel makes clear that his performance as a harpy is intended
not to amuse but to reform. The spirit-hounds Prospero and Ariel set on Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo replicate the punishment for passion in Golding’s moralization of Ovid's Actaeon myth.50 Prospero's graceful masque of Ceres forbids the presence of Venus or her “blind boy's scandall’d company” (IV.i.90). These classical references display an ideological connection between the goal of subjecting passions and Prospero's masculine attainment of a classical education. These characteristics inform The Tempest as a whole, with its allusions to Virgil's Aeneid and its conformity to the classical unities of time and place.51 In marked contrast to Macbeth and The Winter's Tale, The Tempest may be called, in a humanist sense, one of Shakespeare's most “masculine” works.

Paradoxically, the very rigidity of these divisions between masculine and feminine, mind and body, white and black magic presage their collapse by the end of The Tempest. These distinctions begin to weaken where they seem strongest: in Ariel's performances. Kermode has discussed the attributes Ariel shares with English fairies: he is small enough to couch in a cowslip's bell; he abhors unchastity; and like Puck, he leads mortals into standing pools.52 These similarities link Ariel, the “airy spirit” of Neoplatonic philosophy, to the diminutive creatures of childhood stories. Even more striking are the noises of beasts—the “bow-wow” of dogs, the “cock-a-diddle-dow” of a rooster (I.i.382, 384, 386)—in the songs of this “spirit of pure intelligence.” Like the incantations of the witches in Macbeth, the “magic” of Ariel's songs bears striking resemblances to the nursery rhymes of early modern childhood in which these noises also appeared, such as “Bow, wow, wow, / Whose dog art thou? / Little Tom Tinker's Dog, / Bow, wow, wow” or the ancient “onomatoplasm” of “Cock a doodle doo, / My Dame has lost her shoe.” The “ding dong bell” of his ethereal song “Full fathom five” echoes the rhyme “Ding dong Bell, / The Cat is in the Well.”53 In these rhymes, Ariel's art perhaps reveals its debt to his twelve years in Sycorax's tree/womb.

Caliban's sensitivity to music also blurs the otherwise exaggerated distinctions between the ethereal Ariel and this bestial “hag-seed” of Sycorax. Caliban's moving description of these “sounds and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not” evoke a child's intense response to a lullaby:

The clouds methought would open, and show riches
Ready to drop upon me, that when I wak’d
cried to dream again.

(III.i.139-42)

Like Ariel's songs, Caliban's song shows the influence of nursery rhymes. Caliban's composition, however, contributes a specifically political angle: his jingle, “‘Ban, ‘Ban, Ca-Caliban / Has a new master, get a new man” (II.i.184-85), adapts a common derivation of numerous nursery rhymes as expressions of popular protest.54

This blurring of the initially clear differences between Ariel and Caliban, between classical myth and nursery rhyme, implicitly weakens Prospero's claim as ruler of this island. Demonstrated in the rational control of the body and its passions, the masculinity instilled in the schoolroom was to legitimate authority over others. As various critics have pointed out, however, Prospero is not always rational. He becomes irritated at Miranda on little pretext and he apparently desires vengeance on the court party. Most destructive to these gendered distinctions, however, is his vengeful threat to Ariel to enact the same form of punishment inflicted by Sycorax for resistance to his commands: to “rend an oak, / And peg thee in his knotty entrails” (I.i.295-96). It is surely no coincidence that this image blurs the differences between male and female bodies. The pronoun “his” describing the tree's entrails reveals that Prospero's trunk, like that of Sycorax, has a human interior. The placement of a creature inside the entrails of a male, to form a kind of male womb, expresses the early modern sense of the essential physiological similarity of the genitalia of men and women.55
Prospero's earlier description of his own body as a trunk in the process of destruction by Antonio prepares for this dissolution of distinctions based on gender. In addition to identifying the similarities of genitalia, this image expresses what for Prospero is perhaps an even more radical identification of himself as a "trunk," or a physical body apart from soul or mind:

He was
The ivy which hid my princely trunk,
And suck'd my verdure out on't.
(I.ii.85-87)

In this representation of Antonio's sucking, an image of oral sexuality merges with that of maternal nursing. Prospero has become a lactating male who nourishes his parasite/child through the loss of his own semen/milk. He is effeminized, not by a homoerotic act, but by the power relationship it inscribes. In the circumstances leading up to Antonio's sucking out of Prospero's strength call into question the humanist version of masculinity structuring The Tempest. Prospero lost his power over Antonio as well as Milan by engaging precisely in those practices upon which he based his magic: by reading learned books. “Rapt in secret studies” (I.ii.77), Prospero gave Antonio the “manage” of his state. Prospero chose his library as “dukedom large enough,” while Antonio thought him “incapable” of “temporal royalties” (I.ii.110-11). Like Sycorax, he was banished from his realm. The image of fantasized pregnancy he uses to describe his care of his three-year-old daughter stresses its effeminizing effect. As Adelman notes, “he ‘groan’d’ under his ‘burthen’: her smiles ‘rais’d in [him] / An undergoing stomach, to bear up / Against what should ensue’” (I.ii.156-58). The intellectual mastery empowering Prospero's control of his island did not work in Milan. Precisely because of his “trunk,” his bodiliness, Prospero was vulnerable to physical force. Faced with naked political power, men of intellect—including magicians/playwrights—become as powerless as women. Perhaps because of this failure of Prospero's learned magic, and the form of masculinity it implied, Prospero renounces his art as he prepares to return to Milan. Various critics have noted that the lines between white and black magic begin to blur in Prospero's renunciation, especially in his claim that “graves at my command / Have wak’d their sleepers, op’d, and let ’em forth / By my so potent art” (V.i.48-50). These lines translated were spoken by Medea, an enchantress often represented as a witch in the early modern period. According to Jean Bodin's influential Demonomanie des sorciers, these lines composed an actual witch's incantation which the devil had seduced Ovid into including in his work. So who was the actual author of Medea's words? As he concludes his discussion of Medea's lines with the warning that the Devil has deceived men in all languages, including Latin, Bodin represents the poet as no more in control of his text than his character Medea. Ovid was only an intermediary; the real author was the Devil. With this claim, Ovid's mastery of Medea is no longer so clear. In Bodin's reading, this learned...
Latin text collapses into the demonic incantation it contains. And so, by implication, does Shakespeare's rendering of Prospero's renunciation, a translation of Ovid's lines spoken by Medea. Latin poet, classical enchantress, female witch, male magus, and even male playwright: all become indistinguishable in a whirling witch's brew.64

The issue at stake in Shakespeare's use of a witch's incantation is not so much literal belief as the identification of the male playwright with the very real powers attributed to female narratives through the staging of witches. As Prospero stands forward on the stage to speak the forbidden incantation of a witch, he not only renounces his art, but also the gender distinctions which that art rehearsed. With Prospero's renunciation, Shakespeare, in a sense, returns his own writing to the androgyrous period dominated by women when narratives really were magic. This return is signified by the fairy tale lore embedded within his translation from Ovid. Like Golding, Shakespeare translates “di” as “elves” in the line, “Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes, and groves” (V.i.32), but he has no apparent source for the invocation to “demi-puppets that / By moonshine do the green sour ringlets make, / Whereof the ewe not bites” (36-38) or to “you whose pastime / Is to make midnight mushrumps, that rejoice / To hear the solemn curfew” (38-40). It is through the aid of these local deities, “weak masters” though they be, that Prospero, and Shakespeare as well, “bedimm’d / The noontide sun” and even, like Paulina, seemed to open graves. Is there a connection between Prospero's renunciation of his art and this passage which is simultaneously a Latin poem, a witch's incantation, and fairy tale lore? Does this connection imply a parallel renunciation by the playwright of an art indebted to childhood narratives told by women?

There is another possibility, however, which suggests an acceptance rather than a rejection of old wives' tales. In the face of death, the mortal meanings of the physical body cannot be denied; and under the pressure of mortality, Prospero returns to his body. Soon after his renunciation speech, Prospero expresses his vulnerability to death, to foresee that in his retirement in Milan, “every third thought shall be my grave” (V.i.311). Enacting a return of the repressed, a series of womb images encribes this movement towards death as a full-circle return to the comfort of women's bodies, represented as the locus of mortality as well as life. In Act III, Alonzo believes that his son “i’ th’ ooze is bedded” (III.iii.101); later he repeats this image in his desire to lie “muddled in that oozy bed / Where my son lies” (V.i.151-52). These repeated images of drowning as lying “bedded” in “ooze” imagine death by drowning as a return to the womb. Ariel's song, “Full fathom five,” strikingly enacts the miraculous power of the art of birth/death practiced by this sea womb upon the body, capable of turning bones to coral and eyes to pearls. It is to this sea womb that Prospero returns his book, drowning it “deeper than did ever plummet sound” (V.i.55). In drowning his book, Prospero renounces not only his art, but the form of learned masculinity it signifies.

As Prospero perceives himself in terms of his mortal bodiliness, the power of his learning to elevate him above the flesh and the feminine loses its relevance. Stepping forward to ask the prayers of the audience, Prospero enacts a new and moving dependence. Freed from the authoritative presence of the learned magus, Prospero returns to the wise vulnerability of a child as he embarks on his longer journey towards the womb of death.

Notes


10. Rackin, 76; this early modern commonplace was publicized from, for example, the homily on marriage, cited in Lawrence Stone, The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England, 1500-1800 (New York: Harper and Row), 198.

11. This flight was not limited to early modern schoolrooms: see R. Howard Bloch, “Medieval Misogyny,” Representations 20 (1987): 15, who defines misogyny as “the desire to escape the sense, perception, the corporeal”; he also associates the literary with the feminine, although for different reasons from mine.


16. Fleming, 158, notes that since “the category of the aesthetic” was “absent” in early modern England, fictions written primarily to entertain were often represented as only “trifles” or “toys” suitable only to reading by women. George Peele’s Old Wives’ Tales conveys the delight possible to a late night tale told by a lower-class woman to three young pages.


18. The implications of Mamillius' name are discussed well by Paster, 265; her discussion of the forceful removal of an infant through wet-nursing prefigures and exaggerates the later trauma of a boy's separation from the women who raised him.


20. This regressive identification is discussed well by Paster, 265; Adelman, 224-25; and Coppelia Kahn, Man's Estate: Masculine Identity in Shakespeare (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 216, who notes that Leontes is emotionally stuck in the symbiotic stage of development.


25. Erickson, 158.


29. Baron, 265; Kahn, 153-54; Willbern, 522-30.

30. Fox, 129.


32. For association of witches and nurses, see Willis, 36-37; Paster, 248-60; Stone, 65; Adelman, 4; Karen Newman, 58. Dorothy McLaren, “Marital Fertility and Lactation, 1570-1720,” in Women in English Society, 1500-1800, ed. Mary Prior (London: Methuen, 1985), 32 suggests the actual infant mortality rate for wet-nursed infants may be exaggerated. However, see also Keith Wrightson.
“Infanticide in European History,” *Criminal Justice History* 3 (1982): 12, who discusses the apparently deliberate role of certain wet nurses who “tacitly guaranteed” an “early death” for unwanted babies.

33. Willis, 64.


35. Kahn, 181; for slightly different readings see Adelman, 140 and Callagan, 361.

36. This double meaning of blood relates to the paradoxical significances of wounds as at once attesting to “a (feminine) vulnerability” and serving as “a cultural marker of manly virtue,” as ably discussed by Coppelia Kahn, *Roman Shakespeare: Warriors, Wounds, and Women* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 18.


42. Adelman, 140, further notes that “the play curiously enacts the fantasy that it seems to deny.”


45. Adelman, 237, suggests the connection between the intellectuality of Prospero's art and his banishment of the mother in the form of Sycorax as Prospero reshapes “the world in the image of his own mind.”

46. The horror (or the even more frightening nostalgia) for this period of female domination is perhaps the source of the “dread potential within Shakespeare's imagination of women” discerned in the representation of Sycorax's art by C. L. Barber and Richard P. Wheeler, *The Whole Journey: Shakespeare's Power of Development* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 336.

47. This naturalization of Prospero's rule over Caliban connects a gendered reading of *The Tempest* with recent colonialist readings to confirm Klaus Theweleit's claim that “the imperialist drives of the European world against ‘primitive’ peoples” formed one aspect of an “inner imperialism that took as its territories lands formed from the subjugated nature of female bodies” (*Male Fantasies*, trans. Stephen Conway [Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1987], 322).

48. As quoted and discussed by Kermode, 143.

49. Kermode, xlvii.


51. One of many such discussions of *The Tempest's* debt to Virgil is Donna B. Hamilton, “Defiguring Virgil in *The Tempest,*” *Style* 23 (1989): 352-75.
My thanks to Barbara Hodgdon for reading an earlier draft of this essay.

Criticism: Sources, Influences, And Ideologies: Scott F. Crider (essay date 1999)


[In the essay below, Crider contends that the “mythic” and “theatrical” readings of Hermione are not mutually exclusive—that Hermione can be read as being both “dead and alive”—and provides textual evidence for both readings by examining Ovid’s Metamorphoses.]

When there is poetry, it is Orpheus singing.

—Rilke, Sonnets to Orpheus (1.5)
It is now a critical commonplace that Hermione is merely pretending to be a statue in the last act of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* and that, as a consequence, there is no actual animation represented there. As Stephen Orgel explains in his introduction to the Oxford edition of the play, “Hermione is not, after all, a statue” (60). The evidence of the play, however, is rather less conclusive than Orgel’s confidence would suggest. Using Jonathan Bate’s fine distinction in *Shakespeare and Ovid*, we can say that Orgel has decided against the “mythic” reading of the scene and in favor of the “theatrical”: A mythic reading would allow that, within the mimetic world of the play, Hermione is a statue and then becomes, in the mythic mode, a woman; a theatrical reading assumes that she is pretending to be a statue and performs, in the theatrical mode, the animation. Bate’s reading of the play is characteristically fine, but he too precludes a “mythic” reading, and he too assumes rather than argues the case:

> [T]his is not really an animation or a resurrection. Paulina is staging a theatrical coup.
Shakespeare has triumphantly moved from Ovid's key of myth into his own of drama. … As the preserved Hermione pretends to be a statue coming to life, so does the boy actor. When we realize that Paulina and Hermione are staging a performance and when we see the correspondence between character and actor, we recognize that the magic which Paulina claims to be lawful is that of theater.

(237-8)

Throughout, Bate assumes that theater and myth are mutually exclusive. This assumption cannot do justice to the play's ambiguity, because there is textual evidence for both the theatrical and the mythic readings. The question is this: Is the animation actual, or is it a representation of an animation? Both Orgel and Bate assume that, without a doubt, we may not say that a statue of Hermione becomes Hermione herself. Hermione must never have been dead. Again, the play does not share their confidence. In fact, its very ambiguity denies that the two modes—theatrical and mythic—are exclusive, enacting a tension between the two which is itself mythic, demanding as it does that the audience experience the moment as simultaneously both. As Jean-Pierre Vernant explains in *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece*, “[M]yth brings into operation a form of logic that we may describe, in contrast to the logic of non-contradiction of the philosophers, as a logic of the ambiguous, the equivocal, a logic of polarity” (260). This “logic of the ambiguous” is the mythic logic of the statue scene in 5.3 of *The Winter's Tale*, yet Bate’s humane skepticism would preclude our discernment of that mythic logic, a logic which allows Shakespearean mimesis to have two objects at once: a mythic *praxis* and a theatrical.¹

Why does Shakespeare do this? To answer the question, I would like first to examine the intertextual relationship in the scene between Shakespeare and Ovid, the trace within 5.3 of both the Pygmalion tale and the Orphic frame of that tale in the tenth book of the *Metamorphoses*. I know of only two discussions of this point.² My provisional argument is that the play demands a double-reading, one in which Hermione is both dead and alive, and the statue scene is both mythic animation and theatrical performance. No reading of the play can perform the scene one way without suppressing the other. We begin to discern Shakespeare's intention when we remember that the Pygmalion tale, so often recognized as a source for the scene,³ is actually told by Orpheus in Ovid's epic poem, one of the many tales he tells after Eurydice's death and before his own at the hands of the Thracian women. The Pygmalion tale *per se* is not a source for the scene; the tale *as told by Orpheus* is. Once we recognize that we must attend, not simply to the tale, but to the tale-within-the-tale, we can begin to explore the play's central ambiguity. There are three parts to my full discussion: The first examines Ovid; the second, Shakespeare's appropriation of Ovid; the third, that appropriation as a figure for literary history itself, the archive of the poetic tradition. The Orphic frame of the Pygmalion tale in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* suggests that the particular tale is a romance Orpheus fashions to make his own tragic circumstances intelligible to himself, a romance which, because of the frame, enacts Orpheus’ desire for a *mimesis* which can transform the real. This Orphic romance, including both the animation of Pygmalion's statue and the death of Eurydice, is a classical, pagan mystery, a mystery for which
death is an absolute horizon because both faith and love, though not art, fail before the ultimate givenness of mortality. When Shakespeare appropriates and transforms the tale of Pygmalion, he also appropriates and transforms the Orphic frame, disclosing an Orphic presence in the statue scene which will not allow us to preclude Hermione's actual animation. Shakespeare's revision of Ovid will allow the possibility that art, faith, and love might be able to triumph, if only briefly, over death; this is a Renaissance, pagan mystery in which mimesis can transform the real. For Shakespearean romance, art, faith, and love are not completely powerless before death. Indeed, Shakespeare's poetic friendship with Ovid, a friendship Bate has gone a long way to illuminate, reveals that the literary tradition is itself a series of reanimations in which the living bestow life on the dead.

The archive of poetry is the temple of Orpheus: We examine now only its historicized ruins, the pieces of stone we can see and measure; what such an examination fails to sense is the music which animates stone, a music at once both ancient and present. Shakespeare is not only an early modern, but also a late ancient. His lyre is Orpheus'. Ovid gave it to him.

I

Stories ... make endurable our losses.

—George Steiner, “Two Cocks” (384)

The story is worth the telling. Orpheus' bride Eurydice dies on their wedding day, bitten in the heel by a snake (10.1-10), and Orpheus descends into the underworld to restore her, singing there a song (11-39) which persuades Pluto and Proserpina to release Eurydice on one condition: as Orpheus leads her up and out to the upper world, he is not to look back at her (40-52). Leading her out, he does just that, losing her again. After mourning for her in the underworld itself, he returns to the upper world where he forsakes the love of woman for that of young men (52-85). On a hill in Thrace where the trees have gathered to him (86-142), Orpheus sings five songs to himself: After his invocation and designated subject (148-54), he sings of Jupiter and Ganymede (155-61), Apollo and Hyacinthus (162-219), Pygmalion and Galatea (220-97), Cinyras and Myrra (298-502), and Venus and Adonis (503-739). (Venus herself tells the tale of Atalanta and Hippomenes to Adonis [566-707]). After singing his songs, Orpheus is dismembered by the Thracian women and reunited with Eurydice in the underworld, where the two play their game of “follow-the-leader” (11.1-85). All the tales must be understood metafictionally within the context of Orpheus' own tragic circumstances, especially the tale of the misogynist Pygmalion, the sculptor who, disgusted by the Propeotides, fashions through his own art an ideal woman he then desires and, after Venus' intervention, animates and marries. Interestingly, this is the one tale which does not enact the subject Orpheus earlier announced:

But now I need a milder style to tell of pretty boys
That were the darlings of the Gods: and of unlawful joys
That burned in the breasts of Girls, who for their wicked lust
According as they did deserve, received penance just.

(152-4; 157-10)

The “pretty boys” are Ganymede, Hyacinthus and Adonis; the “Girls” of “unlawful joys”are Myrra and Venus. (The tale of Venus and Adonis combines both subjects.) What of the tale of Pygmalion, though? The tales before it enact the first subject; those after, the second. Because the Pygmalion tale itself does not fit the announced subjects, I would suggest that it is a tale the teller had not planned on telling, a tale whose catalyst is Apollo's mourning for Hyacinthus. Apollo accidently kills his pretty boy, remember, because the disc he threw takes a bad bounce and strikes him dead. As Orpheus has Apollo lament,

Thou fad’st away, my Hyacinth, defrauded of thy prime
Of youth (quoth Phoebus) and I see thy would my heinous crime.
Thou art my sorrow and my fault: this hand of mine hath wrought
Thy death: I like a murtherer have to thy grave thee brought.

(196-9; 207-10)

Orpheus, aware of the parallel between Apollo's responsibility for Hyacinthus' death and his own for Eurydice's, then fashions a romance calibrated to make endurable his loss.

If one reads the Pygmalion tale with reference to its Orphic frame, one discovers that it is a more serious narrative than it appears in isolation. In Orpheus: The Myth of the Poet, Charles Segal reads Orpheus as Pygmalion's double in the tale (85-9), a doubling which reveals Ovid's poetic purpose: “By enclosing the story of Pygmalion within that of Orpheus, Ovid reflects on both the power and the limitations of art” (89). For Segal, Pygmalion's capacity, with Venus' divine assistance, to animate the statue comments upon Orpheus' inability to have brought Eurydice back from the dead; because the Pygmalion tale concerns only love and art, though—and not love, art and death—it is not a serious tale (88-9). For Segal, the power of Pygmalion's art to triumph over lifelessness, figured in Ovid's poem as stone, is diminished by the fact of Orphic art's failure before death.

This interpretation is true if one isolates the two narratives, then compares them as independent tales. This isolation diminishes the nature of the two stories, though; Ovid chooses to tell the one inside the other. Strictly speaking, there are not two narratives; instead, there is one narrative within another. Ovidian narrative is a perpetuum ... carmen (1.5), remember; its “course” will run “directly” (1.4), according to Golding. The poem is ultimately one tale, all the tales within it versions of a single human action: the narrative of metamorphosis, “shapes transformed to bodies strange” (1.1-2; 1.1). Ovid wants us to see one, continually changing story. Granted, one can separate the tales. In the case of Orpheus' songs, however, such a separation is not a good idea. One should not isolate the Pygmalion narrative from its Orphic frame because the mimesis Orpheus fashions represents his own praxis in order to make it intelligible to himself. Romance is not simply mystification; it is also clarification. Romance clarifies for us our desire to transcend our own mortality and to help others transcend theirs. Romance clarifies the fact that the beloved's death is often the result of the lover's inadequate love, not his or her inadequacy art. In the Ovidian account, after all, Orpheus' failure is not a failure of art. His song to Pluto and Proserpina succeeds in reclaiming Eurydice from death: “And neither Pluto nor his Lady were so strong / And hard of stomach to withhold his just petition long” (46-7; 50-1). Orpheus' art saves her; his ethical weakness, his incapacity to keep the terms of her release, loses her. What, exactly, is that ethical weakness? The text is ambiguous. As they are ascending, he does indeed look back:

They took a path that steep upright
Rose dark and full of foggy mist. And now they were within
A kenning of the upper earth, when Orpheus did begin
To doubt him lest she followed not, and through an eager love
Desirous for to see her his eyes did backward move.
Immediately she slipped back.

(53-7; 56-60)

Ovid provides two tragic errors, both of which indicate ethical failure: First, Orpheus fails because he is eager to see her; second, he fails because he begins to doubt that she is following him. The first weakness is incontinence. What is the second? The Ovidian narrator passes by the doubt silently, saying only—and sarcastically—“For why what had she to complain, unless it were of love / which made her husband back again his eyes upon her move?” (61; 65-6). The reader, remembering as he or she will how Orpheus lost her again—it has only been ten lines—cannot fail to notice that the narrator stresses only Orpheus' incontinence, not at all his doubt. What is the nature of Orphic doubt? Who is its object, the gods or his wife? Does he
believe that Pluto and Proserpina have failed to stand by their word, or does he believe that Eurydice has failed to make the journey? The text is indeterminate: How, after all, is one to translate “ne … deficeret” (56)? Orphic doubt may be either erotic or metaphysical or both, and the Ovidian indeterminacy may disclose an affinity between piety and love.

What we can say with certainty is this: Orpheus' failure is not artistic. If the arts of our poet and our sculptor are triumphs, then, Orpheus' faith is not as strong as Pygmalion's, and Orpheus recognizes as much in his romance by emphasizing Pygmalion's faith in Venus. Pygmalion's art is necessary for Galatea's metamorphosis, but it is insufficient. Prayer is required. At Venus' festival, Pygmalion prays for a woman like the statue he loves (250-76). Having fashioned a mimesis of an ideal woman, he now desires a real woman like her (276), a real simulation of his imaginary simulation of a real ideal. Pygmalion reveals piety, humility, and—given his earlier autoerotic activities with the statue (251-69)—a portion of foolishness here. He is not in the least skeptical about his beloved or his gods. Orpheus was. If examined alone, the romance Orpheus fashions is ridiculous; if examined as his tale, it is quite serious indeed, although not without Ovidian humor. Ovid indicates that Orpheus' desire to transform the real by means of mimesis fails through doubt. It is no accident that the presiding deity in Orpheus' own tragic life is Death, but that the presiding deity in his story is Love. Depending on the nature of his doubt, Orpheus either fails to love Eurydice enough or doubted the gods too much. Pygmalion's miracle is Orpheus' comment upon both. In the middle of a series of tales of erotic "deviancy," Orpheus makes his own tragic error intelligible to himself, an intelligibility which, in the Aristotelian understanding, is what poetry is for. The Pygmalion tale, then, is not, as Segal would have it, "pure indulgence" (88-9); instead, it allows the reader to see that Orpheus is capable of educating himself through poetry. The tales within the Orphic frame constitute an inseparable whole, and—in the metafictional relation between Pygmalion and Orpheus—the Ovidian object of representation turns out to be art's limited capacity, when activated by the faith of love, to suspend death, if only for a short time. Of course, even romance has its limits.

After all, Galatea will eventually die, and, even had Orpheus achieved Eurydice's life, she too would have eventually died. He concedes as much in the song he sings in the underworld, a song which I believe is more moving than is often recognized. Orpheus' song appeals to Pluto and Proserpina by highlighting the necessity of death, even if—in this one case—it is postponed. Orphic transcendence is limited:

All things to you belong.
And though we lingering for a while our pageants do prolong,
Yet soon or late we all to one abiding place do roam:
We haste us hither all: this place becomes our latest home:
And you do over human kind reign longest time. Now when
This woman shall have lived full her time, she shall again
Become your own.

(31-7; 33-9)

Pagan reanimation, unlike Christian resurrection, still operates within the horizon of death, and there are other than Christian miracles. The gods themselves were moved enough by Orpheus' concession to them that death remains an ultimate limit for human beings to lend her to him, if he can meet their condition. Ovidian irony does not undermine this concession; without Virgilian sentiment, Ovid moves us. Orpheus' tales are indeed a fusion of the serious and the ridiculous, neither element a repudiation of the other. Orpheus operates in the Metamorphoses as a figure for Ovid himself. If William Anderson is right in "The Orpheus of Virgil and Ovid" that Orpheus is "a performer, egotistic, calculating, self-dramatizing" (47), so too is Ovid, yet neither vates is simply that. Ovid is the poet who dwells inside the archive of his own
poem, both animating others and awaiting animation, both Orpheus and Eurydice, Pygmalion and Galatea. He awaits a lover capable of leading him out into the upper world, and in the final lines of Ovid's own cosmos, even as he is reanimating Horace through the Horation formula of poetic immortality,\textsuperscript{10} he himself awaits reanimation: “And time without all end / (If poets as by prophesy about the truth may aim) / My life shall everlastingly be lengthened by fame” (878-9, 993-5). Ovid believes that he will live vivam, that his presence will endure as does the presence of other poets, those he himself ironizes and honors. Ovid waits inside his poem for his own lover.

II

[F]or her to return to him is for him to recognize her; and for him to recognize her is for him to recognize his relation to her; in particular what his denial of her has done to her, hence to him. So Leontes recognizes the fate of stone to be the consequence of his particular skepticism.

—Stanley Cavell, \textit{The Claim of Reason} (481)

When Shakespeare reanimates Ovid in \textit{The Winter's Tale}, he does so by appropriating and metamorphosing not only the Pygmalion tale, but also its Orphic frame. The statue scene interrogates the essence of aesthetics, of course, the relationship between art and nature, between the mimetic and the real.\textsuperscript{11} If the scene is “theatrical,” then Hermione performs as a statue who comes to life; if it is “mythic,” she is one who does so. The metafictional narrative of Ovid's poem, including as it does the tale-within-the-tale, assists us in a reading of the scene and the play. Though I will concede the scene may be read either theatrically or mythically, I will read it mythically first, only allowing the theatrical reading later. That is, I will assume for now that Hermione has actually died.

The Pygmalion tale will often obscure the sequence unless the Orphic frame is called upon for assistance. Leontes and Perdita have come to see “the statue of our Queen” in Paulina's gallery (5.3.10), and, when Paulina exhibits it to them, they are silent (21). Leontes' response indicates that Giulio Romano is a kind of Pygmalion, one able to represent with such mimetic force that one might imagine the stone has human being:

\begin{verbatim}
Chide me, dear stone, that I may say indeed
Thou art Hermione—or rather, thou art she
In not chiding; for she was as tender
As infancy and grace.
\end{verbatim}

(24-7)

“Thou \textit{art} Hermione”: Unlike Pygmalion's statue, this is not a statue of an ideal woman; it is a statue of Leontes' wife, a woman whose death he himself caused through faithlessness. Though 5.3 often employs the ridiculousness of the Pygmalion sequence in Ovid—Hermione's wrinkles (28), for example, or the prospect that Leontes will smear the statue's paint, not yet dry, were he to kiss it (42-48)—the Orphic frame reminds us that Leontes is standing before a representation not only of his dead wife, but also of his own tragic error or \textit{hamartia} in destroying her. It is he who destroyed her, death figured as the hard stillness of stone. After Paulina explains “Hermione's” age by pointing out that the sculptor made her, not as she \textit{was}, but as she \textit{might have been}, had she lived,\textsuperscript{12} Leontes begins a meditation upon his own Orphic failure:

\begin{verbatim}
O, thus she stood,
Even with such life of majesty—warm life
As now it coldly stands—when first I wooed her.
I am ashamed. Does not the stone rebuke me
For being more stone that it? O royal piece!
\end{verbatim}
There’s magic in thy majesty, which has
My evils conjured to remembrance. ...

(34-40)

Pygmalion's statue is only an actual person once Venus animates her, but the statue of Hermione is a representation of a person now dead, whose very death was this observer's responsibility. Leontes is both Pygmalion and Orpheus in the sequence; or, drawing upon my reading of Ovid, he is Orpheus as Orpheus imagines himself as Pygmalion. Leontes' “evil” was doubt, here a more specific doubt than Orpheus'—doubt concerning Hermione's fidelity—but doubt nonetheless; essentially, it was the doubt concerning the presence of the other. Both Orpheus and Leontes doubted female presence and destroyed the women they loved through such doubt. Only by means of a form of mimetic madness both Orphic and Pygmalionist—Orpheus' madness in descending to the underworld, Pygmalion's in imagining that his statue is an actual woman—can Leontes repair history: Art can conquer death only through the faith of love. This scene appropriates both the ridiculousness of Pygmalion and the seriousness of Orpheus in order to transform the source into a moment that reads Orpheus' understanding of his own tale: Belief in the presence of the other is an act of faith; we are all stone before the loveless gaze, all animated by the glance of love. Our contemporary conversation concerning desire has obscured the madness of love, a madness which compels Orpheus to pass over to the dark side of being in search of his dead beloved:

Paulina: I'll draw
the curtain.
My lord's so far transported that
He'll think anon it lives.
Leontes: O sweet Paulina,
Make me to think so twenty years together!
No settled senses of the world can match
The pleasure of that madness.

(68-73)

Mimetic madness is necessary for reanimation, but it is not, however, sufficient. Only faith can animate stone. As Paulina instructs him, “It is required / You do awake your faith” (94-5). It is, of course, at this moment that music begins and “Hermione” the statue becomes Hermione, “[b]equeath[ing] to Death [her] numbness, for from him / Dear life redeems [her]” (102-3). The romance of The Winter's Tale is Orphic: Leontes is both Orpheus and Pygmalion; Hermione is Eurydice. Without the Orphic frame, one might assume that the scene is moving because it rejects Ovidian irony; with the frame, though, we see that it moves us because it transforms Ovidian irony by actualizing a sentiment potential within Ovid which Ovid did not himself, however, actualize, leaving only implicit the relation between tale and frame. The Ovidian frame augments our understanding of Shakespearean romance, animated as that romance is by the desire to conquer death. The scene certainly enacts, as Leonard Barkin puts it in The Gods Made Flesh, “a pagan mystery” (287), one which concerns the animating principle of human recognition of the presence of the other, a principle which Orpheus doubts, but Leontes by 5.3 believes.

This reading has all along assumed that Hermione did in fact die and that the statue of her is not Hermione pretending to be a statue of herself, yet the play is no more unambiguously “mythic” than it is unambiguously “dramatic.” Ultimately, I am trying to qualify, not refute the theatrical reading of the play. I count seven moments in the play where one must choose a reading either mythical or theatrical: First, Paulina's announcement that Hermione is dead (3.2.170-241); second, Antigonus' relation of Hermione's visitation (3.3.15-45); third, Paulina's suggestion to Leontes that he remarry when Hermione is alive again (5.1.77-84); fourth, the Third Gentleman's relation of the existence of the statue (5.2.102-6); fifth, the Second Gentleman's report of Paulina's daily visits to the chapel (125-30); sixth, Hermione's explanation of events in the chapel (5.3.125-30); and, seventh, Leontes' statement that he saw Hermione dead (139-41). All seven moments will
allow either reading, but some are easier to perform one way rather than the other. The “theatrical” reading would interpret each piece of evidence something like this: Paulina lies when she announces Hermione's death in order to preserve her until Perdita returns (1), as Hermione herself explains after her performance of animation (6); Antigonus' vision is only a dream (2); Paulina, knowing that Hermione is really alive, can offer Leontes the possibility that she will return (3); the statue Romano fashioned (4), either from a living Hermione or from some idea or image of her, is still around somewhere, Hermione having imitated it during the chapel scene, or it was a fiction all along; Paulina visited the chapel twice a day to feed Hermione (5); and Leontes only thought he saw her dead (7). This reading works, but I hope my reader will allow that it is less than fully persuasive concerning Antigonus' dream (2) and Romano's statue (4). The “mythical” reading, on the other hand, would interpret each of the six pieces of evidence something rather like this: Paulina announces an actual death (1); Antigonus has a genuine vision of Hermione's ghost (2); Paulina believes that Leontes will be able to reanimate the statue, so she offers him the hope that she will return (3); Romano's statue, the one others have seen and spoken of, is what all in 5.3 actually see before it becomes Hermione herself (4); Paulina's magic, whatever its exact nature, requires that she be in the chapel twice a day to prepare the lawful miracle (5); Hermione's report that she “preserved” herself (5.3.127-8) is a lie to preclude questions about the reanimation, which is why Paulina cuts her off (6); and Leontes did, in fact, see her dead (7). This reading too works, but I concede that it is less than fully persuasive concerning Paulina's visits (5) and Hermione's explanations (6). Each reading accommodates five of the seven moments. The play will allow, then, either reading, yet neither reading will be fully persuasive. If my reading of the evidence has been at all adequate, no critic should ever be allowed to assume uncritically the theatrical reading now so dominant that it simply goes without saying that Hermione is not, after all, a statue.

Why does Shakespeare design into the play this central ambiguity? Or, rather, why does he design the ambiguity in such a way that no full performance will ever fully persuade an audience of the governing interpretation? Because he wants the mythic logic of the play experienced as such. Its plot or muthos is double, and a performance of that plot precludes the viewer from dwelling comfortably within either a skeptical or an enchanted mimetic world. Why, then, does he desire this doubleness? Because the human action represented is double. We are beings who, through an art motivated by love and faith, both can and cannot save the dead from death. The theatrical reading reminds one of Hermione's death; the mythical, of her reanimation. After all, we who weep in the upper world long for souls who have passed from bodies, and—in our most inspired moments—fashion new bodies for them, mimetic vessels we hope somehow will contain and carry their presences. Do such vessels really contain them? Can the lyre of Orpheus really raise the dead? A just representation of such a question must be double, both theatrical and mythic simultaneously. If the theatrical dominates, as it now does, death overwhelms art; if the mythical were to dominate, art would overwhelm death. In the late plays, Shakespeare's paganism precludes a single response, yet only in The Winter's Tale does he succeed in holding that doubleness in so fine a tension that a mature performance of the play requires that those involved, on the stage and in the audience, must descend into the ambiguity of (im)mortality. For some, Hermione does not die, so she is not reanimated; for others, she dies, so she is. Both responses are inadequate. Ultimately, the play discloses to us the character of our own faith, compelling us to live a question about ourselves: Can we awaken our faith in the presence of death? In Ovid's poem, Orpheus fails; in the first three acts of Shakespeare's play, Leontes too fails. In the last act, though, Leontes does not fail. How fully he succeeds is the question the play enacts. About the fact of the death of the beloved, we experience the logic of polarity in silent wonder. Any other response would make death unintelligible.

III

There is neither friendship nor justice toward soulless things.

—Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics (1161b2)

Stranger, if you passing
Shakespeare's appropriation and transformation of Ovid offers a figure for literary history itself, the nature of the archive of poetry. To see how, one may begin with what is now a mythic moment in Shakespearean studies, Steven Greenblatt's failed “desire to speak with the dead”:

If I never believed that the dead could hear me, and if I knew that the dead could not speak, I was nonetheless certain that I could re-create a conversation with them. Even when I came to understand that in my most intense moments of straining to listen all I could hear was my own voice, even then I did not abandon my desire. It was true that I could hear only my own voice, but my own voice was the voice of the dead, for the dead had contrived to leave textual traces of themselves, and those traces make themselves heard in the voices of the living. (1)

Though he assumes both that he is hearing only his own voice and that his voice has been fashioned by the voices of History, he does not forsake listening to simulated voices, “for simulations are undertaken in full awareness of the absence of the life they contrive to represent, and hence they may skillfully anticipate and compensate for the vanishing of the actual life that has empowered them” (1). I admire this author for expressing the desire to speak with the dead, but I want to question his assumption that this desire must fail. As one of his own chosen authors, Michel Foucault, cautions us, “It is not enough … to repeat the empty affirmation that the author has disappeared” (105). I would like to argue that the author may, perhaps must, reappear if we are to fashion an understanding of the nature not only of literary history, but also of human association, if we are to discern, in effect, an ethics of historiography. I do not believe that we ought to efface the “illuminating conversations” Steven had with Michel in Berkeley when Foucault was present there (viii). On the contrary, we ought to realize both that the intertextual relation was, in fact, a personal one and that such an association would have been ethical; by doing so, we would discover our own ethical responsibilities to that friendship. I no more doubt the human presence of Foucault than I do that of Greenblatt. I simply ask that we accord the dead the respect that we accord the living, that we imagine for the moment, in order to see if it is possibly true, that our cultural ancestors still do have presence, and that the voice-in-the-text we hear is neither a mere simulation of the imagination, nor a mere projection of historical narcissism, but the actual voice of the other. The archive of poetry is the temple of Orpheus, and it is full of voices. Those voices are more difficult to hear than the voices of the living, yet we may be forgetting how difficult it is to hear the living and how quickly the living become the dead. As Joyce puts it in “The Dead,” “One by one, [we are] all becoming shades” (222). Indeed, perhaps the friendship and justice which Aristotle argues are impossible toward the “soulless,” if practiced properly toward the dead, could be better practiced toward the living.

Present within Greenblatt's myth is the myth of Orpheus: Reader attempts to reanimate the voice of the dead, only to discover that the voice he hears is, all along, only his. Let us imagine that Orpheus figures both intertextuality itself, an author's desire to bring the dead poet back to life within a new poem, and at least one form of historiography, a critic's desire to write the story of such intertextuality. Orpheus' song might also figure poetry's power to reanimate dead poetry; his turning back, historiography's failure to trust the presence almost retrieved from absence. Must historiography fail thus? Or is it possible that, with a certain disposition toward the dead, their actual voices might be heard? An ethics of historiography will have to become mythographical.

I imagine that I am not supposed to say these things, that to do so puts me outside the academic discourse community. Yet I must confess that I find the theoretical stories I hear insufficient before my own experiences, imaginary and real. Shakespeare introduced me to Ovid, and I am grateful to him for having done
so. I do not know how else to put it. The purpose of the following speculations is to discern conceptually how such an introduction is possible and how gratitude might then be called for.16 My argument is composed of eight propositions: First, a text discloses the presence of a person; second, an intertextual relation discloses a mediated association between persons, either one of whom is dead, the other alive, or both of whom are living or both of whom are dead; third, intertextual relations are, by their associative nature, ethical; fourth, a literary historiographer may, perhaps must, not only recognize intertextual association as ethical, but also participate him/herself in that association, often the living historiographer reflecting upon a relation between two dead people, one of whom, however, was alive during the relation; fifth, that association is not synchronic, but diachronic, made possible by, but not limited to, historical time; sixth, in extraordinary intertextual relations—poet-to-poet or historiographer-to-poet(s)—the living animate the dead, recognizing and actualizing the living presence of the persons) in the text(s); seventh, that recognition and actualization are essentially Orphic, revealing both the possibility of reanimation and an inherent tendency toward failure, failure due to doubt concerning presence, the hesitancy to believe that the dead have presence; eight, that doubt is now the ideology of literary studies, the convention that the author is dead now an article of faith, so the literary historiographer may, perhaps must, question that convention in order to understand the ethics of the intertextual, becoming in the process a literary mythographer. Let me take these speculative points up one at a time.

A text discloses the presence of a person. Multiple authorship, whether in the form of co-authorship or in the form of compositional traditions, does not at all refute authorship. It certainly attenuates authorship, and makes it much more difficult, perhaps even impossible, to identify all the individuals and their respective contributions. That simply means that in such instances, and they are surprisingly rare in the literary traditions of the West, one cannot extricate the voices from one another, individualize one's relationship to a presence in the text, the presence of the dead author. The death of the human body is certainly a death, but it need not preclude the presence of the author within a new, textual body, one which is immortal, though not eternal.17 This is, in fact, Ovid's own conception. The Metamorphoses ends, remember, with Ovid's boast to his gods and his ruler that, having fashioned a textual body for himself, he is free of their terror (15.871-9). When Shakespeare read both Ovid and Golding's translation of him, Ovid's text argued that Shakespeare was, in fact, holding the new, textualized presence Ovid was himself able to construct through his poetic craft and his regime's imperial power. Whatever human presence is, we assume that it either dies with the physiological body or that, if immortal, it is not so within the text itself. I am suggesting that we take, in good pagan fashion, the metaphor of the text-as-body quite seriously. I concede that this first principle is undemonstratable. The presence or “soul” of the other certainly can be denied, the consequences ranging all the way from loneliness to genocide; even so, that denial is no more firm than my affirmation. We do not know what exactly human presence is; even so, one either does or does not wager on presence.18 I do not quite see how one wagers on absence without (re)living, in some fashion, Leontes' tragedy.

An intertextual relation discloses a mediated association between persons, then, often one of whom is dead, the other alive. Given that the new, textual body has as its medium language, often enough poetic language which can literally be voiced, why do we assume that the voice performed has no trace of the dead within it? Shakespeare's plays, for example, are representations of fictional voices, and I certainly concede that voicing him voicing them is difficult, yet this is one of the distinct pleasures of reading/performing Shakespeare: the sense of a presence, one quite near, playing all the parts and inviting “STRANGER, why should I not speak to you?”—us into his company. Is voicing Shakespeare voicing them impossible? Is there any reader/performer who imagines that Shakespeare admires Leontes' mad jealousy? If so, would we not agree that such a reading/performance is tone-deaf?19 Intertextual relations are associations, the mediation subtilizing the relationship, but not making it impossible. Perhaps we might imagine intertextual relations as Dante does in The Divine Comedy, when Dante the character sees Virgil on the horizon, “one whose voice seemed weak from long silence” (1.63). In the poem, Dante is reading Virgil, and he figures this reading as the living being led by the dead: Somewhere within the imaginative experience of reading, Dante meets with Virgil's soul. I grant that the association is imagined, but deny that it is imaginary, after all, we must, in fact, imagine the
living, as well, but that does not for a moment deny their real presence. Once one concedes my first principle, the second follows.

Such intertextual relations are, by their very associative nature, ethical. Reading is an associative activity and, as such, it is ethical. Let me explain. In Aristotelian ethics, one begins with human association, the fact that we are essentially social; sociality entails a shared form of life and any form of life assumes human goods as goods, including the good of human virtue itself. Virtue ethics does not demand Kantian, transcendental speculation; instead, it begins where we actually are, within a form of life with flexible rules of human conduct. If a literary text is a new, textualized body for the soul of the poet, then reading is associative. As Whitman would have it, one is his associate when reading his poem; one is his Camerado. This entails certain intellectual and moral virtues. Because intertextuality is ethical, the same ethical principles that shape one's practical form of life ought to inform one's reading and writing. Harold Bloom's *The Anxiety of Influence* goes a long way to personalize intertextual relations: “In ways that need not be doctrinal, strong poems are omens of resurrection” (xxiv). Now, I would desire a greater number of descriptive possibilities than anxiety alone. I suggest that we consider the descriptive possibilities of Aristotelian virtue ethics, in great part because his categories of the virtues are those we employ within our own form of life. Their very prosaic character makes them useful. Even if we were not to agree that *his* ethics ought to govern our personal and textual lives, however, we would still require *an* ethics; even if we were to agree that we needed more than one ethics, we would still need to be able to assume one of them at any moment within a designated context.

A literary historiographer may, perhaps must, then, not only recognize intertextual association as ethical, but also participate him/herself in that association, often the living historiographer reflecting upon a relation between two dead people, one of whom, however, was alive during the relation. Once one recognizes such intertextual associations as ethical, one must respond to them as such, employing an ethical vocabulary to define the relationships. The metaphor here is an introduction: A friend introduces you to someone; his or her disposition toward the other disposes you, as well, though it does not determine your response. I have friends who do not like one another; their perceptions of one another have to be questioned. I am not myself persuaded by Bate’s argument concerning Ovid in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*; even so, I am grateful for an introduction some of whose details I have come to question. This association is a great deal more complicated than we acknowledge.

This is true in great part because that association is not synchronic, but diachronic, made possible by, but not limited to, historical time. Time is not a constant, but we treat it as such in our investigations. Because we are separated by time from the historical contexts of our texts, we imagine they are other; they are, but not as we imagine it. As Levinas explains in *Time and the Other*, time is itself the result of ethical association: “[T]ime is not the achievement of an isolated and lone subject, but … the very relationship of the subject with the Other” (39). We imagine that the association is attenuated to such an extent that it obscures presence. Why? It may very well be true that the text is available because of History. Shakespeare, after all, was a reader of Ovid because of the nature of English Renaissance education. Even so, he then became a reader of Ovid. If the poem is a new, textualized body, then History carries that text to one, it does not determine what one does once one has it, though. Poets continually speak as if there is another order of time, one in which they can speak with the dead. If temporal orders must be imagined to be experienced, then we might imagine a temporal order that can provide the space for such ethical associations. Perhaps the presence of the other, carried in the new, textualized body, can only be recognized through the power of our imagination. This is impossible to demonstrate, of course, but no more so than when considering living human beings. All follows from the first principle.

In extraordinary intertextual relations—poet-to-poet or historiographer-to-poet(s)—the living animate the dead, recognizing and actualizing the living presence of the persons in the text(s). This means that our recognition of presence actualizes what is only potential within the text; that is, without recognition, the presence is faint, but with it the presence grows stronger. Being is associative. Discursive practices do not
merely see objects of discourse; they make possible the object's appearance. If there is a presence in the text, it is not imaginary, even if it must be imaginatively fulfilled by the reader. That recognition and actualization are essentially Orphic, revealing both the possibility of reanimation and an inherent tendency toward failure. Orpheus' failure to believe that Eurydice is present results in her loss. In my reading, the tragedy of the myth of Orpheus is doubt concerning the presence of the dead. If that reading is adequate, then the turn of this desirous glance reveals doubt, the doubt concerning her presence; the doubt then destroys her presence, Eurydice slipping into absence. The Ovidian myth, then, figures the consequences of the very refutational doubt I have been responding to; in fact, that doubt is self-confirming since, once he turns, he loses her again. My argument is that he is not destined to fail; his agency is qualified, but not extinguished, by the extraordinary circumstances of his journey. This is, in fact, one of his own discoveries in the myth of Pygmalion, the tale Ovid has Orpheus tell. Pygmalion's slightly mad desire for stone to become animate, for dead matter to be infused with life, attended as it is by the prayer to Venus, animates such stone. Doubt concerning presence stones people into absence. The framing here is crucial: The Pygmalion tale is the romance of presence Orpheus tells himself in order to make intelligible to himself his own tragedy of absence. Leontes is Orpheus and Pygmalion, the man who can—by means of Romano's art and Paulina's guidance—bring Hermione back from absence into presence. We are now ready to see that Shakespeare's own friendship with Ovid is Orphic: He brings him up out of the underworld into the upper, where he then introduces him to us. I have myself met Ovid because Shakespeare introduced him to me; indeed, I met Ovid because Bate introduced me to Shakespeare's introduction of him. Bate's own father appears to have introduced him to Ovid (xii). We are reluctant to put it this way, of course, because of the very doubt of skepticism Shakespeare enacts in Acts 1-3 of The Winter's Tale.

That doubt is now the ideology of literary studies, the convention that the author is dead now an article of faith. Even so sensitive a reader as Greenblatt, one whose Orphic desire is both perceptive and admirable, turns back in doubt: “It was true that I could hear only my own voice. …” It certainly became true, yet did it need to? We nod—knowingly, sadly—that, of course, the recognition of presence must always fail. The myth of Orpheus in The Winter's Tale suggests it need not, even though it so often does. Pygmalion's prayer is Orpheus' own response to his doubt, and it is only with such a mimetic prayer that he is himself prepared for reunion with his wife. Without the prayer that itself signals to and responds to the other, there will be no ethics of historiography. Aristotle is right: “There is neither friendship nor justice towards soulless things.” That the soul is itself a myth, a presence whose presence must be imagined to be activated, need not disturb us. Literary historiographers must become literary mythographers if we are to be ethicists. We have been all along, of course, postmodernity having proven that there are only myths. Perhaps, reader, you do not find my myth persuasive. What shall our myth of the other in the text be? Please do not respond with the myth of absence. STRANGER, we need a new myth. Concerning both archive and city, I suggest the myth in The Winter's Tale, the myth of Orpheus, singing.

Notes

1. The understanding of mimesis here is thoroughly Aristotelian: For Aristotle in the Poetics, emplotment [muthos], the arrangement of episodes, is the essence of the dramatic art, making intelligible to the audience as it does the nature of human action [praxis]. See Chapter 6 of the Poetics (1449b21-50b20). For fine readings of the Poetics in this regard, see the following: Stephen Halliwell, Aristotle's Poetics, especially Chapter 4, “Mimesis,” 109-137 and his article, “Aristotelian Mimesis Reevaluated”; Paul Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, especially Volumes 1 (52-87) and 2 (7-28). An Aristotelian aesthetic is assumed throughout.

2. In his reading of the Romances, “The Dismemberment of Orpheus,” David Armitage argues that “[a] suggestively Ovidian metamorphosis marks the presence of Orpheus in the statue scene (5.3), in which Shakespeare, like Ovid, combines the myths of Orpheus and Pygmalion” (130). His discussion is suggestive, but brief. In Lynn Enterline's fine reading of the play, “‘You speak a language that I understand not,’” she argues that the scene “both claims and disavows the Orphic power for which it
longs”; that power is “the rhetoric of animation” (41), a rhetoric which she sees as essentially patriarchal. Hers is a brilliant discussion, one which qualifies my own idealization of the scene. I cannot, however, see why the rhetoric of animation she examines so sensitively must by necessity be patriarchal.

3. In Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare, Geoffrey Bullough excerpts the Pygmalion tale (10.243-97) without the Orphic frame. Brooks Otis in Ovid as Epic Poet mistakenly argues that Orpheus' tales are only “nominally” his (190).

4. Though this understanding is very likely to have been made possible by the idea of Christian resurrection, Shakespeare's romance here is not that romance. Pagan reanimation does not deny death; it only postpones it. Shakespeare often distinguishes between and among three horizons of life, two of which are temporal, one eternal: The life of a human being is limited; the life of human history is less so, but is still finite, nonetheless; eternity is infinite. Here, as in the Sonnets, Shakespeare's focus is on the second horizon: “So till the judgment that yourself arise, / You live in this, and dwell in lovers' eyes” (55.13-4). Of course, within the first horizon—that of a human life—one might reanimate someone who will, even so, still die within that first horizon. For discussions of paganism's presence in the Renaissance, see Leonard Barkan's The Gods Made Flesh: Metamorphosis and the Pursuit of Paganism. I am indebted to Barkan throughout, especially the chapters on Ovid (19-93) and Shakespeare (243-88). For a marvelous reading of both Ovid and Shakespeare, see Kenneth Gross's The Dream of the Moving Statue (72-9 and 99-109). Neither Barkan nor Gross notice the Orphic frame.

5. The translation here is Golding's, spelling modernized. When I refer to text without citation, line numbers refer to the Loeb edition; when I cite, I provide two references, the first to the Loeb, the second to Golding. As Bate points out, even though Shakespeare's Latin was certainly good enough that he did not need to rely upon Golding, he would no doubt have used it “for speed and convenience” (7-8). Bate himself shows that Shakespeare is often revising Golding's translation within his own intertextual relationship with Ovid. Even so, Golding remains Shakespeare's Ovid-in-English, so I cite his translation.

6. On the question of the relationship between narrative and metamorphosis, see Joseph Solodow's The World of Ovid's Metamorphoses. Ovid's unifying action may very well be his own narrative act, the praxis of a dramatized narrator fashioning a narrative cosmos for himself.

7. See William Anderson's note on the passage (479-80) in his commentary, where he explains that Ovid, unlike Virgil in the fourth Georgic, keeps the focus throughout on Orpheus. For a discussion of both poets in Shakespeare's education, see William Baldwin's William Shakspere's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke, vol. 2 (417-97).

8. The Ovidian aesthetic is akin, then, to the Shakespearean, which fuses what the Aristotelian separates, tragic seriousness and comic ridiculousness, as Johnson himself explains so well: “Shakespeare's plays [or Ovid's poem] are not in the rigorous and critical sense either tragedies or comedies, but compositions of a distinct kind; exhibiting the real state of sublunary nature, which partakes of good and evil, joy and sorrow, mingled with endless variety of proportion and innumerable modes of combination; and expressing the course of the world …” (266-7).

9. William Anderson argues in his essay on Ovid and Virgil that Ovid's parody of Virgil makes Orpheus “a cheap orator-poet” (47). I grant that Ovid's Orpheus is often more ridiculous than Virgil's, but Ovidian irony is not as deconstructive as is often thought: Like Shakespeare, who may very well have learned to mix generic tones from him, Ovid fuses the serious and the ridiculous. Ovid cannot abide Virgil's relentless seriousness and often treats moving moments with greater distance than Virgil, without, I would argue, turning the whole into mere parody.

10. See Horace's Ode 3: “I shall not altogether die, but a mighty part of me shall escape the death-goddess” (quoted from the Loeb translation by Booth, 227-8). For a discussion of the historical awareness such “immortality” discloses within the Renaissance, see Thomas M. Greene's The Light in Troy (1-80).
11. For a fine reading of the issues, see Mary Ellen Lamb's “Ovid and The Winter's Tale” and her bibliography of the relevant readings (84).

12. Her point is Aristotle's about poetry: It represents not the actual, but the hypothetical (1451a36-9): “[I]t is not the poet's function to relate actual events, but the kinds of things that might occur and are possible in terms of probability or necessity.” Had Hermione lived, she would have looked like the statue, the sculptor having made “her / As [if] she lived now” (31-2). It is an Aristotelian commonplace that art can actualize natural potentialities that nature itself cannot and that art can, as a consequence, augment the given.

13. In Appropriating Shakespeare, Brian Vickers has made a compelling case that authorial intention is a legitimate object of literary study. His chapter on “Creator and Interpreters” (92-162) is persuasive that intertextuality is itself one way of discerning such intention. That the statue scene is, as is often noted, Shakespeare's own transformation of Pandosto, or the Triumph of Time indicates the importance of 5.3 for understanding the whole of the play's enactment of the limited defeat of time.

14. Foucault's discursive project does not, as far as I have yet to ascertain, explain whether or not there is human agency within a discursive practice; if so, that would make possible my project, though I am quite aware that this is not a Foucauldian ethics. Again, it is thoroughly Aristotelian. If Foucault's argument is that there is no agency, then our projects would be incommensurate.

15. The modal auxiliary here will, I suspect, frighten some readers with its Kantian timber of an imperative; I employ it in a deliberative, I hope not an authoritarian, manner. Tolerance need not preclude persuasion, and this essay hopes to be persuasive.

16. Christopher Ricks presented a moving reading of Beckett's gratitude to Shakespeare at the World Congress of International Shakespeare Association Meeting in Los Angeles (April 1996).

17. Again, the frame of reference is the second horizon of human comprehension: neither individual, human time nor divine eternity, but collective human time, the order of culture, an order which will last, but not forever.

18. For a brilliant discussion of this issue, see George Steiner’s Real Presences, especially Chapter 3 (135-232).

19. See Howard Felperin's. Tongue-Tied Our Queen?” for such an ingenious, yet tone-deaf, reading of Leontes' suspicion as sensible.

20. See Book I of the Nicomachean Ethics for Aristotle's method; Books 2 and 3.1-4, for his conception of “virtue ethics.” Nussbaum's superb Fragility of Goodness emphasizes just these prosaic limitations within the Aristotelian method (240-63) and offers an excellent reading of his ethical thought (264-372). Useful as well is Wayne Booth's The Company We Keep (168-373). Both Nussbaum's and Booth's discussions of ethics and literature concern only narrative, though their perceptions are, with attentive qualification, most enabling with regard to drama.

21. For a fine discussion of the general question of “literary history,” see David Perkins' Is Literary History Possible?

22. I would like to thank the editors of Studies in the Literary Imagination for their editorial assistance. The following people have also provided generous assistance, correction and/or support: John Briggs, Lowell Gallagher, Theresa Kenney, Bob Miola, Martha Nussbaum, Lance Simmons, Stanley Stewart, Glen Thurow, Gerard Wegener, Grace West, Deborah Willis, and the students in Studies in Myth (Mayterm 1996). As well, I would like to thank both Kyle Lemieux and Bryant Mason, whose production of The Winter's Tale at the University of Dallas (Spring 1998) demonstrated that a “mythic” reading of 5.3 can, in fact, be performed. This essay is dedicated to my father, Hollis M. Crider.

Works Cited


**The Winter's Tale (Vol. 57): Further Reading**

**CRITICISM**

Examines the relationship between unity and deconstruction in the play.


Focuses on the character Autolycus as a representation of the Jacobean and argues that through Autolycus, Shakespeare explores themes of social instability and assimilation.


Considers the concepts of nostalgia and belatedness as they relate to Leontes and Hermione.


Focuses on Leontes's transformation and argues that The Winter's Tale is Shakespeare's most moving play.


Considers language and time as they relate to femininity in The Winter's Tale.


Explores the relationship between theater, identity, and homosexual desire in The Winter's Tale.


Argues that Shakespeare employed pastoral themes and conventions in The Winter's Tale in order to explore the generation and demise of political authority.


Explores feminist theory and romance while considering the ease with which some characters in The Winter's Tale “seem to slip in and out of view.”


Contends that Shakespeare pits the rational against the marvelous in The Winter's Tale.


Analyzes the underlying meaning of the visual links between The Winter's Tale and Titus Andronicus.
The Winter's Tale (Vol. 68): Introduction

The Winter's Tale

One of Shakespeare's last plays, The Winter's Tale is considered a tragicomedy because of its two part structure—the first three acts contain elements of tragedy, while the pastoral fourth and fifth acts contain elements of comedy. The play is characterized by several improbable events, including Leontes's sudden outburst of jealousy and the amazing restoration of Hermione sixteen years after her apparent death. Modern commentators continue to examine Leontes's behavior, attempting in a variety of ways to account for his seemingly irrational jealousy. Critics also study the play’s religious themes, finding religious implications in Hermione's resurrection. Additionally, scholars continue to analyze the play’s dramatic structure; some find the two-part structure awkward, while others see it as successful and innovative. The play’s transition from tragedy to comedy is also a concern for modern stagings of the play.

It has been argued that Leontes's jealousy—apparently resulting from Hermione's successful coaxing of her husband's childhood friend, Polixenes, to extend his visit in Sicilia—erupts suddenly and without provocation. Although this view is not uncommon among critics and audiences alike, some scholars believe that Leontes's jealousy can be traced to factors present at the beginning of the play. John P. Cutts (1968) contends that Leontes suffers from a “boy eternal” complex, evident from the very start of the play, which causes him to relate to those close to him—including his wife, his son, and his friend—in terms of the past. The critic argues that this complex explains Leontes's apparently sudden onset of jealousy, and finds that when Polixenes responds to Hermione's coaxing instead of his own, Leontes feels an unbearable sense of displacement as well as inadequacy. Similarly, Wilbur Sanders (1987) identifies factors that preface Leontes's jealousy, including the social embarrassment it is likely that both kings feel in discussing the extension of Polixenes's visit. The critic notes that although they were boyhood friends, the two men in all likelihood no longer know each other well since their only encounters for decades has been through their attorneys. Sanders concludes that "Leontes' jealousy is not 'causeless', any more than it is justified."

At the conclusion of The Winter's Tale, Hermione is presented as a statue to the court, then “magically” comes to life and walks down off her pedestal. This apparent resurrection has led some critics to study the religious elements of the play. Walter S. H. Lim (2001) finds both mythic and biblical sources for such a resurrection account, and notes that the animation of Hermione's statue, accompanied by the language of religious belief throughout the scene, reveals conflicting attitudes toward the icon and icon worship in Reformation and Catholic thought. Lim contends that Shakespeare questioned the foundation on which religious claims to truth and knowledge were built by refusing to grant the dogma of either religion the final say on Hermione's resurrection. François Laroque (1982) takes another approach to the play's treatment of religious elements, identifying correlations between the play and the cycles of the year in their pagan, Christian, and folkloric contexts. Laroque finds references to pagan ritual in the first half of the play, and points to seasonal rituals of rebirth in the play's pastoral scenes, as well as various allusions to the English Church year.
The way in which The Winter's Tale combines tragedy and comedy is a source of much critical analyses. Mary Pollingue Nichols (1981) maintains that the genres of tragedy and comedy are not given equal weight in The Winter's Tale. Nichols claims that comedy reigns over tragedy in that the play stresses the individual, rather than the universal nature of the tragic condition. Nichols additionally points out that despite the inequality of the mix, the play does not lose its sense of unity. Theresa M. Krier (see Further Reading) contends the play's tragic and comic elements are deliberately presented as a paradox of two supposedly incompatible genres that in reality exist side by side. Krier also explores the way in which time functions in relation to the two genres, demonstrating that the disparate views of time seen in the two parts of the play are eventually reconciled in the resurrection scene. While Krier believes that the play consists of two genres joined together, Joan Hartwig (see Further Reading) maintains that the that play is less a linkage than a "tragicomic blend." Hartwig demonstrates how relationships within the play mediate its tragic and comic elements. For example, the relationship between Leontes and Paulina, Hartwig explains, is in part exploited (despite the tragic circumstances) as the stock comic situation of tyrant versus shrew, which allows some sympathy for Leontes so that he may be embraced in the play's comic resolution.

The structure of The Winter's Tale offers a number of challenges to modern stagings of the play. For example, in reviewing the Public Theater's production of the play directed by Brian Kulick, Charles Isherwood (2000) observes that the production, while smoothly staged and relatively competent, did not completely succeed in handling the play's transition from tragedy to pastoral comedy. Isherwood additionally finds fault with the performances of the actors playing the parts of Leontes and Perdita. Similarly, Matt Wolf (2001) finds that the successfully staged second half of the Royal National Theater's production of The Winter's Tale, directed by Nicholas Hytner, did not compensate fully for the lackluster beginning.

The Winter's Tale (Vol. 68): Criticism: Overviews And General Studies


[In the following essay, Bieman discusses The Winter's Tale's composition date and textual issues, provides an overview of its plot, language, themes, and characters, and argues that the play adapts the romance genre in order to emphasize its realism.]

Just as all of the Romances move beyond the toughness of the tragedies without leaving tragic potentialities behind, so each Romance reaches beyond its predecessor in certain ways. If we see in Pericles a skeletal paradigm of the unrealistic conventions of romance and Cymbeline fleshing the skeleton out with every narrative and dramatic trick at Shakespeare's command, we are prepared to see The Winter's Tale modifying the genre in the direction of realism.¹

The dramatic worlds of Sicilia and Bohemia, and the seas between, may seem more remote geographically than the ancient Britain of Cymbeline's main plot and may seem, like Pericles, to participate temporally in the ancient Mediterranean cultures that appealed for aid and guidance to Olympian deities. But several factors help situate this play in the England of its early audiences: a court concerned with problems of succession, a rural sheep-shearing festival at which common English flowers are distributed (to characters bearing Greek names, of course), and the rogue Autolycus (named from Homer) flaunting the tricks of a petty offender of the Elizabethan underworld.² It relates further to the audience's world in the universal evocations of its ritualistic plot and by the richly ambiguous language that lends some verisimilitude to the psychological outlines of its characters.
We find many elements shared among the first three Romances beyond the generic similarities they exhibit. The Winter's Tale shares with Pericles a structural break in the passage of many years between those dramatic events in which problems are established and those in which they are resolved. Both, in short, are clearly tragicomedies, hinged quite obviously in the middle.

But they differ in some of their structural effects. The linear and episodic plot of Pericles divides in two readily at Gower's prologue to act 4; similarly, The Winter's Tale can be divided in two, whether at the stage direction “Exit, pursued by a bear” that presages the last death in the story; at the old shepherd's words, “Now bless thyself: thou mett'st with things dying, I with things new-born”; or at the choral speech of Time that in position (the opening of act 4) parallels precisely Gower's overarching narrative in the earlier play. But the plot of The Winter's Tale is far less linear in effect than that of Pericles. As the action of the Tale moves from Sicilia to Bohemia and back to the Sicilia, the plot folds back upon itself in ways that can be compared either to the closing up of a diptych or to a cycle reverting in mythic and Neoplatonic fashion back to its beginning.

The Tale shares with Cymbeline (and with Othello) the motif of furious jealousy in a husband convinced that his innocent wife is unfaithful. With Pericles and Cymbeline it shares the motif of a lost (or absent) daughter restored to her father as an agent in his transformation; an emphasis on magic; the theme of the otherwise good subordinate commanded to perform an evil action; doubling of characters; ritualistic effects; and, overwhelmingly, the sense of some transcendent power shaping the potentially or actually tragic elements into an overarching comic design. In The Winter's Tale, however, the help that providential power derives from a human agent takes on a new coloration in Paulina, who anticipates something found later in Prospero.

**DATE, TEXT, AND SOURCES**

The Winter's Tale was probably written in 1611, either concurrently with final touches on Cymbeline or soon after. Certainly the first recorded performance was at the Globe theater in May of that year, a month after a performance of Cymbeline. We have only the Folio text of 1623 for The Winter's Tale. When the plays were being performed frequently by the King's Men, there was no economic reason to print them for the public and many reasons to withhold them from rival companies. The text, a good one, seems to have been transcribed and then printed from Shakespeare's own working papers. Those places where the language is most garbled (as in act 1, scene 2, 137-46) work so well dramatically that there is no reason to blame obscurity on problems of transmission, as there so often is in the text of Pericles.

The main source for The Winter's Tale is Robert Greene's prose romance Pandosto, published first around 1588—one of the many pieces of prose fiction that entertained members of Shakespeare's audiences when they were not in the theaters. Although he changed the names of most of the characters (Pandosto become Leontes; Bellaria, Hermione; Egistus, Polixenes; Fawnia, Perdita; and so on), Shakespeare followed so many of the details of Greene's text that the major changes he did choose to make are often worth noting. The most striking change was to transform a tragic narrative of jealousy, remorse, and divine retribution into a tragicomic drama with a self-proclaimedly happy ending. Greene's Queen Bellaria does actually die, along with her young son; after the lost daughter, Fawnia, returns to remind Pandosto of his injustice, the king kills himself. To know this is to take Leontes' guilt and repentance seriously, as Shakespeare surely did, but to see the restoration of happiness and order in the play (however qualified by the irreversible deaths of Mamillius and Antigonus) in a very positive light. This, the third of the Romances, would convince any contemporary, who would know his Greene the way we know the best-sellers or television series of recent decades, that Shakespeare was deliberately making new and happier patterns out of old and would set them to pondering the transformations.

The story of The Winter's Tale is not as complex as that of Cymbeline. Since complexity of language does so much to carry the plot forward, it will be interesting to compare the bare story with the closer analysis of the second scene that will open further discussions.
THE STORY

ACT 1

Camillo and Archidamus, lords, respectively, of Sicilia and Bohemia, discuss the current visit of Polixenes, king of Bohemia, to the court of Leontes of Sicilia. They note the brotherly affection between the kings, forged in shared experiences in childhood. They indicate that Sicilia's hospitality is richer than that Bohemia will be able to offer in return when Leontes and his companions return the visit. In the second scene, Polixenes announces his departure after a visit of nine months, resisting repeated requests from Leontes that he stay. Leontes commands his queen, Hermione, to further his efforts. When her entreaties succeed, Leontes grows suspicious that he is being betrayed by guest and wife. He raves in innuendo to his son, Mamillius, and in direct accusation to a courtier, Camillo, who staunchly defends the queen's virtue. Leontes orders Camillo to poison Polixenes; instead Camillo warns him and flees with him to Bohemia.

ACT 2

Hermione, tired in her late pregnancy, calls for her ladies to amuse Mamillius. The boy shows precocity and a sense of royal command in banter with them. His mother soon joins in the amusement. Leontes, his rage heightened by the flight of Polixenes and Camillo, enters, accuses Hermione directly of adultery, and, dismissing her gentle but firm denials, orders her to prison. His attendant lords, including Antigonus, protest. Leontes announces that to confirm his accusations he has sent messengers to the oracle at Delphi.

Paulina, Antigonus's wife, visits the prison where Hermione has just given birth to a daughter. Seeking to soften the king, Paulina takes the child into his presence. Raging—both at Paulina, the “mankind witch” who dares thus to confront him, and at the “ bastard” he takes the child to be—Leontes first threatens to burn both mother and child and then orders Antigonus to expose the babe in “some remote and desert place quite out / Of our dominions.”

ACT 3

Leontes' messengers describe the sweet climate at Delphos and pray to Apollo to “turn all to the best.” At court, Leontes formally charges Hermione with infidelity. Denying the charge without hope that she will be believed, and ready to die, she calls on “powers divine” to defend her woman's honor—a “derivative from me to mine,” her children. The messengers arrive with the oracle's defense of Hermione's chastity and its prediction that “the king shall live without an heir, if that which is lost be not found.” Leontes rejects the message as untrue; immediately the news arrives that Mamillius has died. Leontes immediately sees this as Apollo's anger at his “injustice”; Hermione swoons and is carried offstage; Leontes plans reconciliation with those he has wronged; Paulina returns to report Hermione's death; Leontes vows prayers of repentance as his daily “recreation.”

On a far shore in Bohemia, Antigonus has landed with the baby. In a dream, Hermione has asked that he call the child Perdita, she who has been lost, and has told him that he will never see his wife again. Setting the baby down, Antigonus “exit[s], pursued by a bear.” An old shepherd and his son, a “clown,” enter describing the death of Antigonus and the loss by storm of all mariners aboard the ship that carried him. They find the babe along with much gold and rejoice in their good fortune. Her name, Perdita, is conveyed in an attached note.

ACT 4
Time, as chorus, spans the sixteen years that have passed between acts 3 and 4. Leontes has suffered overwhelming guilt, while far away Perdita has “grown in grace / Equal with wond'ring” at the comfortable rural home of her foster father, the old shepherd.

At the court of Bohemia, another scene of parting and remonstrance unfolds: Camillo tells Polixenes he has been summoned to Sicilia by the repentant Leontes but agrees to stay a little longer. They discuss rumors that the beautiful daughter of an affluent shepherd has engaged the affections of the young prince, Florizel.

Out on a footpath in Bohemia, the “rogue” Autolycus sings cheery, ribald songs. He meets the clown who has been sent to purchase supplies for the festival of sheep shearing and picks his pocket, allaying suspicion by complaining of having been robbed of his own fine clothes by a notorious rascal, “Autolycus.”

Mistress of the festivities at the sheep shearing, Perdita is wooed by Florizel, disguised as the gentle rustic, Doricles. Polixenes and Camillo, also disguised, are welcomed by Perdita. They prompt Florizel to confess that he is hiding his love for Perdita from his father. Polixenes unmasks and angrily forbids the match. Camillo suggests that Florizel and Perdita seek refuge in Sicilia with Leontes, who will assuredly welcome them. Autolycus, in the guise of a peddler, enters and sings more of his happy, ribald songs. He exchanges clothing with Florizel to aid the lovers' escape. Camillo muses that he will tell Polixenes of the flight to draw him to Sicilia and advance his own reconciliation with Leontes.

ACT 5

In Sicilia, Cleomenes pleads with Leontes to forgive himself—his long years of penance have more than “paid down” his trespasses. Leontes, remembering Hermione with longing, cannot forget his guilt. While others ask him to marry again, Paulina continues to reproach him and exacts the promise that he will not marry without her leave. Florizel and Perdita enter, closely followed by the news that Polixenes is approaching. Florizel laments that Camillo has betrayed them. Touched by the lovers' fresh beauty and mutual love, Leontes resists Polixenes' letter asking that he arrest Florizel and promises to intercede for them.

Three gentlemen in conversation describe the scene of tearful wonder that ensued when Perdita's true identity was revealed by the old shepherd and clown who, through the action of Autolycus, had followed the lovers to Sicilia. The oracle has been fulfilled. Polixenes has forgiven Leontes and blessed the union of the prince and princess. The gentlemen tell also of Paulina's mixed emotions when the prevailing joy coincided with the confirmation of her husband's death. The shepherd and his son, now enriched by royal favor, encounter Autolycus, who thinks it prudent to promise to mend his ways.

The court assembles on Paulina's invitation to view a statue of Hermione, which, she says, she has had the noted Julio Romano execute for her. Perdita kneels before the lifelike “lady” to implore a blessing. Paulina prolongs the marveling suspense, forbidding Perdita and Leontes to touch the work of art but offering to make the statue move. Before Hermione (for it is she) descends from her pedestal to harmonious music to embrace Leontes, Paulina protests that her “magic” is “lawful.” Happy reunions ensue—wife with husband, mother with child. Hermione says her oracle-based hope of seeing Perdita again preserved her life. Paulina proposes now to withdraw to grieve for her own continuing loss; instead she is matched by command of the grateful Leontes with Camillo, “an honourable husband.” Paulina leads them out, in order, to tell their several stories of events in “this wide gap of time.”

THE SLIPPERY LANGUAGE OF SCENE 2

As in life, so in this fiction, the necessity for each to tell a personal story in the hearing of others arises because the tales we tell ourselves of the events in which we participate rarely coincide with the way other participants understand the same events. One way of interpreting the fall that closed the gates of Eden to all
children of Adam and Eve makes it a fall into alienation—not just from the God we cannot see again walking in the garden but also from the God we encounter in human relationship whenever we are truly united with others in love. Fallen human souls, enclosed in mortal bodies and bone-hard heads, enclosed in barriers of self, must work hard at interpreting words and events if the alienation that pushes us toward tragedy is to be overcome. But fallen human souls, and flawed minds, need help against the evil forces that prevail in the world of tragedy. The help offered by the deus ex machina in the first two Romances takes an interesting turn in this play—but that insight will be developed later.

Meanwhile, we see that the second long scene reflects “realistically” the inevitable problems raised by human language. The ease with which the lines between truth and falsity can blur is demonstrated here: as we participate imaginatively in the dramatic fiction we sense something of the dangers we all face in human communication. We sense also, through symbolic and mythic reverberations of the language, the outlines of the great changes in human life with which the play ultimately concerns itself.

When Polixenes announces his departure after “nine changes of the watery star,” his phrase signifies to us openly the span of his absence from Bohemia, but as the scene unfolds we find, in retrospect, that the words can reinforce Leontes' suspicions; the visit has been just long enough to match the span of human gestation. The language readily transfers itself to notions of the inconstancy of woman. The interplay between an innocent phrase and the guilt it can bespeak to a suspicious ear typifies the opposition between innocence and sin that runs as motif throughout the scene.

While Hermione is urging their guest to stay, Leontes is ostensibly deep in private thought. But what he can overhear, in snatches and out of context, while Hermione and Polixenes talk lightly of the past will signify to him something very different from what is intended by the speakers.

Take Polixenes' memories, for instance: “We were … two lads that thought … to be boy eternal … twinn'd lambs that chang'd innocence for innocence” and “knew not the doctrine of ill-doing” (1.2.63-70). In his memory, the innocence of youth, the high idealism of the puer aeternus, is unqualified. Hermione's lighthearted response, “By this we gather / You have tripp'd since,” does indicate awareness of the “doctrine of ill-doing” but no personal guilt on her part. This is the sort of social games playing her husband's rebuke for her silence has encouraged. Polixenes' rejoinder edges toward guilty ambiguity, especially to a listener already as prone to suspicion as Leontes:

Temptations have since then been born to's: for
In those unfledg'd days was my wife a girl;
Your precious self had not then cross'd the eyes
Of my young playfellow.

(1.2.76-80)

The image of boy twins, exchanging innocence freely, darkens when temptation is equated to the female persons of the two wives. “Exchanging” becomes in this context explosive. The fuse is lit by Hermione's still “innocent” banter:

Of this make no conclusion, lest you say
Your queen and I are devils. Yet go on;
Th'offences we have made you do we'll answer,
If you first sinn'd with us, and ...  

With any but with us.

(1.2.81-86)
The plural pronouns lay the words wide open: as they blur the demarcations between two husbands and two wives it would be hard to prove that the syntax signifies parallels, not crossovers.

Few readers suspect Hermione as Leontes comes to do, but few noticing these ambiguities would agree that Leontes’ malignity is as totally unmotivated as that of Iago when he insinuates a similar malignity into the hitherto trusting soul of Othello. There is no doubt that the word structures lend themselves as readily to the dark interpretation Leontes comes to favor as to the truth and fidelity we as audience and readers locate in Hermione.

“‘A lady’s Verily’s / As potent as a lord’s,’” Hermione protests when Polixenes says “verily” he “may not” stay. Here, too, playful language develops ambiguous reverberations. She who has just been addressed as “most sacred lady,” a phrase that elevates her almost to the status of the Virgin Mary, is suggesting a relativity in truth that enables it to be claimed by opposing forces. With three repetitions of “verily” outweighing Polixenes’ one, she prevails, but the victory is one of social grace, not of ultimate truth.

I turn now to the ambiguous word grace, which Hermione first uses in the sense I have just demonstrated. With “Grace to Boot!” (1.2.80) she applauds one of Polixenes’ courtly compliments. She uses it playfully again to Leontes of an as yet undefined “good deed” she has done by speaking “to th’ purpose,” but when she finds that the deed was her acceptance of his offer of marriage, the tone deepens: “Tis Grace indeed.”

It deepens, that is, when we see Hermione as the very model of chaste wifehood. But Leontes? He can trivialize it easily as Hermione goes on, lightly, to compare the occasions on which she “for ever earned a royal husband” and “for some while a friend.” Shakespeare used that word, in a sense now obsolete, in Measure for Measure: “He hath got his friend with child” (1.4.29).

Who is to interpret? The king, born and bred to earthly authority, never questions his own opinions—or his own lack of spousal trust—until the oracle, which he first rejects, seems confirmed by the death of a king to be, Mamillius. Royalty, proved mortal, seems also then as fallible as mortal.

AUTHORITY, COURTIESHIP, AND SEXUAL HIERARCHY

Like the other Romances, and like any other fiction that focuses on a ruler as a major protagonist, The Winter’s Tale explores the complex theme of authority. But unlike Antiochus, who is deliberately vicious, and unlike Cleon, Cymbeline, and at times Pericles, who are too passive (the first two hag-ridden, the third apathetic under the harsh power of lady Fortune), Leontes rules so vigorously as to be tyrannical, understanding his own actions as unquestionable and therefore right. In this one important dimension, the play represents Leontes’ quest for a new understanding of himself as ruler, of others in the relationships they bear toward him, and of the place of ruler and ruled in a transformed system of values.

Since the dominant plot lines bear on relationships within the royal families of Sicilia and Bohemia, and most of those characters who are not royal are still defined by family structures (or, in the case of Autolycus, the lack thereof), the issue of authority in this play bears directly on sexual roles. The court becomes a large metaphor for the family in a patriarchal culture—hence my juxtaposition, in this section, of courtly and sexual politics.

Before moving on to the central family hierarchies in the plot, I consider a question that has arisen in the two earlier Romances: that of the quandaries that arise for courtiers whose rulers’ decrees run counter to their own moral judgments. Of courtiers in this play, Camillo, Antigonus, and Paulina are most striking, but they have enough companions in quandary in Sicilia to support all the trust we are willing to invest in Hermione.
Camillo is first to be given a chance to remonstrate when Leontes turns his suspicions into open accusations against his queen. He sees the way the king is moving when asked, “How cam’t, Camillo, / That he [Polixenes] did stay?” “At the good queen's entreaty” is one word longer than need be to answer the question, and “good” is one word too many for Leontes, who commands that it be dropped (1.2.219-22). As the accusations swell, so too do Camillo's defenses of his “most gracious mistress,” his “most sovereign mistress,” the “clouding” of whose name calls for his personal “vengeance.” Camillo's words here, with his later diagnosis of the king’s “truth” as “diseas'd opinion,” demonstrate courage, fixed as Leontes is in his delusions, and powerful as he is to act upon his judgmental anger.

Camillo finally gives up open remonstrance with, “I must believe you, sir” (1.2.333): opposition to a “diseas'd” monarch must henceforth be covert. He accedes ostensibly to the king’s command that he kill Polixenes, but one short soliloquy and one brief conversation hence, he and Polixenes are allied in their escape from Sicilia.

In the final two acts, Camillo demonstrates a similar resistance to the harsh commands of his new ruler, Polixenes, but not without mixed motivation. Helping Florizel and Perdita to escape to Sicilia may be less a matter of support for the rebellious lovers than a stratagem to get his homesick self, with Polixenes, to Sicilia (4.4.662-67), where he knows a warm welcome from the repentant Leontes awaits them. For that to work, he must tell Polixenes of the lovers' flight. Before the happy outcome softens the impression of Camillo's duplicity, Florizel flatly calls it betrayal (5.1.192). We remember this instance of self-serving when the otherwise exemplary Camillo is matched by Leontes to Paulina. It qualifies her “happy” ending.

Antigonus and another “Lord,” unnamed, defend Hermione against Leontes' “justice” when he sends her off to prison. The lord would lay down his life if Leontes would “accept … that the queen is spotless / I' th' eyes of heaven”; Antigonus, stirred to his masculine depths, would “by [his] honour” geld his three daughters if the queen “be honour-flaw'd” (2.1.130-47). The harsh illogicality of the threat cuts two ways. Primary is the sense that he knows such a horror would never be required of him since he trusts the queen absolutely. But a woman hearing him must flinch at a familiar consequence of masculine anger, that one “proved” instance of female misconduct will cast assumptions of guilt on all, and prompt reactions punitive for the innocent. We have already seen this instinctive masculine reaction demonstrated in Posthumus's misogyny when Iachimo has duped him.

Two scenes later, Antigonus's humane protectiveness extends to the newborn baby. To Leontes' challenge, “What will you adventure / To save this brat's life?” he responds “Anything, my lord … I'll pawn the little blood which I have left / To save the innocent.” The language will be borne out by events, sadly, but the effect is not merely of foreshadowing. The laying down of a life for another (though the other be “innocent,” not deemed guilty of that original sin “hereditary ours” [1.2.75]) has overtones the audience cannot miss. In starkest terms, we are driven to recognize that resistance to powerful evil in this world can call for total sacrifice.

Many male courtiers dare, for a time, to challenge Leontes, and, for a time, Leontes tolerates each. Paulina provokes a very different reaction when she enters to defend Hermione and intercede for the baby. “Away with that audacious lady!” the king thunders as soon as he sees Paulina enter. “Antigonus, / I charg'd thee that she should not come about me. / I knew she would.” When Antigonus pleads himself helpless to keep his wife in line, he wryly rationalizes: “When she will take the rein I let her run.” Paulina's opening speech belies her husband's insinuation that she is an unruly animal: “Good my liege, I come … your loyal servant, your physician, / Your most obedient servant … I say, I come / From your good queen.”

Paulina's words are courageous—physician and good especially—but they are measured by courtesy. When the king mocks, “Good queen!” the courage swells: “I say good queen, and would by combat make her good, so were I / A man, the worst about you.” Before she is eventually forced out, she hears herself called a
mankind witch … A most intelligencing bawd,” a “crone,” a “callat,” a “gross hag! / And lozel.” But no epithet stems the flow of words by which Paulina defends “the sacred honour of himself, his queen's / His hopeful son's, his babe's” against the king's own “slander” (2.3.61-129).10 Paulina leaves only when subject to force: “I pray you, do not push me; I'll be gone.” In the face of the verbal and physical abuse that a woman challenging masculine bastions of power must suffer,11 Paulina exhibits a moral strength and tenacity more impressive than any other courtier's.

Her more important role in orchestrating the events that lead Leontes through remorse and repentance to reconciliation will be examined later. Meanwhile we turn to the scene of Hermione's trial (3.2).

A WOMAN'S VERILY

We have seen “A lady's Verily” prevail against Polixenes' intent to leave: in courtly games playing, “lords” will defer to “ladies.” But what of those more desperate situations in which a woman's reputation and very life are at stake? Once her “lord,” her master, has decided to count her “integrity … falsehood,” it “shall … scarce boot {her} / To say 'not guilty’”: he who holds the social and political power will determine how words will be receiv'd (3.2.25-27). In situations of such dead earnest, a woman's verily means very little.

Yet, like Paulina in her eloquent courage, Hermione must say what she can. She affirms her own dignity as “a great king's daughter, / The mother to a royal prince”—both claims, we note, dependent on her relationship to male power—and then staunchly accepts her peril: “For life, I prize it / As I weigh grief (which I would spare).” But for “honour, / 'Tis a derivative from me to mine, / And only that I stand for” (3.2.42-45). That “honour,” a lady's, encompasses the correct social graces she has shown toward Polixenes—“such a kind of love as might become / A lady like me … even such … as yourself commanded.” But more, her woman's “honour” rests on the assertion that the “love” she offered Polixenes was “So, and no other” (3.2.64-67). Her words in extremity prove predictably futile. To Leontes' further accusations she responds:

Sir,  
You speak a language that I understand not:  
My life stands in the level of your dreams,  
Which I'll lay down.

(3.2.79-82)

The silence of the metrical space after “Sir” is as eloquent as Hermione's acceptance of the nightmare that threatens her life and as the double-edged irony of Leontes' retort, “Your actions are my dreams.”

WHOSE ACTIONS? WHOSE DREAMS?

Leontes simply intends the court to understand that Hermione's guilty actions occasion his nightmares. But the copula verb, whose function is to join two syntactical elements in a structure of equality or reciprocity, reflects the “dreams” back upon the “actions”: the guilt he implies may have no more substance than the delusions of his deeply disturbed mind. Leontes' words expose the contests between falsity and truth, appearance and reality, “action” and “dream,” even tragedy and comedy, that confront us in language, theater, and life. They prompt me to step back from practical interpretation to reflect briefly on what we have been doing.12

We are engaged in a complex process. As we interprete the dramatic actions unfolding for us in Shakespeare's language, we are doing in the theater of our minds what the characters within the fictions do in relation to each other. Between us and the characters, in any Shakespearian production, move the actors who must choose their tones of voice and their body language according to their—and their directors'—interpretation of
Shakespeare's text. Beyond the theaters, and outside the rooms and libraries in which we work over the texts, spread other “texts”: the history of Shakespeare's time, which links the family of King James to the plots of the Romances, and the history of our own time, which predisposes us to see the dangers of unquestioned power and control, whether in mushroom clouds, ecological disasters, domestic injuries—or dramatic texts.

We, interpreting texts, reconstruct them in the personal theaters of our minds and the texts we write and read. In Aristotle's phrase, interpreters imitate actions as truly as the playwright does. But the critical mimeses in which we are engaged do not merely reflect the literature we read or the "real" lives we live. In the webs of language in which we all participate, the process of imitation, of re-presentation, works to make present that which can never be wholly or unambiguously present. The process unfolds inconclusively—cutting through barriers that divide levels of interpretation from each other and those that divide skull-locked men and women from each other. Insofar as we participate with vigorous inquiry in the fictions, we change our capacities to participate with vigorous inquiry in the “real” lives of those who share our personal histories—to understand a little, to interpret with the judgment that, arising from empathy, leads to conclusions more equitable than those of unquestioning, autocratic judgment.

My argument will never prove—nor is it trying to prove—that Shakespeare understood his own linguistic-dramatic efforts in precisely this way. If it refreshes and expands our awareness as readers, it serves its primary purpose. If, further, it convinces us that art does interconnect, mysteriously and intricately, with life, that the interconnections go far beyond the resemblances of a reflection in a mirror to the object reflected, it participates in Shakespeare's lifelong preoccupation with art's bridging of the gap between illusion and reality.13

In *The Winter's Tale* the most striking moment of this bridging comes when Hermione, presented by Paulina as a statue, a work of art, steps down and presents herself in embrace to her husband—not a statue, not an impossible dream projected by the residual *puer* or youth in her ostensibly adult husband, but a warm and breathing woman. The art of Paulina has worked to transform Leontes' false image of perfection into his realization of an absence that calls for fulfillment not by an artifact of the imagination but by a person.

Now we move on to consider yet again the illusory world projected by a man who is possessed by the archetype of the *puer* aeternus and the problems real women have when subjected to his dreams.

**THE P U E R , T H E S E N E X , A N D H O N O R**

Thus far, when speaking of the *puer* aeternus, I have followed the insights that Marie-Louise von Franz developed from Jung's own usages of the term. We have seen that the *puer* is obsessed with the image of purity in woman, an obsession justified in his inner world by the high ideals he holds before him on life's quest and by the accordingly high image he holds of his own role. The obsession is rooted in infancy. What the “boy eternal” (1.2.65) is seeking is the perfect maternal figure (or at times the parental-paternal, since the nurturing unity can include a man), lost when the *puer* first began to realize that his wish was no guarantee of its own fulfillment.14 Since life unfolds on a chronological continuum, experiences of infancy color youth, maturity, and age.

Several post-Jungian analysts, chief among them James Hillman, have followed an ancient and medieval convention in associating the archetype of the *puer* with that of the *senex* or old man.15 Their insights are instructive for Leontes, Polixenes, and Prospero and for the Pericles of the last two acts of his play. Surprisingly, they bear also on the figure of Autolycus and, as we shall see in the next chapter, on Ariel and Caliban.

The positive *puer*, we have seen, is a questing idealist, always on the move, like Pericles perambulating the Mediterranean world, searching, among other perfections, for the perfect woman. A youth driven by this
archetype may marry, but his understanding of his relationship with his wife will be so narcissistic that he will see her primarily as a reflection of his own perfection. (Thinking back to the narcissism of both Posthumus and Imogen early in their story, we recognize that both males and females can be propelled by puer consciousness.) If the union with a female brings forth the recognition and assimilation of the anima archetype, the puer comes down to mother earth and progresses toward the enlarged selfhood Jung speaks of as the goal of individuation. He will be driven thereafter neither by the puer figure nor by its polar opposite, the senex, but will be able to draw on the positive elements this double archetype represents, incorporating them with elements from other archetypes into a well-rounded psyche.

But puer consciousness does not always progress along a positive path. The puer, representative of and drawn to the transcendentally spiritual, “is weak on earth because it is not at home on earth.” It is impatient, vulnerable, and, although changeable, it resists development. “When it must rest or withdraw from the scene, then it seems to be stuck in a timeless state … out of tune with time.” Hillman’s insights seem tailored to fit the “wide gap of time” during which Leontes endlessly repeated his rituals of repentance and go some way toward explaining the otherwise inexplicable dallying of Pericles, who waits until his daughter is full grown before seeking to reclaim her.

If the puer on his quest toward selfhood loses his spiritual purpose and strays “through the halls of power towards the heart-hardened sick old king,” that negative senex prevents the internal development of the archetype of the wise old man—the positive senex. The chronological age of the aging puer is relatively unimportant; critics have estimated that the rigid, irascible Leontes of the early acts is about twenty-eight. But the puer-driven man who does not come to know the anima within, his internal principle of love, life, inspiration, will come under the sway of the senex years before his time. If only he could keep the dynamism and idealism of youth and assimilate them to the positive attributes of age—order, responsibility, and wisdom! When the two poles of the puer-senex archetype are both in play, all is well. But the person driven by one with the other repressed—the puer only or the senex only—becomes trouble personified, for self and others.

The negative senex, flipping into power when the puer goes underground, has a number of attributes instructive for readers of the Romances: tendencies to melancholy and depression (the counterparts to the puer's abstractions from the real world); a “hardening of consciousness” that produces egocentricity, rigidity, irascibility, cold judgmentalism. Some or all of these traits are recognizable in Pericles (depression), Cymbeline (irascibility), Leontes (irascibility and judgmentalism), and even in that more positive wise old man, Prospero (irascibility).

Now to Leontes, Polixenes, and Florizel. The puer, idealist that he is, always means well. If he is born and bred to rule, he will be conditioned to see himself as perfect judge, defining his own understanding of any complex matter as the truth and acting accordingly with unquestioning authority. The description defines Leontes, but it can be extended to define young men (like Posthumus) who are kings only metaphorically as rulers within a love relationship or marriage. Since the kingdoms of The Winter’s Tale should be read primarily as metaphors for the more universal structures of family and friendship, we often need to interpret Leontes’ actions more as those of an authoritarian husband, a puer turned senex, than as those of a king.

As puer-senex, Leontes encounters universal problems. Having married a woman as royal as himself, projecting on her the image of the Virgin who blends eternal strength and unspotted purity with the maternal solicitude of the queen of heaven, he sees her undergoing the domestic changes the “watery” moon ordains for woman—the fatigues of pregnancy, the “spot of childbed taint,” and, probably worse, the diversion of her attention from him by duties to her offspring. When his “virgin” becomes so palpably human, so changed—and perfection is not expected to change—deep and undefined anxieties come to the surface, ready to fasten on any plausible pretext.
Leontes' reactions to Hermione and Polixenes in the second scene are not mad in the sense of motiveless malignity; they are mad in the sense that they push to an absolute extreme, to absurdity, the self-confident “logic” that the puer turned senex substitutes for his undefined and misinterpreted anxieties. Leontes projects the frailties of the inner self he still idealizes onto the objectified scapegoats he makes of his wife and boyhood friend. The anxieties arising from “betrayal” by a mother are translated into anxieties about “betrayal” by the two figures who have formed Leontes' current circle of affection.

Polixenes is in some senses a double for Leontes. When Camillo tells their stories using third-person plural pronouns (1.1.21-32), and Polixenes extends and confirms the effect by using the first-person plural (1.2.62-75), the same verbs serve for both. As double, Polixenes is experienced by Leontes as uncanny—he reminds Leontes of oedipal and homoerotic impulses that get in the way of his loving a wife.19 There is, then, an additional impulse to anxiety welling up in Leontes. Seeing the two he has loved best since he outgrew infancy in affectionate conversation with each other, Leontes is tossed back into an infant's turmoil, feeling outpowered (he has failed where another now succeeds), abandoned, betrayed. To understand him in this way is not to make light of a senex's tyrannical injustice. But temper tantrums are more forgivable in a child than in a man. If we can forgive the child in Leontes, we will accept, a little more readily, the moment when Hermione steps silently back into his arms.

The self-absorption of the child becomes, in the adult male under the influence of the senex, a preoccupation with personal honor. Since this is a tale of love, not war, Leontes is no Hotspur. His honor is vested in his image of himself as unquestioned authority over the unspotted kingdom to which Hermione belongs. When, tormented by insecurity, he looks outward for a cause and projects one on his wife and his friend, his deepest wound, we see, is to the honor he equates to his very life:

Go play, boy, play: the mother plays. and I
Play too; but so disgrac'd a part, whose issue
Will hiss me to my grave: contempt and clamour
Will be my knell.

(1.2.187-90)

Hermione has been conditioned to share the patriarchal attitudes of Leontes: her long-suffering sweetness in the face of manifest injustice, like that of patient Griselda, follows the model of feminine strength held up to womanhood in any society dominated by masculine values.20 She spiritedly defends her honor at her trial (humbly and subserviently in terms of reliance on the gods for vindication). She declares she does so on behalf of her family. Her own life, so painful now, she will gladly sacrifice, as a good woman should: “Sir, spare your threats: / The bug which you would fright me with, I seek … The crown and comfort of my life, your favour, / I give for lost” (3.2.91-95).

Once the action moves to Bohemia, rural and pastoral settings and characters soften the patriarchal and courtly values represented by Camillo and Polixenes, the latter at least representative of a senex when he acts the authoritarian father. At the sheep-shearing festival, Perdita, lamenting Florizel's humble disguise as Doricles worries how the king would “look, to see his work, so noble, / Vilely bound up.” Florizel refers his humble disguise to the stories of “the gods themselves” who “humbling their deities to love, have taken / The shapes of beasts” to visit mortal maidens, or (like Apollo) of a “poor humble swain / As I seem now.” Then he redefines honor in a way quite alien to men who define it in terms of possession and reputation:

Their transformations

Were never for a piece of beauty rarer,
Nor in a way so chaste, since my desires
Run not before my honour, nor my lusts
Burn hotter than my faith.
The syntax is ambiguous. The word *chaste* refers first to Perdita, the “piece of beauty,” but it then attaches itself forward to Florizel’s “honour” and the “faith” that balances the urgency of his “lusts.” The ambiguity reveals that, for Florizel, self and beloved form a unity and harmony that encompasses both the flames of sexual desire and the chaste “honour” of those who restrain desire until it can be lawfully expressed. Through the love that has grown out of his desire for the forthright maiden he believes to be no more than a shepherdess, Florizel—a generation younger than Leontes—has reached a maturity Leontes has yet to know.

This redefines honor in terms neither of masculine possession nor of feminine asexuality. Although Perdita's behavior is totally chaste, her ardor is never in doubt from the moment she appears as a figure of “Flora,” a goddess who represents sexuality in most of her Renaissance manifestations. The ardor suffuses her address to Florizel at 4.4.130-32. Such a redefinition belongs to the fictive world of pastoral. Hierarchical and patriarchal societies, represented by the court, always assign the honors of war and possession (not very different from each other in feminist thinking) to men and the honor of sexual purity to women. Their highest genres are epic and tragedy. Pastoral, on the other hand, builds on the (in the male-defined genres, lower) values of retreat, receptivity, and sexual generation. Although I question any assumption that the optimism of *The Winter's Tale* is absolute, I find some indication of trust in the possibility of transformation in social attitudes in this representation of Florizel's advance over *puer-senex* thinking on “honour.”

Before proceeding to Florizel's Perdita as a richer representation of the virgin archetype than Hermione, I want to look at the strange rascal Autolycus, who, negating all forms of honor, nobility, and humane concern, nonetheless inhabits the happier acts of this play.

**THE ROLE OF AUTOLYCUS**

What is Autolycus, named for the thieving son of Mercury and ancestor to the wily Ulysses, doing here in the pastoral world of love, with the noble Perdita and Florizel, with the trustworthy old shepherd and his honest but clownish son? What is he doing in Sicilia, the place of refuge and the birth of reconciliation?

Literal answers are easy enough to offer. Autolycus is singing dirty songs, playing confidence games at the expense of the unwary, peddling ribbons and other trifles to tempt an innocent eye, delivering in the end an absurd promise to reform. His antics entertain Shakespeare's audiences, just as within the fiction he entertains the decent rustics at the festival of the wool harvest. He serves the plot directly twice: he shifts clothing with Florizel, enabling him to escape a father's wrath with his beloved, and he directs the old shepherd and his son to Sicilia where they are able to reveal Perdita's true identity. The latter incident holds the clues to the deeper significance we sense but must struggle to define. This son of Mercury is as hard to pin down as his mercurial father, but he calls us to fathom his meaning: Mercury-Hermes is guide of souls and father of hermeneusis or interpretation.

In asides, Autolycus confesses that “though I am not naturally honest, I am sometimes so by chance” (4.4.712-13) and that the good he has done to shepherd and clown has been “against his will” (5.2.124-5). His envy at “the blossoms of their fortune” prompts the second aside and undercuts the credibility of his promise that he will seriously mend his ways. After all, any hope of further gain from this fortunate pair will depend on the trust the rascal hopes to promote by his promise of transformation.

His very presence, untrustworthy as he continues to be, helps bridge the boundaries between fictive art and life. This story in which all seems to come together happily is not set in a true Eden, we see, but in a world realistically harboring a devil, calling yet for vigilant interpretation of others' language. This said, its converse also emerges: a world where the power of evil is represented by an entertaining rascal whose actions turn to good, whatever his motivation, is one we need not fear too seriously. The greater evil of a tyrannous king has
been transmuted, in part through the actions of the rascal.

The shift of clothing by which Autolycus enables Florizel to escape is superficially simple to understand. Autolycus enjoys the advantage, clearly, of trading a peddler's rags for the relative riches of the prince's rural but festive guise. But a shift of clothing in Shakespeare is always worth pondering. As Cloten was tied in uncanny ways by clothing to Posthumus, so here we sense some mystery. Hillman, a mercurial writer on the mercurial aspects of the puer, once more can be our guide.

“When we stand in the image [of the trickster and soul guide] and view hermetically, the problem of black and white becomes irrelevant … Hermes son Autolykos … changes them back and forth opportunistically in accordance with the situation.” The linkage between Autolycus and Florizel need not signify evil in the latter: garment shifts are not doctrine and do not require moralizing. What we do see is that as the puer moves toward selfhood (and Florizel is boyish and idealistic, even though we find he does not share the puer's dehumanizing projection of self onto a virgin figure), he will meet situations in which good and evil are inextricably mixed. Sons owe allegiance to fathers; lovers owe allegiance to each other. Situations that in tragedy will tear an Antigone or an Othello apart can have different issue in the story of a clever youth. Florizel turns trickster to escape and buy time without incurring any but a senex's adverse judgment. “Puer opportunism is … an instinctual adaptation to psychic realities,” a stage in growth toward the fuller psychic being that can contend with worldly evils without disaster.22

THE FEMALE PRINCIPLE: MAMILLIUS, HERMIONE, AND PERDITA

Let us start this discussion with names, first with the name of the young prince, son to Hermione and brother to Perdita, whose death is the darkest of the irreversible evils in this tragicomedy. “Mamillius” is Shakespeare's name: the parallel character in Pandosto is Garinter. For a prince whose character is extolled as the epitome of youthful masculinity, the name is strange. Only its suffix sounds masculine; the first two syllables link it to a group of words denoting the female nipple or breast.23 Mamillius's name works against the interpretation of his fatal illness that Leontes proposes: “To see his nobleness, / Conceiving the dishonor of his mother! / He straight declin’d … and fix’d the shame on't in himself.” Mamillius is no young Hamlet, sickened by female sexuality. Were he so, his very name would have been the death of him long before he is forced to observe his father's cruelty and injustice toward his mother. He has accorded her a playful affection in their brief conversation together (2.1.21-32) and, earlier, a bemused defense against his father's raving accusations (1.2.208).

The death of Mamillius signifies more than the victimization of innocence under evil,24 although the death of the son of a king often means that, in myth and scripture as in history. It signifies also the death in Leontes' Sicilia of those softer and nourishing virtues that are often regarded as feminine, although males too may be marked by “the milk of human kindness,” to their detriment in a world that values power more than love.25

Although the particular child's death is irreversible, what he represents thematically is restored to Sicilia in Florizel. Leontes doubly regains a son in this son of his double, this husband to his daughter. Florizel's name, even more than that of Mamillius, suggests the union of male and female: “zell” is an archaic form of zeal, ardent love, and “Flora,” goddess of the springing flowers, is the love name he himself gives Perdita, the “queen of curds and cream” (4.4.2, 161).

Hermione's name rarely attracts attention: Shakespeare's queen is so much more memorable than the classical character for whom she is named that “Hermione” now signifies to most a chaste and long-suffering wife whose closest sisters in literary typology are Desdemona and Chaucer's Griselda.

The Greek compound means “pillar-queen.”26 For the “herm” syllable, a glance at a Greek lexicon adds to “pillar” the suggestions of “prop,” “rock,” “bedpost.” “Herm” as an English word signifies a pillar-supported
statue of a male head, often used in ancient times as a boundary marker. All of these variants open possibilities as we consider Hermione's role. She is certainly treated by Leontes like a bedroom thing, a “bedpost”; her integrity and passive strength under assault are “rock” hard; and Leontes' encouragement of her conversation with Polixenes, taken with his possessiveness, puts the unfortunate queen out on an exposed boundary. As a prop she supports the rigid male head that represents, in its turn, the senex who sees his spouse in utterly conventional and servile terms. When Leontes' perspective of Hermione as directly under him, supporting only him, is shaken by her friendly banter with his double (and unconscious rival) Polixenes and by the advanced pregnancy that will divert her support to a life newer and more fragile, the senex loses his balance and his head.

Etymology may be enough in itself to account for Shakespeare's name for the queen who in Pandosto is called Bellaria. But when we look at the sad tales of the ancient Hermione, evocative patterns emerge. Homer's Hermione was the daughter of Helen and Menelaus, abandoned by Helen when Paris carried her off to Troy. Thus Hermione's name was closely associated with an adultery of which she herself was innocent. Homer's Hermione endured the threat of an unjust death and marriage to a violent man, Orestes, who, when tried for the murder of his mother, escaped penalty. Orestes was defended by Apollo's denial that a mother is in any sense more important “than the inert furrow in which the husbandman casts his seed” and by the deciding vote of that most masculine of female Olympians, Athena-Diana.

The analogies need not be labored. Shakespeare's Hermione is witty, intelligent, and chaste, but in pregnancy clearly touched by sexuality. She is so strong in adversity that women as well as men cannot fail to admire her. But this strong good woman's forbearance—with her willingness to embrace the husband who has grievously wronged her, caused the death of her firstborn, and exposed her second born—reflects a masculine dream of femininity, not the self-sufficiency of the pagan virgin archetype we see more clearly in Perdita than in her mother.

The one moment of the play that works best to justify the problematic embrace of reconciliation is that in which Leontes tells Paulina that the “dear stone” is much more “wrinkled” and “aged” than the beautiful wife he remembers. “Because eternity is changeless, that which is governed only by the puer does not age,” Hillman notes. But Leontes, face to face with the changes of many watery moons and years, accepts the imperfections with no diminishment of his longing for the wife who would, living, look like this. The puer-senex powers that have been fueling his actions drop away in his recognition of longing for a specific, time-flawed, woman. The moment is like that in which Pericles confronts his memories of Thaisa in her name. Not the projected dream and adjunct but the particular woman draws the husband's love. Hermione, hearing all this as (true to her name) she stands motionless on her pedestal, may find in it the justification she needs for belief in Leontes' transformation.

Perdita's name—“the lost one” in the female inflection—is man given in several senses. Leontes has imposed on her innocence the exposure that “loses” her to Sicilia; Antigonus has attached the name to her swaddling clothes; and the fostering shepherd has used it in her upbringing. Her name—chosen by the mother who knows male power all too well—suits all too well any girl-child born into a patriarchy ruled by the puer-senex polarity. Though her name is tied to her victimization as infant, Perdita represents also, like Mamillius, the loss to the court of Sicilia of those gentle, loving, and relating motives in the psyche that are symbolically feminine.

In pastoral Bohemia, Perdita wears her name proudly, and more honestly and independently than most men wear theirs. At her festival, the men from the court are disguised by name as well as attire; Autolycus is also disguised; and even the old shepherd and his son wear a social dignity that comes from the gold Antigonus left with the abandoned child, a dignity in this sense not their own. But Perdita is Perdita, in her own mind no more or less than she seems—beautiful and witty by nature, modestly well dressed by good fortune, warm and commanding as mistress of the feast, ardently in love but fully concerned lest her noble lover fall into
trouble because of her modest circumstances.

Perdita is in the most obvious sense a virgin—fully virtuous, innocent of sexual trespass though not of sexual desire. But her purity is not that of a votaress of Diana: it is neither tantalizingly unreceptive to male approach nor secluded from it as Thaisa and Hermione are when sequestered from their husbands. This forthrightly nubile girl is defined by her amatory relationship to Florizel and by her daughterly relationship to the old shepherd, Leontes, and Polixenes. She lives on the very boundary between daughterhood and wifehood, in both instances in close relationship to the masculine principle.

All the more remarkable then is the decisive intelligence and moral aplomb in her dialogues with both Florizel and Polixenes, lover and future father-in-law, respectively. These mark her as virginal in the most ancient sense of all, the self-sufficiency in the face of masculine strength that links her back to Marina.

But unlike Marina's, Perdita's female strength grows with her love. We have already noted her concern that her lover may fall under his father's censure for his masquerade in the festive dress that Autolycus will find such an improvement over his peddler's rags (4.4.18-22). She also feels abashed at the very thought that the king might surprise her in her “borrowed flaunts,” a festive finery above her station; although she straightforwardly accepts her current status in the social hierarchy, she knows that discovery will threaten “this purpose” of their love and may do so with special force if her garments seem presumptuous. But on stage she and “Doricles” are matched in the costumes that are for her above, for him below, the proper social station. Their moral equality, thus emblematically established, is reinforced by Florizel's words: “Or I'll be thine, my fair, / Or not my father's. For I cannot be / Mine own, nor anything to any, if / I be not thine” (4.4.42-45). Strengthened in her own self-assertiveness by Florizel's declaration of his selfhood in the mutuality of love, Perdita can match Polixenes gracefully in the ironic debate on the breeding of flowers. Within the fiction, she does not know who this aristocrat may be, but she stands her ground against him on matters of both intellect and morality. The audience, knowing her identity, sees her vindicated yet again as fit consort to a prince.

The debate starts with the simple social gesture of a gift of flowers from the mistress of the feast to two newcomers and embraces as it unfolds many of the major themes of the Romances, and of romance as genre. Perdita dismisses, from her offerings, “carnations and streak'd gillyvors, / Which some call nature's bastards,” propagated by grafting, “an art which, in their piedness, shares / With great creating nature.” She prefers natural over artistic creation as befits the pastoral occasion and her own rural nurture. But Polixenes counters with a conventional argument based in Neoplatonic philosophy: since all creation flows down through the various strata of the cosmos from the One source, “nature is made better by no mean / But nature makes that mean.” “Over that art, which you say adds to nature, is an art / That nature makes.” Polixenes goes on to praise the husbandman's art that “marr[ies] / A gentle scion to the wildest stock” to “make conceive a … baser kind / By bud of nobler race.” Such art, mending nature, “itself is nature.”

Perdita gracefully concedes his principle (which Polixenes fails to recognize as applicable to the marriage he will soon oppose, thinking the girl's nature and nurture both deficient) but she still refuses to have anything to do with the flowers of bastardizing art. “No more than, were I painted, I would wish / This youth should say 'twere well, and only therefore / Desire to breed by me.” Her final sally, whether she guesses her antagonist's identity or not, affirms her natural worth against all that “artful” nurture might have done to improve her. It also shows a virginal vigor insisting, not shrewishly, on the last word and the loving fervor from which she draws her strength.

That commonplace of Renaissance pastoral, the nature-nurture debate, introduced here pointedly and enigmatically, will arise again in The Tempest. But we turn now from it to matters related to the larger questions of nature and art raised by Paulina's “magic.”
PAULINA: NO DEUS EX MACHINA, “MANKIND WITCH”

We have seen Paulina's courage in the face of tyranny provoking a misogynistic tirade from Leontes, embedded in which was the epithet “mankind witch.” The phrase labeled her by two major and conventionally related offenses, sexual perversity and the practice of forbidden arts. In a rigid patriarchy, any female strength that contradicts the imposed norms of unthreatening femininity automatically provokes such taunts. A woman is held to be no woman if she fails to conform to the masculine dream. Moreover, she will be suspected of links to devilish powers to support her usurping strength. History demonstrates that independent women, acting out of strength and wisdom in the cause of good, have been frequently persecuted as witches for the knowledge and behavior that is seen as far less dangerous in a man like Prospero.

Mamillius's death, confirming the oracle's support for Paulina's position, alters Leontes' responses. Self-accused, he welcomes the power of this strong woman to punish his tyranny. Her very name suggests the epistles of Paul, which define and condemn human sin in the context of a hope for redemption that hinges on repentance. I warn again that explicit doctrine need not be preached, by Shakespeare or any reader, for us to hear reverberations in Paulina's name that link her to a male model of unquestionable authority. Those who find such reverberations powerful will find in the “resurrection” and the gracious forgiveness offered by Paulina's mistress a representation, however incomplete, of Paul's lord and master. In Hermione, Paulina serves not the devil, lord of witches, but a human channel of divine love. As we shall see, though, that human channel offers links to more than one divine myth.

In the final scene, years after the accuser's anger has cooled, Paulina recalls the charge of witchcraft when she declares that the “spell” by which she brings Hermione to life “is lawful.” We know, of course, that the “art” that enables the statue to move into Leontes' arms is that of “great creating nature,” the art of God sustaining Hermione through the trials that have deepened the marks of time in her face.

In the final scene, years after the accuser's anger has cooled, Paulina recalls the charge of witchcraft when she declares that the “spell” by which she brings Hermione to life “is lawful.” We know, of course, that the “art” that enables the statue to move into Leontes' arms is that of “great creating nature,” the art of God sustaining Hermione through the trials that have deepened the marks of time in her face.

Hermione utters no words to Leontes in their embrace or to Camillo, who challenges her to prove she lives by speaking. Only when Paulina leads Perdita to seek a blessing does the mother finally speak: “You gods look down, / And from your sacred vials pour your graces / Upon my daughter's head!” Her maternal love, sustained by the hope the oracle gave, has “preserv'd” her “to see the issue.” Hermione's last word in the play can be paraphrased as “outcome,” but to do so impoverishes its meaning. This play is about the saving grace of the Nature the Renaissance philosophers saw in the earthly Venus, the medieval philosophers deified as Natura Naturans, and the ancients celebrated in the mother-daughter mysteries of Demeter and Persephone. In the upturn of Nature's annual cycle, figured as transparently in the reunion of Hermione with Perdita as in the older myths, a “sad tale” yields to merry spring, and all the happy tales the persons of the play will tell each other after “good Paulina / Lead[s] them hence.” In this final ritualistic scene, three women—maid, mother, and crone—dominate, three avatars of the ancients' triple goddess. Through her, the great creating Nature, the love that issues from nature redresses wrongs and restores social and spiritual balance.

One wry observation demands concluding space. Only after all has been ceremoniously resolved under Paulina's apparent control do we realize that Leontes, again in command, is denying her wish to escape the happiness she cannot share. Without a word of courtship or permission, he is matching her to Camillo and telling her what she must direct others to do. For a male playwright, a happy ending sees all power reinvested in those to whom it traditionally has belonged. Paulina's manifest power must be governed by another husband—however ineffectual in this sense Antigonus once proved to be.

Notes

Leontes' mad jealousy and other points of characterization—more than I do. (All quotations from the play are from this edition.) Howard Felperin in “Tongue-tied our queen?: The Deconstruction of Presence in The Winter's Tale,” in Shakespeare and the Question of Theory, ed. Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman, (New York: Methuen, 1985), 3-18, discusses the contribution of intricate language to the lifelike slipperiness we encounter in the play.

2. The probable contribution of Greene's “cony-catching” pamphlets to the character of Autolycus is discussed by Pafford in his Introduction, xxxiv-v.

3. Pafford, in section 4 of his Introduction (lxiii-lxvii), discusses the interrelationships at length as they have been defined by critics over the years.

4. Pafford's introduction deals with the “structural mare's nests … [as] nonexistent problems” throughout, but especially li-li.

5. In the absence of firm proof for any speculation on text and date, the summaries of textual issues given in the Arden introductions for each of these plays give acceptable guidance—although bibliographical debates continue in the literature.

6. Romano was an actual Renaissance sculptor. This notorious “anachronism,” of course, is one of many devices in this play blurring the boundaries between art and life.

7. Felperin, “Tongue-Tied Our Queen?” finds, as I do, that Hermione is probably innocent but that Leontes' suspicions have more than a little foundation in the ambiguities of the text.


9. Camillo's word recalls the Platonic distinction between truth, which accords with the eternal patterns, and opinion, which is precariously based on the evidences of fallible human sense.

10. We note a contrast here to Cymbeline wherein slander attacks the royal Imogen from outside the family.


12. The broader theoretical premises for this book have been sketched in my introductory chapter, but here it is important to review them.


14. Although I have begun by using the Jungian and post-Jungian terminology of the puer, since so much that Marie von Franz and Hillman have observed is applicable, the insights of Freud are basic to the same psychological mechanisms, and those of the post-Freudian Lacan about a “fall” into ambiguous language are particularly applicable to the occasions of Leontes' judgments. For elaboration, see, in addition to works cited in chapter 2, Stephen Frosh, The Politics of Psychoanalysis: An Introduction to Freudian and Post-Freudian Theory (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), chaps. 6, 7.


16. This paragraph and the next quote and paraphrase James Hillman’s “Senex and Puer” in Puer Papers, 24, 25.

17. Milton's phrase (Sonnet 23), expresses the age-old patriarchal taboos upon the blood mysteries of womanhood. Such taboos gave rise to the Levitical law prescribing purification after childbirth and persisted in Milton's day in the Anglican ritual of “churching” a new mother. The other quotation is adapted from Polixenes' opening speech (1.2.1).

18. Many of the insights here run parallel to those of Coppélia Kahn in “The Providential Tempest and the Shakespearean Family” in Representing Shakespeare, ed. Murray M. Schwartz and Coppélia Kahn (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980). Kahn's chosen terminology is more Freudian than mine: my choice of the “puer” archetype, codified by Jungians, was suggested, of
course, by Shakespeare's own phrase, “boy eternal.”
20. Again Lisa Jardine in Still Harping on Daughters, 181-94, is instructive. She traces the “nobility in adversity” Renaissance writers habitually located in figures like Griselda and Lucrece.
21. The Oxford English Dictionary derives “hermeneut” or interpreter from the name of Hermes, whom the Romans called Mercury. Other attributes of this young god, messenger of the greater gods—trickiness, speed in constant journeying, inconsistency—signal his importance in any exploration of puer psychology like this play.
22. See “Notes on Opportunism” in Hillman, Puer Papers, esp. 159, 161, 163.
23. The male nipple, “mamma,” takes a different vowel in the second syllable.
24. See Pafford's Introduction, lxxxii.
25. I am thinking here, of course, of the dark and bloody atmosphere of Macbeth's Scotland. Kahn, “The Providential Tempest and the Shakespearean Family,” sees the death of Mamillius in much the same way as I do.
27. In addition to Graves, I have consulted a Greek lexicon and the Oxford English Dictionary for this paragraph.
28. The quotation and many of the details in the paragraph come from Graves.
29. Hillman, “Puer and Senex,” 17-18, notes that the puer archetype is often linked to child exposure.
30. In this she is like that serpent of old Nile who, obliquely reflected in the dialogue of a drunkard at another feast in Antony and Cleopatra, “is shap’d, sir, like itself … moves with it own organs … [and] lives by that which nourisheth it” (in the Arden Shakespeare, ed. M. R. Ridley, [(London: Methuen, 1965)] 2.7.41-45).
31. Here I differ decisively from the opinion of J. H. P. Pafford (lxxvii) that Perdita is less intelligent in the “debate” with Polixenes than stubborn in a peasant way.
32. Spenser's admirable female knight, Britomart, has often fallen under the censure of male readers who do not seem to see that her “irritability” results from the need to exercise vigilance over a “virtue”—chastity—that will be lost forever in male eyes if it is once defeated.
33. Mary Daly in Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism (Boston: Beacon, 1978) gives an outline, informed by passionate outrage, of the injustices imposed on women by men in many cultures under the rationale of witchcraft.

Criticism: Character Studies: John P. Cutts (essay date 1968)


[In the following essay, Cutts focuses on the issue of Leontes's jealousy, contending that the “boy eternal” complex from which Leontes suffers explains the apparently sudden onset of his jealousy, bridges the supposed division between the play's first three acts and the fourth act, and is further exploited in the theme of “re-wooing” in the fifth act.]

Criticism of The Winter's Tale concerns itself sooner or later with the inception of Leontes' jealousy, about which there has been great conflict of opinion. Most modern critics support the view that Leontes shows jealousy from the very beginning of the play and carefully document this. But Pafford, in the New Arden Shakespeare edition of the play, reverts to an older school of criticism which found no indication of Leontes' jealousy until I. ii. 108, and claims that all the arguments for jealousy from the start can be answered in a general way because “there is no apparent indication that Leontes says or does anything to show jealousy before I. ii. 108, or that anyone on the stage is aware of or even suspicious of anything of the kind.” This
general criticism does not take into account the possibility that the dramatis personae are not openly aware of the deeper significances of what they do. The first burst of flame obviously steals the dramatic moment, but surely this does not necessarily mean that a dramatist will take as his point of departure the moment when the kindling begins, nor does it absolve the critic from searching for the first signs of smoke. To claim that Leontes’ words would all be said in a warm and friendly way, that his speeches before I. ii. 108 are those of a devoted and appreciative husband, and that the happy loving memories of his early courting days of his wife prove the loving husband's admiration for his able wife's success in managing to persuade Polixenes to stay, is to ignore the tinder which makes the fire possible. It is not enough to say Leontes is “a little uneasy, somewhat puzzled and hesitant,” that his worry grows, that he is probably meant to hear the equivocal lines I. ii. 83–86, and that “if he is represented in this way the audience will have some preparation for the shock.” The audience is surely being prepared much more carefully than this for the burst, and is given powerful hints and suggestions about what caused it.

Much of our difficulty with this very first part of the play lies in our willingness to watch Leontes carefully and to treat Hermione and Polixenes as adjuncts for the further clarification of the “star.” To argue that Leontes lacks the confident serenity which radiates from a Hermione is a splendid example of this attitude. Hermione is not turned into a statue, not cloistered for sixteen years, only because these are the effects of Leontes' actions, but because she herself is in need of revitalizing as a result of her own actions and involvement. Polixenes is by no means blameless either, as we shall see.

Close investigation of the first scene of the play in conjunction with the first 107 lines of the second will reveal a “boy eternal” complex in Leontes, which in many ways is not inferior to Coriolanus’ in dramatic appeal, and which throws significant light on his relationship with both Hermione and Polixenes. This complex is exploited throughout the rest of the play, becomes one of the essential links with the “golden girls and lads” episode in rural Bohemia, bridging what most critics have made an unnecessary division between the first three acts and Act IV, and links carefully with the re-wooing theme of Act V.

Leontes has not seen Polixenes since they were boys together undergoing the same training and yet:

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, as over a vast; and embraced, as it were, from the ends of opposed winds.

(I. i. 26-31)

—which is more suggestive of the conduct between parted lovers than schoolboy friends. All that is necessary for the audience at this stage is the hint of an unusually close relationship between two gentlemen of Sicilia and Bohemia. The rest of the play will strengthen and confirm this hint, and knowledge of the speaker, Camillo, the rope that binds both kings, whom both treat almost as a father-confessor figure, will convince the audience that it was right to be suspicious even in the beginning. Camillo ends the above speech with the hope that the heavens will “continue / their loves” (I. i. 31-32), which, of course, is marked irony, not just because their loves are soon found to be altered by malice and matter, but more significantly that one personal encounter should be even suspected of being able to jeopardize years of perfectly harmonious relationship in absence.

The preparations for the one personal encounter invite close scrutiny. Leontes has striven to impress Polixenes “with such magnificence” (I. i. 12) that Polixenes' servant, Lord Archidamus, feels too overwhelmed to think his master can retaliate in kind for the projected visit of Leontes to Polixenes. The overwhelming entertainment Leontes has put on for Polixenes is not unlike Timon's need to create an embarras de richesses to make visitors incapable of repaying him in kind—an attempt to assert dominance over the visitor. Polixenes and Timon both give “freely,” but the end result is the same—their visitors feel imprisoned in their
indebtedness, and no amount of being told “You pay a great deal too dear for what's given / freely” (I. i. 17-18) makes their visitors feel really at ease. Archidamus speaks as his understanding instructs him, and as his honesty puts it to utterance, because he is not the main recipient of such free honors: Polixenes is caught in Leontes' web of lavish entertainment.

The first scene might well end on the theme of there not being in the world either malice or matter to alter the friendship between Leontes and Polixenes. It has the knell of “All's well” about it, inviting dramatic doom round the next corner. But this conclusion would leave the audience with a dominant interest in the relationship between Leontes and Polixenes as adults, whereas the scene has been building up background information about their childhood friendship, the root of their affection, of which we see but the branching now. Hence the introduction of the talk about the young prince Mamillius, “a gentleman of / the greatest promise” (I. i. 35-36), a “gallant child” (I. i. 38), who “makes old hearts fresh” (I. i. 39). Critics do well to compare this extravagant praise with that given to Posthumus in Cymbeline's first scene—both are excessive for specific dramatic purposes. Praise of Posthumus is proved wrong, as I have already shown. That of Mamillius is given not for Mamillius himself, for his early death in the play removes him from consideration as a dominant persona, but for the light it throws on Leontes. Before long Leontes will draw the audience's attention to Mamillius as a reminder of his own childhood—“Looking on the lines / Of my boy's face, me thoughts I did recoil / Twenty-three years” (I. ii. 153-155). In this first scene there is only the hint that Leontes showed remarkable promise in childhood which did not come to fruition. He does not act as a cordial reinvigorating the whole nation, or does he make old hearts fresh, or give longer life to the old who are living on just “to see him a man” (I. i. 40). The king has no son in Mamillius because Mamillius is the equivalent of himself. No wonder the scene ends with the paradoxical statement—“If the king had no son, they would desire to live on / crutches till he had one” (I. i. 44-45). The visit of Polixenes is not a forward movement at all for Leontes, but a harking back to his childhood when he stood heir to men's greatest expectations of him to see him a man. To invite Polixenes and make such a fuss over him obviously argues for something wrong in the state of Leontes. Polixenes is somehow his hold onto the dream of what he was to become, but feels he is not; hence his need to revert to the days of promise rather than fulfilment. Shakespeare asks a great deal of his audience in this first scene as he does in the first scenes of Othello, Lear, Pericles, and The Tempest, to name but a few. His technique of rushing in medias res is usually acknowledged, but critics are only paying lip service to this acknowledgment if they do not give the first scenes enough emphasis.

That the dominant theme of the first scene in The Winter's Tale is the boyhood of Leontes and his relationship with Polixenes at that time is vouched for by the very organization of the first scene, and by the way the second scene is linked. No sooner has Hermione managed to persuade Polixenes to stay than she opens the conversation with—“I'll question you / Of my lord's tricks, and yours, when you were boys. / You were pretty lordings then?” (I. ii. 60-62). Hermione is seeking for an explanation of her husband in the past. Of course she is being the polite hostess and making her guest feel most comfortable by talking of his relationship with her husband when they were both boys. It all sounds harmless enough, but it is odd that Leontes should be kept waiting in the background and have to ask “Is he won yet?” (I. ii. 86), and to be told simply “He'll stay, my lord” (I. ii. 87), without a word of explanation as to how she has managed this proceeding which was so difficult for Leontes. It is also odd that Leontes should have absented himself from the felicity of Hermione a while during her attempts at persuasion. The key to the explanation of this oddness lies, I suggest, in Hermione's questioning about Leontes' boyhood. Leontes present is forgotten in her preoccupation with Leontes past. Her attitude to Leontes present here and throughout the play is consistent. Not until she is wooed for herself as a vibrant being can she really come to life for Leontes. His treatment of her as a glorified statue does not come home to him until the very end of the play. The statue that mimics life so excellently that it could be mistaken for life, but cannot be the real thing until it is given a real existence in its own right, becomes a symbol for much of the play. Leontes present, Hermione present, Polixenes present, are excellent statues mimicking life excellently well, applying various faces to meet the faces that they meet, but living in the past. Leontes and Polixenes live in the reflected vision of their boyhood made possible by the personal encounter, face to face, and by the mirror of their respective sons. The Leontes-Mamillius relationship has
already been noticed. The Polixenes-Florizel relationship functions in a similar manner. It is surely a deliberate stroke to have Hermione talk of “the by-gone day” (I. ii. 32) when asked by Leontes to speak in favor of persuading Polixenes to stay, and use as her first line of persuasion “To tell, he longs to see his son, were strong” (I. ii. 34). By the time that Leontes asks Polixenes “My brother, / Are you so fond of your young prince, as we / Do seem to be of ours” (I. ii. 163-165), the reflected image of father in son is being brought to obvious attention. Here again one could say that the dramatist is taking as his point of departure the moment at which the kindling of dramatic interest begins—Leontes’ use of “seem” instead of “are” steals the dramatic moment, but all the time this has been carefully led up to, step by step. When Polixenes avers that Florizel is all his “matter” and rejuvenates him, the themes of the previous scene are being echoed:

If at home, sir,  
He’s all my exercise, my mirth, my matter:  
Now my sworn friend, and then mine enemy;  
My parasite, my soldier, statesman, all.  
He makes a July's day short as December;  
And with his varying childness cures in me  
Thoughts that would thick my blood.  

(I. ii. 165-171)

This dependence on Florizel jars with Polixenes' absence for so long from him. The nine moons' absence from Bohemia is obviously a minimum to make it possible that Polixenes could be the father of Hermione's child, but it can hardly be regarded as a “reasonable holiday absence from a throne and family,” in the light of Polixenes' statement of extreme fondness for his son, and the effectiveness of Hermione's taunting him about longing to see his son. Florizel is not longed for as Florizel but as a rejuvenated Polixenes.

The effect of much of this encounter of Leontes, Polixenes, and Hermione is more that of an assembly of full-length statues in a gallery or of a painting than the action itself. The stilted language between them is similarly statuesque. Polixenes’ “Nine changes of the watery star hath been / The shepherd's note since we have left our throne” (I. ii. 1-2) echoes the kind of language we expect of the player-king and player-queen in Hamlet—“Full thirty times hath Phoebus' cart gone 'round … So many journeys may the sun and moon / Make us again count o'er ere love be done!” (III. ii. 145, 151-152). The artificial banquet of thank-yous follows this immediately. Like “a cipher / (Yet standing in rich place) [Polixenes] multiplies with one ‘We thank you’ many thousands moe / That go before it” (I. ii. 6-9).

Polixenes suggests that he has stayed long enough to tire Leontes, and that there is no tongue that moves, none, none in the world so soon as Leontes' could win him to stay longer. But it is painfully obvious that the whole situation is tired, that there is no movement in the language between Leontes and Polixenes. The only movement in language comes about when Hermione is successful over the recall of their boyhood, and it is this which gives them life—colorful lights of the past hover over them.

This, I think, is one of the hallmarks of Shakespeare's technique in the late plays. Critics have variously pointed out that it is not action that matters in them so much as symbol, and have shown the regenerative symbols of youth for old age, fertility for sterility, nature and natural zest for art and artificiality, but these are by no means the monopoly of the late plays. The early comedies, and Twelfth Night, and As You Like It in particular share these devices. What does mark the late plays from the others is their particular rhetoric for framing the symbol. The language becomes largely that of painting and sculpture rather than of the audience's imagination; the language of the Blackfriars theater and its cultivation of the masque with all its lavish scenic devices rather than the bare Globe. The audience watching Pericles, Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale, and The Tempest has to be a great deal more artistically sophisticated than for Globe plays.6 This does not mean to say that we are meant to allow the magnificence of the painting and the sculpture to overawe us and take away or suspend our critical faculties. The dark shadows behind the principal figures, the very setting in which they
are depicted, should evoke critical attitudes. I have already tried to show with *Pericles* that the very presence of the prince in Antiochus' house of death is a criticism.

The presence of Polixenes in Leontes' court invites our critical awareness. The static main figures merely going through the gestures of courtesy are lost in the lavish display of entertainment in the foreground, but in the background are the clouds of glory of childhood when Polixenes and Leontes “were as twinn'd lambs that did frisk i' th' sun, / And bleat the one at th' other” (I. ii. 67-68). The foreground is concerned with the shades of the prison house. Hermione's conversation with Polixenes, before it turns to investigation of the childhood era, turns on the theme of imprisonment—“Force me to keep you as a prisoner” (I. ii. 52)—‘My prisoner? or my guest (I. ii. 55)—“Your guest then, madam: / To be your prisoner should import offending” (I. ii. 56-57). The careful juxtaposition of “guest” and “prisoner,” “gaoler” and “hostess” emphasizes this even more.

When Hermione probes into the background her questions reveal that Polixenes and Leontes were boys eternal in an escape world of innocence, where their only blemish was something they could do nothing about, original sin, where they neither knew of nor dreamed of either the possibility or the actual commission of evil deeds. But “stronger blood” has taken over in the real world, and it is no longer possible to plead ‘not guilty’ on their own account before the tribunal of heaven. Hermione is quick to jump to the conclusion that they have “tripp'd” (I. ii. 76) in the real world. There is real vitality in her questioning here, and in her reply, that as long as Leontes and Polixenes “first sinn'd” with their wives, and that with them they “did continue fault, and that [they] slipp'd not / With any but with [them]” (I. ii. 85-86), as much is revealed about herself as about her husband. Talk of the boy eternal business leads directly into talk of the marital relationship. The transition from the clouds of innocence and glory of childhood into the prison house of adulthood is far from smooth. Polixenes talks about temptations along the way that have somehow been borne since entry into the married state. But it is true he phrases this negatively, for in those unfledged days of eternal boy his wife and Hermione were girls who had nor crossed the eyes of himself and Leontes. Although Polixenes addresses Hermione as “most sacred lady” (I. ii. 76) during this conversation, Hermione's caution lest he say his queen and she are “devils” (I. ii. 82) makes it quite clear that she is inferring that the wives are somehow being blamed. That this is the case is borne out immediately by her craving for praise—“What! have I twice said well? when was't before? / I prithee tell me: cram's with praise” (I. ii. 90-91); “Nay, let me have't: I long!” (I. ii. 101)—and by her strong affirmation that Leontes and Polixenes will get far more out of their wives by “one soft kiss” (I. ii. 95) than by harsh treatment. Hermione makes too much of the infrequency she is held to say well for it to be casual repartee of light conversation with no undertones. When she persists in making Leontes himself name the exact occasion of her first good deed, since the second is to have persuaded Polixenes to stay, it is powerful irony that he is thus made to acknowledge that her consent to marry him was the occasion of her first good deed. And Hermione will not let the subject of her two good deeds drop—“Why lo you now; I have spoke to th' purpose twice” (I. ii. 106). This last remark follows on Leontes' description of how Hermione had agreed to marry him, a description which is full of the winter of his discontent. The three months he took to woo her to the state at which she agreed to marry him are referred to as “crabbed” and are said to have “sour'd themselves to death” (I. ii. 102). The yielding of Hermione's love is described more as the result of a forcing by Leontes who found it difficult to make her open her white hand.

It is, of course, possible to suggest that the souring of Leontes results from Hermione's success where he had failed, but again I would counter that his crabbedness is too bitter to stem only from this. His next words will be the famous line “Too hot, too hot!” What I am suggesting is that the description of the wooing is akin to all the other themes so far exploited. The boy eternal has not matured sufficiently to woo Hermione for herself, to treat her as a woman with a woman's needs. Praises and kisses have been absent from their relationship from the very beginning. The wooing is all one-sided, and described with no words of warmth and comfort but words of harsh treatment. No wonder Hermione says that Leontes and Polixenes may ride their wives “With one soft kiss a thousand furlongs ere / With spur [they] heat an acre” (I. ii. 95-96), and that not to mention even one good deed in their favor is to deny the existence of thousands of others. It seems fairly clear that by this stage in the play we are meant to understand that Leontes has made of his wife something akin to a white
How fitting it thus becomes at the end of the play that Leontes has to praise the “living” quality of Hermione, the way she breathes, the vibrance of her veins, her very air which makes him want to kiss her. By that stage he can claim that “thys she stood, / Even with such life of majesty, warm life” (V. iii. 34-35) when “first [he] woo'd her!” (V. iii. 36), as if the magic of art has been able to draw a convenient veil for him over the last approximately thirty years. The statue that stands coldly (V. iii. 35) at the end of the play and rebukes him for being more stone than it is the same as he sculpted all those years ago. What irony it is, too, that almost immediately after the offer he makes to kiss the statue it comes alive. One soft kiss all those years ago would have maintained the warmth of life which now he is apparently seeking.

Hermione's words give her away, too. Apart from the obvious overwillingness to dismiss consideration of Leontes present in her preoccupation with what Polixenes can tell her of Leontes past, and her offhanded treatment of Leontes by not telling him as soon as Polixenes has agreed to stay, she does give herself away by talking of praises as wages, as if these were in the first level of her demands. And it may well be that subconsciously she is herself conducing to being treated as a marble goddess by revelling in the power which this brings. She is by no means hesitant in tackling the job of persuading Polixenes to stay, even though her husband, his closest friend, has failed. There is no deference to Leontes, no tempering of the discomfort Leontes must feel by his own lack of success, but an outright claim that he is going about matters “too coldly” (I. ii. 30), that all he has to do is assure Polixenes that all is well in Bohemia, and Polixenes' best defenses are down. When she meets with a negative response from Polixenes, she is prepared to outgo his seeking to “unsphere the stars with oaths” (I. ii. 48) in order to get her way. But the biggest clue of all to her success is the kind of ultimatum she presents—prisoner or guest. In some ways Hermione is just as much imprisoning Polixenes with her forced hospitality as Leontes is with his overwhelming entertainment. Her success in this direction is a compensation for the wages she is not getting in the other. As soon as she feels she has won, she can descend to ask questions about his and her lord's boyhood, which, as we have seen, totally undermine the confident act that she has put on. She is far more interested in Polixenes' and Leontes' past, and does lose herself in this reverie.

It is much easier to see Polixenes' guilt. In the first place he has spent an over-long time away from his courtly responsibilities in Bohemia, and yet can only come up with vague expressions of fears for the affairs of state in his absence. Hermione is very clever in calling his bluff over Bohemian affairs. The real reason for his not wanting to stay is tacked on to the end of his talk about the possibility of “sneaping winds at home” (I. ii. 13)—“Besides, I have stay'd / To tire your royalty” (I. ii. 14-15). That Polixenes feels he has outlasted his welcome is further emphasized by his choice of words. Leontes can claim that he is tougher than Polixenes can put him to it, but Polixenes reiterates the theme of “tiredness.” He could easily have stated that no one could better persuade him to stay than Leontes, but he uses the tired metaphor—“There is no tongue that moves, none, none i' th' world, / So soon as yours, could win me” (I. ii. 20-21). He could easily have stated that Bohemian affairs urgently demanded his return home, but he uses the tired metaphor of the horse—“My affairs / Do even drag me homeward” (I. ii. 23-24). For Leontes to ask him to stay is the quickest way to whip him home.

The situation between Leontes and Polixenes, as I have tried to outline it, is again made powerful mainly through the visual appeal to the awkwardness of these two main figures. Polixenes says that he would “for perpetuity / Go hence in debt” (I. ii. 5-6), and both of them are paying a great deal too dearly for what should be given freely but is not. Ironically they are shaking hands “as over a vast” (I. i. 30). Their only link is in the past: talk of present affairs has little or no meaning. That is why Hermione's questioning about their childhood friendship so successfully breaks down the negative barrier of the present and focusses attention on the positive past—the background of eternal boy where there had been amity. Polixenes responds immediately: Leontes ought to, but the fact that it is his wife who can spark Polixenes into life again rather than himself jolts him out of that comforting link with the past into a terrifying combat with the present. He does not know
how to function in terms of the present. For a short but terrible period he plays up sexual jealousy for all it is worth, knowing as he does all the time that Paulina will come to pull him into line. His only hold onto this terrifying present is through Paulina, to whose apron strings he clings until she releases him from this kind of dependence and tries to supervise his marrying a wife not a statue.

I have concentrated on this very early part of the play because I am convinced that it is generally treated too casually by the critics who in their preoccupation with the dramatic outburst of sexual jealousy (line 108) have rushed in extremis res rather than in medias res. In this early part lie so many of the play's themes and preparations for developments, not just in the immediately following scenes but in the play as a whole. To miss the “eternal boy” complex, for instance, is to put the play on quite a wrong footing. To treat Leontes as a mature adult whom sexual jealousy turns inside out is to mistake the outward show for the inward worth. It is not sexual jealousy which maddens Leontes so much as having his whole world picture, the convenient framework he has been operating in up to this point, suddenly destroyed for him. When Polixenes accedes to Hermione's persuasion rather than to his, the feeling of displacement, of inadequacy, is more than he can take. Like a boy he wildly lashes out at the destroyers, and at any reminders of their success. After this he clearly lapses into the “boy eternal” complex with Paulina as his mother.

When Leontes gives vent to violent sexual jealousy he is too consciously applying sexual jealousy to himself for it to carry conviction. He desperately wants everyone to think of him as cuckolded because this at least will ensure being thought of as a wronged husband, not a disappointed boy. His first words—“This entertainment / May a free face put on, derive a liberty / From heartiness, from bounty, fertile bosom, / And well become the agent” (I. ii. 111-114)—are supposed to be directed at describing Hermione's false cover-up for her “free” entertainment of Polixenes, but they apply far more appropriately, because truthfully, to his own entertainment of Polixenes. Leontes is obviously the one who has been putting a free face on, has been “making practis'd smiles / As in a looking-glass” (I. ii. 116-117) to his narcissistic counterpart, conjured up from his boyhood. And this procedure has not become him. He cannot recapture that image for himself by himself, and has had to apply the very agent that has thwarted the attempt—his wife.

When he turns to Mamillius he tries to find identity there—“they say we are / Almost as like as eggs” (I. ii. 129-230) and “yet were it true / To say this boy were like me” (I. ii. 134-135). But again any comfortable association is destroyed by his wife. This double frustration leads him into the clouded, bitter language of what has been called “the obscurest passage in Shakespeare.” Pafford is surely right in suggesting that the speech is meant to be incoherent to Polixenes and Hermione, for Leontes dare not speak openly to them. More importantly, however, it marks Leontes' inability to be coherent. It is he himself, not lustful passion personified, who “communicat'st with dreams” and is active with what is unreal, fellowing nothing (I. ii. 140-142). I find it highly significant that his mental turmoil should be characterized by the terminology of “dreams” and “nothing.” Like Imogen in the cave, and Posthumus in prison, it is “but a bolt of nothing, shot at nothing, / Which the brain makes of fumes” (Cymbeline, IV. ii. 300-301), “senseless speaking, or a speaking such / As sense cannot untie” (V. iv. 148-149). Whatever it is with Leontes, the “action of [his] life is like it” (Cymbeline, V. iv. 150). He has been communicating with the dream of his boyhood, and has had that dream turned into nothing. His image of himself as a youth, the image which Polixenes was conjured up to recall, has now conjoined with the image of his wife. What he was and what he should be are in league against what he is. But rather than face this he plays the easy part of the cuckold, throwing himself into it with such vigor that he rivals even Iago and Othello on the topic. Iago's statements that he suspects both the Moor and Cassio of having done his office between his sheets, and Othello’s about Desdemona and Cassio, are no wilder than Leontes' about his wife and Polixenes. All such sets of statements by Leontes, Iago, and Othello detract from the real basis of their troubles—their own inadequacy.

How revealing it is that when Hermione and Polixenes ask Leontes what is troubling him, why he is unsettled with so much distraction, Leontes can only direct their attention to his preoccupation with Mamillius, recalling his own youth as he looks on the lines of his boy's face. What he would make his excuse, namely

572
recalling his youth, is the real thing: what he would have the audience believe is the real thing, sexual jealousy, is his excuse. It is, of course, possible to suggest that he plays the cuckold so forcibly that he has managed to convince himself that this is his real concern. Like Hamlet he may be said to fall in love with the role he casts for himself and finds it difficult to snap out of it. That he is beginning to enjoy his role would seem to be indicated by his inability to resist drawing attention to it—“I am angling now, / Though you perceive me not how I give line” (I. ii. 180-181). He may even be enjoying creating the situation in which Hermione and Polixenes are to be left alone while he takes his son alone into the garden. Again he would like the audience's attention to be drawn to Hermione and Polixenes and away from himself and his son. All that Mamillius is allowed to say at this juncture is—“I am like you, they say” (I. ii. 208), which is fairly clear evidence that he is there not for himself but for further confirmation of his father's boy complex. Leontes dismisses his son by bidding him go play, and with the final comment “thou'rt an honest man” (I. ii. 211), which would seem to me to be an attempt to exonerate his own dishonesty in his proceedings. He will be much caught up in the dichotomy between false appearance and true reality. Asking Polixenes if he is as fond of Florizel as he, Leontes, does “seem” (I. ii. 165) to be of Mamillius should alert us to his obvious playing with the role of deception. Soon he will be asserting to Camillo that “good” should be “pertinent, / But so it is, it is not” (I. ii. 221-222), and that one is deceived in integrity, “deceiv'd / In that which seems so” (I. ii. 240-241).

It is surely more than purely fortuitous that Camillo's first words to Leontes are cast in nautical terms. Leontes has just drawn attention to his own angling, giving line, and now Camillo says that Leontes has had much ado to “make his anchor hold,” for when Leontes “cast out, it still came home” (I. ii. 213-214). That Camillo has no idea of Leontes' suspicions at this point makes the irony all the more acute. No matter how Leontes casts about to throw suspicion away from himself, to anchor his fears, doubts, suspicions on others, everything comes back at him. False meanings on “good,” “satisfy,” and “mistress” in Camillo's straightforward expressions—“At the good queen's entreaty” (I. ii. 220), “To satisfy your highness, and the entreaties / Of our most gracious mistress” (I. ii. 232-233)—will not anchor; they still come back home to him. His very admission that Camillo has been trusted with all the nearest things to Leontes' heart, as well as with his chamber counsels, “wherein, priest-like” (I. ii. 237) he has cleansed Leontes' bosom, redounds against any duplicity or lack of integrity on Camillo's part. It is Leontes who is the real penitent in need of reformation (I. ii. 238-239), not Camillo, the father confessor. Camillo can only accuse himself of “such allow'd infirmities that honesty / Is never free of” (I. ii. 263-264). What Leontes is trying to do with Camillo is turn him into the penitent and himself into the father confessor. This perversion is echoed by his biblical parody. Camillo's eye hath not seen, his ear hath not heard, nor hath his mind conceived the things that Leontes is preparing for him (Corinth. 2.9).

Leontes wants to hear the “racy” things of the confessional from the standpoint of a father confessor's putative immunity. How else are we to understand his desire to have Camillo confess that Hermione's a “hobby-horse, deserves a name / As rank as any flax-wench that puts to / Before her troth-plight” (I. ii. 276-278)? His mind is still reverting to those long by-gone days, still trying to prove that his innocence was lost when he plighted troth to Hermione. Camillo, reasserting himself as a father confessor, merely proclaims that Leontes' sin in slandering his wife is as deep as the sin of which he now accuses his wife, even if it were true, which it is not. But Leontes rushes in with his famous speech on “nothing” as if Camillo had flung that very word in his face. Listing “leaning cheek to cheek,” “whispering,” “meeting noses” (I. ii. 284-291) still adds to nothing, despite Leontes' desperate attempt to make something of it. Leontes is monstering his own nothings, like Coriolanus:

is this nothing?
Why then the world, and all that's in't, is nothing,
The covering sky is nothing, Bohemia nothing,
My wife is nothing, nor nothing have these nothings,
If this be nothing.

(I. ii. 292-296)
In adding the destruction of his relationship with Camillo to that of his destruction of his relationship with Polixenes, Leontes is indeed paring his “wit o’ both / sides, and leav[ing] nothing i’ th’ middle” (I. iv. 194-195). What he asks of Camillo, to spice Polixenes’ cup, to give him “a lasting wink” (I. ii. 317), is so preposterous that he cannot really expect it to be carried out. It is almost as if he were preparing the way for getting rid of Camillo. There is no surprise in his words when a lord brings him word that Camillo has left with Polixenes, only expressions of self-satisfaction. It is also suspicious that Leontes expresses himself so willing to take Hermione again as his queen, and give no blemish to her honor once Polixenes has been removed. The removal of Polixenes alone would not solve his sexual jealousy problem, as they both very well know, but they both act the part. Leontes angles with Camillo for getting rid of Polixenes, and hopes Camillo does not perceive how the line is being given for Camillo’s own expulsion. Camillo angles, too, equivocating with words, promising to “fetch off” Polixenes, and asking not to be accounted Leontes’ servant if Polixenes have wholesome beverage. Leontes’ obvious insincerity is marked by his promise to “seem friendly” (I. ii. 350), and by his opposite action in wafting his eyes away from the customary compliment when he meets Polixenes, and showing a “lip of much contempt” (I. ii. 373) speeding from his presence. In the angling match between Camillo and Leontes it is Leontes who wins. By getting rid of both Polixenes and Camillo he has built up his case successfully against Hermione, and on a conspiratorial basis. He has also removed his priest-like conscience. From this stage to the open and public trial of Hermione it is an easy step. Camillo loses out by making the conspiracy charge possible, and by jeopardizing the very safety of Hermione in whose defense he had spoken.

This latter development is an indictment against Polixenes, also. By accepting Camillo’s means to save his own life he imperils Hermione’s, and casts suspicions where there should have been open truth. He can claim that it is strange how his favor begins to warp because Leontes has just refused to speak to him, but his earlier speeches have shown that he senses he has overstayed his welcome. He can accuse Leontes of lack of breeding in thus changing his manners, but he himself has been guilty of the very same thing in changing his manners with Hermione, and showing lack of breeding in turning down his host’s request on such flimsy excuses. One averted look from Leontes should hardly be enough to make a winter’s tale between friends of years’ standing if that friendship were really solidly established. What I am suggesting is that Polixenes, in abandoning Hermione to the lion’s wrath on his own backdoor escape with Camillo, is not really abandoning Hermione as Hermione, but being made to relinquish his schoolboy connection with Leontes which she had so powerfully recalled. She had acted as a mirror in which he saw himself again as he was in his childhood friendship with Leontes, but now Camillo’s changed complexions are to him “a mirror / Which shows [him] his chang’d too; for [he] must be / A party in this alteration, finding / [Him]self thus alter’d with it” (I. ii. 381-384). It is significant that Polixenes cleaves to Camillo as to a “father” (I. ii. 461). Both Leontes and Polixenes are concerned with their boy image, treating Hermione and Camillo as mother and father figures.

The question of sex is largely irrelevant, but makes an excellent smokescreen. No wonder there can be no astonishment, no real emotional outburst from Polixenes, when he is told by Camillo that Leontes is as certain that Polixenes has “touch'd his queen / forbiddenly” (I. ii. 416-417), as if he himself had incited him to the crime. Polixenes’ only response is an immediate denial of being a Judas betraying Christ. It would be an odd juxtaposition indeed if we were to think of sexual matters, but it is perfectly in keeping with offended personal innocence of boyhood idealism. The fabric of Leontes’ and Polixenes’ folly is piled upon their faith in childhood innocence, upon which adult life with its doctrine of ill-doing would too insidiously encroach. Their only difference at this stage, perhaps, is that Polixenes is still hanging onto his boyhood image and trying to strengthen it by adherence to his father-figure, Camillo, while Leontes is in the state of just having his image smashed, and is in a world of broken bits and pieces which he is unwilling and unable to assemble. Polixenes can retire to his Bohemian shell until his son Florizel’s escapades with Perdita force him out into conflict with the world again, and then he fares no better than Leontes, who has drunk the cup of his own poisoning and is caught in the web of his own making.
How ironical it is that it should be the boy Mamillius who is about to tell a sad tale that is best for winter by beginning with the words—“There was a man—,” “Dwelt by a churchyard” (II. i. 29). The sprites and goblins to frighten Hermione are such as a boy would talk about; the whole situation echoes a boy’s preoccupation with story-book disaster. The man who dwelt by a churchyard is a boy’s projection of a man. Leontes is acting out a story-book tale of a man who dwelt by a churchyard and had his wife forbiddenly touched by the ghost of his imagination. How preposterous it is that he should calumniate Hermione in front of her ladies and some lords of the court, that he should accuse her of being big with Polixenes’ child in front of Mamillius, and that he should tell her tale of supposed adultery in such story-book fashion—“I have said / She's an adulteress; I have said with whom: / More; she's a traitor, and Camillo is / A federary with her” (II. i. 87-90). Everything is too pat, too organized, for it to be a burst of real emotion, for it to represent real human feelings that have been trodden on. It is story-book technique consciously applied. Even Hermione’s reply is too pat to be spontaneous. She is not so much shocked by the accusation, by having Mamillius taken from her, as by the affront to her dignity. One detects in her words—“How will this grieve you, / When you shall come to clearer knowledge, that / You thus have publish'd me! Gentle my lord, / You scarce can right me throughly, then, to say / You did mistake” (II. i. 96-100)—a greater desire merely to have Leontes proved wrong and herself proved right rather than that the charge itself be tackled and discounted. It is entirely possible that she is already mentally prepared for some outlandish behavior from Leontes, and is merely following her usual pattern in dealing with him, assuming the stance of patience on a monument smiling at grief, rebuking Leontes for being more stone than herself.

Hermione’s opening remark to one of her waiting ladies about Mamillius—“take the boy to you: he so troubles me, / 'Tis past enduring” (II. i. 1-2)—is not made in mock-annoyance; nor is this episode one of happiness. By asking to have a winter’s tale told her about a man who dwelt by a churchyard she is already steeling herself against the impending fright which Leontes as well as Mamillius is so “powerful at” (II. i. 28). Both she and Leontes know that in those foundations which he builds upon the “centre is not big enough to bear / A school-boy's top” (II. i. 102-103). What really matters in their confrontation over this preposterous “affair” is not the affair itself but the way they go about it. There was a man who dwelt by a churchyard: there was a woman “not prone to weeping, as [her] sex / Commonly are” (II. i. 108-109) who dwelt in “honourable grief” (II. i. 111). Hermione almost too willingly accepts banishment from Leontes, she organizes it so quickly and efficiently. It is, after all, symbolic recognition of their obviously long-standing lack of affinity. But again, I suggest, the clue to her attitude at this stage resides rather in her wish to see Leontes sorry (II. i. 122-124) than to have herself cleared. Her suggestion that the action she is now going on is for her “better grace” (II. i. 122) may echo the proverbial belief that life’s sorrows are ultimately for her own good, but ironically she may well be in need of better grace. Like Queen Katherine she can rest her case on her believed innocence, can appeal to the highest order of morality to keep her own honor from corruption, but there is still need of grace and charity, as Griffin successfully reminds Queen Katherine over her attitude toward Wolsey. The statue of Hermione needs to warm into life for her own sake as well as for Leontes’.

Human considerations do not figure, because the dramatis personae insist on seeing everything in black and white. Antigonus and the lords swear by Hermione’s innocence as if she were Diana herself, and Leontes ignores them because his prerogative does not need their counsels, because he is following his own forceful instigation, his own “putter-on” (II. i. 141). Even the potential natural vigor of Antigonus’ claim that he will geld all three of his daughters if Hermione be “honour-flaw’d” (II. i. 143) is dissipated by the aura of offering his daughters as human sacrifices to a god. Antigonus would have us believe that his own natural goodness imparts this defense of Hermione, but his words are empty devotion; his actions will call for a disastrous “Exit, pursued by a bear” (III. iii. 58). The shadow of his works destroys the shadow of his faith. The hollowness of Antigonus serves to emphasize that of Leontes. When Antigonus climaxes his confrontation with Leontes by wishing that Leontes had in his silent judgment tried the issue without more overture, he is unknowingly, perhaps, shattering Leontes’ image of himself in the most effective way. Leontes is vociferous in claiming that no other proceeding was open to him, but has to admit, though he is personally satisfied and needs no more proof than what he knows, that he has, nevertheless, “for a great confirmation” (II. i. 180),
already dispatched in haste messengers to the delphic oracle. The shadow of Leontes' works will thus destroy the shadow of his faith in his justice. And this is clearly made evident by his need to ask Antigonus and the lords—“Have I done well?” (II. i. 187), and by his suggestion that he has done this in order to give rest to the minds of others, when it is obviously his mind that has suffered the nature of an insurrection, is in rebellion with itself, is wearing itself out with the to-and-fro conflicting motion of impossibly trying to prove how right he is. The futility of it all is emphasized by his talking in one breath of how the oracle will raise the minds of others from ignorant credulity up to the truth itself, and in the very next of the need to keep Hermione confined lest she perform the political assassination which Polixenes and Camillo have left her to do. Sexual jealousy, political assassination, appeal to the oracle—all are remarkable smokescreens for Leontes' basic terrible inadequacy and displacement, which only Paulina seems to understand and know how to deal with, almost entirely from the angle of motherly intuition, though she at first has to break down Leontes' unwillingness to lapse into his erstwhile boy role.

No matter how many restless days and nights Leontes has to spend, he knows that sooner or later he will have to face Paulina, who little by little will exert a bitterly scolding influence over him. He would like to blame Antigonus for setting Paulina against him, and even takes the precaution of charging Antigonus not to let her come about him, so that he can have an easy scapegoat. The truth is that he would be bitterly disappointed if Paulina did not rise to the occasion of ministering to him. It is almost as if he wanted to be scolded, and to be told how wicked he is. This is why Paulina is allowed to get away with her scolding. Leontes needs to have her around. She gives him some identity, no matter how uncomfortable it is. Of course he makes her pardon for scolding him consequent on Antigonus' promise to bear Perdita to some remote and desert place where chance may nurse or end it. But he knows he can successfully bully Antigonus. Perhaps this is the best explanation of his consultation of the oracle, too. Although he is not aware of this deep-seated motive, he does basically want to be caught out and to be punished. In this sense he is genuinely concerned with meting out justice—to himself—but the prices he has to pay for these awful growing-up pains are immense, and in some instances irrecoverable. He is indeed fortunate by the end of the play to be able to re-woo his wife as a woman, and to regain his daughter, but his son Mamillius died with his own lost youth, and has to be replaced by Polixenes' son, Florizel. The association with Polixenes is indelibly printed on his life, and this is, perhaps, some ironic kind of justice. It would hardly be fitting for him to emerge into a seemingly fuller, adult existence without bearing some visible signs and scars of the pains of progress. In this sense the death of Mamillius is crucial to the overall significance of the play. Pericles' actions lose him wife and daughter, but he regains both: Leontes' actions lose him wife and daughter, and a son who can only be symbolically returned to him in the form of Florizel, who should be a constant reminder to him of the price he had to pay for refusing to grow up.

In the great trial scene of the play it is not so much Hermione who is on trial as Leontes himself. He is desperately trying to justify himself to himself. That he would like to be cleared of being tyrannous, since he so openly proceeds in justice, forcibly indicates how tyrannical he knows he is being with justice. He also knows that in due course he will be punished for it. The application of the oracle is his own doing, too. He would like the court to think that the oracle is being consulted for the court's clarification, but he knows that he is challenging the very source of justice and morality, that he is rebelling against it “to th' utterance” (Macbeth, III. i. 71). Unlike Macbeth he is not equivocating with fate, playing for a little more time of a tomorrow that is already dwindling, but tyrannically controlling his own fate, and just delaying the great clash for something in the nature of the excitement of suspense and the destruction of himself. This is why, to my way of thinking, he can challenge the oracle's findings, and why his supreme defiance is the moment of Mamillius' death. Rather than face the long corridors of tomorrow's growing up, he is prepared to die on the altar of the false gods.

The oracle talks of Hermione's chastity, Polixenes' blamelessness, and Camillo's true service as a subject—all of which are open to scrutiny, as we have already indicated. But true to its enigmatic character, the oracle deals in double meanings and betrays the turmoil of the mind consulting it. Because they would not give
Leontes his youth forever, his eternal boyhood, he will refuse to play the gods' game of life. His chaste innocence of those days was not blameless, nor was he a true subject to its idealism, but a jealous tyrant refusing to let his precious infancy blossom into responsibility and the continuity of maturity.

It is bitterly ironical, too, that Hermione should refer to the oracle, and think that she will be getting Apollo's judgment. Her life has always stood in the level of Leontes' dreams. He has always spoken a language that she does not understand, and her actions have always been his dreams. They magnificently bandy the dream-texture charge at one another as if it were a very recently experienced lack of active, here and now, present dialogue. The trial is as static and statuesque as the earlier scenes. It does not throb with the vitality of flesh-and-blood altercation, but stares at the audience from its painting on the stage in magnificent spectacle, devoid of sound and fury, but signifying everything through the texture. Both Hermione and Leontes are metaphorically seeking a more open, and therefore to be hoped more convincing, symbol of their death, a "bug" (III. ii. 92) which frightens neither of them in contemplation, because they have lived with its undeclared state for so long. No wonder Hermione agrees to Paulina's plan to be thought of as dead, and to go on living in death for sixteen years. All she is doing is living out a more "honest" version of what her so-called life had been. No wonder Leontes never once sees through the device which is so open that an ordinary gentleman can suspiciously observe that Paulina “hath privately twice or thrice a day, / ever since the death of Hermione, visited that re- / moved house” (V. ii. 105-107). Leontes is living out in the sixteen years an “honest” version of the way he had treated Hermione all along. He had kept her at a distance, left her to her own privacy, and never really been curious about the daily business of living with her.

How vastly different is this trial scene of Hermione with that of Queen Katherine in Henry VIII with which it is usually compared. Henry VIII really has the physical thought of Anne Boleyn to weigh against Katherine. Leontes would like to use the thought of an adulterous Polixenes to weigh against Hermione, but is really weighing himself in the balance and is found wanting. The past life of Hermione and Leontes “hath been as continent, as chaste, as true” (III. ii. 33-34) as they are both now unhappy. Hermione's boast that history cannot pattern a life more perfect in this respect prizes life at little more than a statue's fee. Her life has become a perfect exemplum "devis'd / And play'd to take spectators" (III. ii. 36-37), but not to be livingly shared in. In some respects it is fitting that she should be under Paulina's guardianship in her sixteen-year seclusion from life. It is almost as if she were being prepared by an overprotective mother for her eventual appearance as a debutante. There is this "precious" quality about her, delicate workmanship more honored in the observance than the breach, like a china shepherdess. Perhaps this is the connection between Perdita in the rural Bohemia of Act IV and Hermione in the first three acts. Perdita is "most goddess-like prank'd up" (IV. iv. 10). Both are retired as if they were always the feasted one, always the exalted one, and never part of the daily traffic of life's banquet.

There is significance in the way Leontes reacts to the effects of his denying Apollo's oracle. When he is told that the death of Mamillius is mortal to the queen, he rather casually asserts that "her heart is but o'ercharged: she will recover" (III. ii. 150), and asks others tenderly to apply to her some remedies for life. There is even less personal emotion over the death of Mamillius. What Leontes is immediately concerned with is his own injustice in so far as it affects only himself; Mamillius and Hermione are merely adjuncts. His rapid list of proposed amendments—"I'll reconcile me to Polixenes, / New woo my queen, recall the good Camillo" (III. ii. 155-156)—is an attempt to clear himself quickly of all the charges that he has been mounting up against himself, almost as if he were making a cheap confession to god Apollo. It is surely indicative of his peculiar sense of values that he should first think of reconciling himself to Polixenes, and then of new-wooing Hermione. Even when he knows the heavens themselves are striking at his injustice, he cannot see clearly that it is his order of relationships which has all along been at fault. To think of Polixenes first is to place primary emphasis on his premarital state, his boy eternal existence. Even at the very end of the play Leontes seems to be as much overjoyed at having Polixenes restored to him as of regaining Hermione. The order is exactly the same—Polixenes first, Hermione second. Even the wording of his rapid confession, reconciliation with Polixenes, and re-wooing of Hermione, is paralleled at the end of the play. The meeting of the two kings, in
which Leontes asks Bohemia forgiveness, is described as laming any report to follow it, and undoing any
description to do it (V. ii. 58-59). The restoration of Hermione is brought about not as in Pericles by wishful
thoughts that somehow his wife might be as miraculously restored to him as his daughter, but by Perdita's
desire to find out what her mother was like. It is Perdita's “hearing of her mother's / statue, which is in the
keeping of Paulina” (V. ii. 93-94) which prevents the royal group from retiring to the court, and instead sends
it to feast its eyes on statuary, at which time Leontes is moved to remark that the statue “stood, / Even with
such life of majesty, warm life, / As now it coldly stands, when first [he] woo'd her!” (V. iii. 34-36).

Leontes' confession rapidly passes over Polixenes and Hermione, in that order, but lingers over Camillo. It is
easier for Leontes to confess his guilt before the thought of Camillo. It gives him the easy satisfaction of
thinking that he is putting things right with the gods, that he is gaining absolution. There is a daily beauty in
his father-confessor's life which makes his own ugly—“how [Camillo] glisters / Thorough [Leontes'] rust! and
how his piety / Does [Leontes'] deeds make the blacker” (III. ii. 170-172). But it is his mother figure, Paulina,
who comes in to assess the guilt of this sinner and to apportion him his penance.

Paulina cleverly makes light of Leontes' guilt with regard to Polixenes, Camillo, Perdita, and Mamillius—they
are the by-gone fooleries of “fancies too weak for boys, too green and idle / For girls of nine” (III. ii.
181-182), but his sins against Hermione are too heavy to be forgiven:

A thousand knees
Ten thousand years together, naked, fasting,
Upon a barren mountain, and still winter
In storm perpetual.

(III. ii. 210-213)

Paulina is trying to strike at the root of Leontes' guilt, but she is obviously too preoccupied with the visible
outward, direct manifestation of that guilt to see the inner, less direct but much more powerful expression of
it. Paulina's motherly protectiveness of Leontes does obscure the boy complex to herself. It is fitting that at the
death of the play Leontes symbolically breaks the apron ties with Paulina by marrying her off to Camillo. In a
powerful sense he is then emerging from the stifling influence of this mother-father complex on him and
establishing it as an independent unit outside himself. But at this stage he applies Paulina to himself, craving
her castigation, demanding she speak her bitterest. When Paulina, who is certainly not known hitherto for
sparing Leontes' feelings, says she has showed too much the rashness of a woman, and begins to pity Leontes,
it is a good enough indication how excessive is Leontes' need to be punished, when he refuses this kind of
pity. He will punish himself repeatedly by visiting once a day the double grave of Mamillius and Hermione as
long as nature will bear up with this exercise. In the comfort of his daily tears he is still largely weeping for
himself in the grave in the form of Mamillius there with Hermione. It is not unlike Timon fixing his grave by
the sea shore so that the flowing tide may regularly shed its tears over him.

Leontes has lulled the tempest in his mind by inflicting this daily punishment on himself and by securely
attaching himself to Paulina's apron strings. But the tempest of his effects blusters everywhere, and is felt
particularly strongly on the coasts of Bohemia, in Bohemia's royal court, and in Bohemia's rural arcadia. Nor
does that tempest blow itself out until it returns to its origin—Leontes in Sicilia.

Antigonus' waking dreams, like Imogen's and Posthumus', reflects his own life. He knows in his waking
moments that in accepting the job of abandoning the baby on the deserts of Bohemia he is an accomplice to
Leontes, but he represses this uncomfortable recognition as if it were unreal. The vision he describes of
Hermione like a vessel of great purity and beauty, gliding with the ghostly motion and beauty of a ship
moving easily under all sail, as opposed to his own ship's movements,13 reflects what deep down he knows to
be true. Yet he refuses to accept its obvious implications about the innocence of Hermione, and perversely and
“superstitiously” (III. iii. 40) argues that the very thought of Hermione as a ghost means that “Hermione hath suffer'd death” (III. iii. 42) because she was guilty (50). Antigonus has the vision, like Macbeth of Banquo, Brutus of Caesar, Richard III of his victims, because his disturbed mental state, suffering the nature of an insurrection, is betraying his guilt. Of course the vision serves the obvious purpose of allowing the audience to think that Hermione is dead, but it should not escape us that Antigonus (whose name literally means “against child”), in an effort to repress his guilt, has symbolically killed her! It is bitterly ironic that Antigonus should think the storm begins after he has abandoned the baby, and that he should be destroyed by that very beastliness to which he had consented to sacrifice innocence. Antigonus has brought a corrupted mind with him, too, and passes on the effects of that corruption.

The shepherd's description of Perdita as the result of “some / stair-work, some trunk-work, some behind-door-work” (III. iii. 73-75) is too closely juxtaposed to Antigonus' expressed belief that Perdita is the result of her “mother's fault” (III. iii. 50), and is indeed the issue of King Polixenes, for it to be coincidental. Antigonus has fathered the shepherd's description. One could argue that the shepherd had no need of outside confirmation of what he was all too willing to suspect, because his first words in the play decry the fact that between the ages of ten and twenty-three there is nothing “but getting / wenches with child, wronging the ancientry, stealing, fighting” (III. iii. 61-63). However, Antigonus does present him with proof, and does afford a far more powerful means of corruption in the form of the riches left with Perdita which the shepherd and his son treat as “fairy gold.” Gold has been introduced into this rural Bohemia and corrupts it every bit as effectively as it does Sidney's Arcadia through Dametas, or more pertinently, perhaps, as it does the forest of Arden in As You Like It though Rosalind, Celia, and Touchstone buying rural rights (As You Like It, II. iv. 65, 71, 92).

Gold immediately causes the shepherd to let his sheep go (III. iii. 124). It is this gold which makes it possible for the shepherd to grow from “very nothing, and beyond the imagination of his neighbors … into an unspeakable estate” (IV. ii. 40-41), and to think of matching his daughter with Doricles, for if “young Doricles / Do light upon her, she shall bring him that / Which he not dreams of” (IV. iv. 180-182). In the actual contract preparations the shepherd promises to make Perdita's portion equal Doricles' (IV. iv. 387).

Rural Bohemia thus functions not as a separate world of natural unsophistication from which the tired worlds of Sicilia and Bohemia are to receive a new life, a reinvigoration, a refertilization. It does not represent Spring's fertility as opposed to the Winter of the courts' discontent. It is a world of corruption, that is living out an immense fraud, a “disguize [which] hath almost / Antick'd” (Antony and Cleopatra, II. vii. 123-124) it. It is a great temptation to take the shepherd's words to his son—“thou met'st with things / dying, I with things new-born” (III. iii. 112-113)—as marking a turn in the play from destruction to the beginning of a new life. Most critics follow this line of development. The Clown has just described Antigonus' death, and the shepherd has taken up the babe Perdita for pity. Critics who favor the general theme of grace and fertility born out of passion and jealousy, of spiritual generation by baptism, attach great importance to this statement. But surely to do so is to ignore the element of corruption. It is inescapable that the normal, natural life of the shepherd and his son is dying, and what is being new-born for them is an unnatural, abnormal life, based on the transmuting power of fairy gold; and the corruption had stemmed from Leontes.

If we could bear this well in mind then we need not see an arbitrary division of the play at this point. It is as if the chorus, Time, were flashing us back as well as forward; as if it were making us investigate the boyhood, lamb-like innocence that Leontes and Polixenes were trying to hold on to, and trying to make us realize that it was and is an illusion, and very largely an escapism from the real business of maturing and fulfilling one's responsibility to government and family. In a very important sense Leontes has created in his own family as artificial a unit as is created in rural Bohemia. Hermione is as dead metaphorically to Leontes as ever the shepherd's wife was to the shepherd: his children are every bit as adopted metaphorically as Perdita is to the shepherd. For sixteen years Leontes will live out the lie that he is mourning for a real Hermione and a real Mamillius when they have been dead all along in his treatment of them. For sixteen years the shepherd and his son will live a monstrous lie. They are the adopted family not so much of Perdita as of the material riches they
found with her. Their sheep-shearing festival is turned by this gold into a prenuptial ceremony for the provider of the golden opportunity. The ceremony invites comparison with Prospero's prenuptial masque engineered by the gold of Prospero's magic. The shepherd puts on the two-part ceremony, the dance of shepherds and shepherdesses in which Perdita is celebrated as the May queen of the feast, and the dance of satyrs; and as with Prospero's entertainment it is the second part that precipitates a crisis.

The first part has the full country look about it, but is painstakingly revealed as a glistering semblance: the second part is openly avowed as marking the intrusion of the court on the country, for “o
one three of them, by their own report … hath / danced before the king” (IV. iv. 337-338). Shepherds and shepherdesses are juxtaposed with satyrs in a very deliberate way.

Florizel has obscured himself in shepherd's clothing for the better pursuit of his shepherdess. Like Sir Calidore for Pastorella or Musidorus for Pamela he has transformed himself to a station which can only bring dishonor. Perdita knows well enough that it is folly to do so, and that this extreme lowering of his high station is to be chided. Her criticism, of course, is largely bound up with the fear that he will be caught out by a chance visitation of his father, and that she will not be able to withstand the sternness of Polixenes' presence. But these personal fears do not detract from her basic criticism of Florizel for so vilely binding up (IV. iv. 22) his greatness. She, of course, knows exactly who Florizel is and thus becomes a party to the deceit, a position which entirely undermines her defense of the natural against “streak'd gillyvors, / Which some call nature's bastards” (IV. iv. 82-83). It will be recalled that in her “father”s eyes she is an adopted bastard herself! Her rustic garden is not rustic—it is streaked with art and artfulness, which Florizel and herself represent. Perdita's words vigorously oppose Polixenes' side of the art-versus-nature debate which defends the idea of marrying a “gentler scion to the wildest stock” and making “a bark of baser kind” conceive by “bud of nobler race” (IV. iv. 92-95), but her actions and compliance with Florizel confute her words every bit as much as Polixenes' actions confute his.

The flowers with which Perdita would like to associate herself in her rustic garden and which critics would like to accept as evidence of Spring's fertility and regeneration are not free from the streaking of artfulness either. The flower passage “O Proserpina / For the flowers now …” (IV. iv. 116-127) has taken the winds of too much criticism with its beauty, just as Perdita's beauty temporarily sweeps Polixenes off his feet. Perdita recalls the flowers specifically in her need to make garlands to strew Florizel's body “like a bank, for love to lie and play on” (IV. iv. 130-131), not like the corpse of physical death as Florizel suggests, but the sexual death of him buried alive and in her arms. And she has enough presence of mind to know that in saying this she has actually become something of the Whitsun May queen, a process she decries, for it lowers her stature from simple shepherdess to what Autolycus conveniently reminds us of all through the sheep-shearing episode, a “doxy over the dale” (IV. iii. 2), an “aunt[.] / … tumbling in the hay” (IV. iii. 11-12), a “troll-my-dames” (IV. iii. 85), whose “red blood reigns in the winter's pale” (IV. iii. 4), whose blood looks out to woo the false way.

It is not just Perdita's goddess stature, pranked up for Florizel and by his assistance, which is changing her disposition from that of a chaste nymph to a lusting goddess, but the very artfulness of the situation, the deceit of disguise under cover of which she is conscious of seducing Florizel. Autolycus weaving in and out of rural Bohemia links all the episodes with his songs, and it is to be noted that all the prettiest love songs for maids which he has in his pack have “delicate burdens” from indelicate songs. Daffodils in this context do peer with borrowed flaunts, trumpeting their beauty, though Perdita would have her hearers believe they “come before the swallow dares” (IV. iv. 119). In this part of the play where transformations, changing of dispositions, and metamorphoses are so much in evidence, the swallow may well carry with it associations of Procne from the Tereus legend. Autolycus' thrush and jay are obviously sexual symbols for the red blood reigning. Perdita's violets, just as Ophelia's, are mentioned for their obvious appeal to modesty and chastity, but they are dim to command attention, whereas “the lids of Juno's eyes / Or Cytherea's breath” (IV. iv. 121-122), to which they are likened, are memorably and poetically powerful. Juno and Venus are not exempla of single chastity. Pale
primroses do pale by comparison with the potential strength of bright Phoebus “marrying” them. Bold, standing oxlips, crown imperial, and lilies of all kinds conclude Perdita's lack—“what maids lack from head to heel” (IV. iv. 229), as she herself is only too well aware, though she excuses this immodesty by claiming the robe she wears as May queen changes her normal maidenly position.

Perdita tries to project her “lack” in a rather subtle way in her distribution of flowers appropriate to age before her famous flower passage. Having called “streak'd gillyvors” nature's bastards, she makes the parallel between herself and the “streak'd gillyvors” quite openly in an effort to detract from its significance. She will not put the dibble in the earth to set one slip of the gillyvors—“No more than, were [she] painted, [she] would wish / This youth should say 'twere well, and only therefore / Desire to breed by [her]” (IV. iv. 101-103). But she is painted in borrowed flaunts, and pranked up like a goddess, and the flowers she distributes immediately after this disarming move are all “hot” (lavender, mints, savory, marigold), and are mentioned in terms of going to “bed wi' th' sun,” and rising and weeping with him. The same kind of sexual implication is to be found in Cloten's aubade “Hark hark the lark” to Imogen, but the significant difference here is that Perdita, unlike Cloten, is applying the seductive language to herself. When, immediately after this, Camillo remarks that were he of Perdita's flock he would leave grazing and only live by gazing, and is told by Perdita that if he did so he would be “so lean that blasts of January / Would blow [him] through and through” (IV. iv. 111-112), it would seem that the episode is being carefully roped, tied, and linked to the main part of The Winter's Tale.

The shepherd and his son left grazing, looking after their sheep, lived by gazing on their fairy wealth, and will find that blasts of January blow them through and through. Leontes has found his winter's tale as a result of gazing on the images of his “eternal boy,” and on the statue he has made of the queen, instead of grazing his way to maturity. All are different aspects of false utopias where men are idle all, and prey to their own ignoble ease and peaceful sloth about the things which they should be doing, but vigorously active in covering up the things which they should not have done.

When Perdita turns to Mopsa and the other girls and wishes she had flowers to celebrate the fact that they yet wear their “maidenheads growing” (IV. iv. 116) upon their virgin branches (IV. iv. 115), it is an awkward association for her because these are country lasses who will soon be characterized by their aggressiveness in “wooing” the Clown to whom they have obviously paid too much for them not to feel ashamed when the Clown accuses them of wearing “their plackets where they should bear their / faces” (IV. iv. 245-246), and whistling secrets which are best left for milking-time, kiln-hole, or going to bed. The two maids wooing a man are not just simple country maids either. They have been streaked with courtly sophistication, both knowing their singing parts in “Get you hence, for I must go” having had the “tune on't a month ago” (IV. iv. 295). Autolycus tries to peddle this item as a ballad, but its metrical and musical structure mark it out as much too sophisticated to be sung to a ballad tune.20

The ballads Autolycus does talk about have satirical relevance for the situation, too. An “usurer's wife … brought to bed of twenty money-bags at a / burden” and longing to eat “adder's heads / and toads carbonadoed” (IV. iv. 263-266) is very true and but a month old (268), according to Autolycus. The linking of money and sex ironically reflects the way the lavish sheep-shearing entertainment brought to bed by the burden of fairy gold is turning into obvious extravagance in which “maids” are longing to woo a man. The ballad of the maid turned fish “for she would not exchange flesh with one that loved her” (IV. iv. 281) sounds topsy turvy—the usual metamorphosis into half beast, half human, emphasizes passion not its avoidance. Presumably this is a less obvious part of Autolycus' clothing of his accounts of the ballads in laughter-provoking extravagance, and playing on the ridiculous credulity of the peasants by flattering his audience with thoughts of propriety and chastity it does not have. Autolycus' continued presence among these rustics is predicated by the effects of the fairy gold. He himself has been whipped out of court where he had once been a servant of prince Florizel, and is known to the Clown by hearsay for haunting “wakes, fairs, and bear-baitings” (IV. iii. 99). He is in this sense courtly corruption invading what he thinks is country innocence and naiveté, and about to shear the sheep. But even he little knows how golden the fleece is, what
“preposterous estate” (V. ii. 148) it is in as the result of a much larger corruption.

Autolycus' merriment, tricks and all, are summer songs before the wintry blast of having to bow and scrape to the new-born gentlemen, the shepherd and the Clown, his son, for their favors of a “good report to the prince [his] master” (V. ii. 151). The country becomes an established court for hearing of suits, and is as corrupt in its sense of justice as can be. The Clown's words—"If it be ne'er so false, a true gentleman may swear it / in the behalf of his friend" (V. ii. 162-163)—are little different from the words of Justice Shallow's man, Davy—"I grant your worship that he is a knave, sir; but yet ... The knave is mine honest friend, sir; therefore, I / beseech you, let him be countenanc'd" (2 Henry IV, V. i. 47-48; 56-57).\textsuperscript{21} It is one of the play's greatest ironies that Autolycus should think he is stepping into innocence when he is but clarifying the fallen pastoral. When he “wander(s) here and there” in this pastoral world and thinks he then does “most go right” (IV. iii. 17-18), he little suspects that he will end metaphorically in the stocks himself trying to avouch his account. What has been labeled “sunny, roguish competence”\textsuperscript{22} is nothing more than the uncertain glory of a summer's day before the inevitability of winter's blast, without the prospect of Spring's promise, for to receive favors at the shepherd's and Clown's hands is degrading, even if his philosophy is to “look out for number one.”\textsuperscript{23} It is almost as if one were to make Falstaff dependent on a triumphant Justice Shallow and Davy, rather than the other way around.

Florizel's sojourn in the country is also a brief lull before an expected storm. He is obviously running away from courtly responsibility, and setting up court on his own terms in the country. Like Prince Hal he is living madcap days of irresponsibility, trying to forestall the inevitable, more “straining on for plucking back” (IV. iv. 466). It is quite possible that he feels displaced by Camillo at his father's court, where his “father's music” is to speak Camillo's deeds and “not little of his care / To have them recompens'd as thought on” (IV. iv. 521). Conversation between Polixenes and Camillo reveals the former's heavy dependence on the latter, but the reason Polixenes gives for needing Camillo, that Camillo had made businesses for Polixenes which no one else can sufficiently manage, and if Camillo does not execute them himself the businesses will become null and void, is only part of the truth. Polixenes needs Camillo's continued presence as a constant reminder that another man agreed he was right in leaving Sicilia the way he did. The management of this arrangement between Polixenes and Camillo at the beginning of Act IV recalls the very first part of the play. Polixenes is trying to hold onto an image of the past, reflected in Camillo. By offering lavish entertainment in the way of bountiful thanks and promise of study how to be more thankful, he is desperately trying to hold onto the past, and to fight off present thoughts of Leontes whose very name punishes him. Camillo's open excuse to Polixenes for wanting to return to Sicilia—to lay his bones there, and to be some kind of allay to Leontes' sorrows (IV. ii. 6-8)—hides his real need, which is his “woman's longing” (IV. iv. 667) to see Leontes. Both Polixenes and Leontes have made of Camillo a father figure, and yet ironically he thinks in womanly terms of needing them. His imagined reception of Florizel and Perdita at Leontes' court is decidedly full of womanly emotion, for he sees “Leontes opening his free arms and weeping / His welcomes forth” (IV. iv. 549-550).

The only way in which both kings can keep Camillo is through Florizel. Thoughts of Polixenes do not alter Camillo's expressed wish to go back to Sicilia, but thoughts of Florizel do. The scene harks back to the first one in the play in which Hermione was successful in recalling Polixenes' youth. Investigating Florizel's relationship with the shepherdess is obviously a far bigger incentive for Camillo's staying in Bohemia than heeding Polixenes' personal need of him. It suggests to me that Camillo is willing to obey a command which allows him the chance to be trusted with the nearest things to men's hearts, so that he may play the role of confessor and adviser, knowing all their chamber-counsels. By means of disguise he can be a witness to Florizel's angling in the country episode, and then openly suggest a course for future life with some promise of amendment. In this respect his manipulation of Florizel follows the same pattern as his manipulation of Polixenes at the beginning of the play, and is not unlike Paulina's method of procedure with Leontes.

Florizel's wooing of Perdita certainly has elements of wooing the “false way” (IV. iv. 151), as Perdita's intelligent sensitivity makes her suggest. His attempt to force the betrothal contract before what he takes to be
only country witnesses is largely suspicious. He is adamant in not wanting his father to “hold some counsel / In such a business” (IV. iv. 410-411), and is guilty of those very presumptuous thoughts about the death of his father (IV. iv. 388) which Prospero has to plant in Ferdinand's mind in order to be able to accuse him of them. It is very suspicious, too, that he should feel it necessary to explain to Camillo that the vessel he has riding fast by, in which he now intends to put to sea with Perdita, was “not prepar'd / For this design” (IV. iv. 502-503). We do not have to take Autolycus' word for it when he says the “prince himself is about a piece of iniquity / (stealing away from his father with his clog at his / heels)” (IV. iv. 678-680), and when he threatens the shepherds with drawing the “throne into a / sheepcote” (IV. iv. 780-781), because Autolycus is again caught out by the dishonest goings on in the country, having had to change suits with Florizel at Camillo's command. What does tend to clinch the kind of relationship Florizel is seeking with Perdita is his description of the sheep-shearing as a “meeting of the petty gods” (IV. iv. 4) of which he has made Perdita queen and himself a god. He feels it necessary to claim that his desires do not run before his honor and that his lusts do not burn hotter than his faith. But unfortunately his rhetoric is too powerful in its use of “transformations” and metamorphoses for his intentions to be allowed purely chaste propriety. The gods who humbled their deities to love took the shapes of beasts upon them, but whether it was Jupiter in the form of a bull, Neptune in the form of a ram, or Apollo in the form of “a poor humble swain,” as Florizel would describe himself, the metamorphosis does not argue honorable intention. The gods transformed themselves into beasts and various shapes in order to accomplish their bestial desires. Florizel's treatment of Perdita as a goddess, and excessive praise of her every act as queenly, makes her cry out that with wisdom she might fear he wooed her the false way, if she did not believe his birth and breeding plainly gave him out an “unstain'd shepherd” (IV. iv. 149). But here as elsewhere in her arguments with him her fears are far more eloquent than her faith.

Florizel's “seduction” of Perdita, Perdita's “seduction” of Florizel, and Polixenes' and Camillo's aiding and abetting the proceedings by looking on as admiring witnesses reach their dramatic climax at the dance of twelve satyrs. The satyr traditionally represents lust and lasciviousness. The pastoral setting in which he is found may look harmless, but his very presence there spells goatish dispositions. No wonder Polixenes suggests it is time to part Florizel and Perdita, and that the matter may already have gone too far. It is possible, of course, that he has gleaned enough information from the old shepherd, who is “simple and tells much” (IV. iv. 346), to make him want to call a halt to everything without being prompted by the presence of the satyrs. But what the shepherd can tell him is hardly the kind of thing he cross-examines Florizel about, whereas the thought of “satyrs” would automatically lead into exactly such questioning. Polixenes is suspicious of the fact that unlike the Clown for his mistress, and unlike Polixenes himself in his own courting days, Florizel has not loaded Perdita with knacks from the pedlar's silken treasury—“What maids lack from head to heel”—without which Polixenes is assured “your lasses cry,” and you are in danger of not happily holding her. Florizel's estimation of these things as mere trifles temporarily disarms Polixenes. The knocks of the pedlar are like “Lawn as white as driven snow” (IV. iv. 220), but Perdita's hand is as “soft as dove's down and as white as it, / Or Ethiopian's tooth, or the fann'd snow that's bolted / By th' northern blasts twice o'er” (IV. iv. 364-366). The description has all the appearance of representing Florizel and Perdita as “chaste as unsum'n'd snow,” so much in contrast with the country shepherd and satyr look. Its strength, however, comes from its too close reminder of Polixenes' own courting days, and through Polixenes of Leontes' courting of Hermione. A white statue mentally intervenes. The whole episode is replete with reminders of the Leontes situation.

Polixenes becomes another Leontes as he angles and then destroys. In his condemnation of his son, utterly disclaiming him from succession as not of his blood or kin, he is re-enacting Leontes' role in the death of Mamillius. In his desire to have Perdita's beauty “scratch'd with briers” (IV. iv. 426), her grace and charm denigrated as the enchantment of “excellent witchcraft” (IV. iv. 424), and her physical attraction lowered to that of a country brothel with its rural latches open, he is re-enacting Leontes' role in the calumniation and denigration of Hermione. Even in his threat to devise a death as cruel for Perdita as she is tender to it, the parallel with the “devised” death of Hermione is not far absent. The bullying of the old shepherd, threatening him one minute with hanging, and then the next minute lifting the dead blow of such punishment, but not the
fullness of royal displeasure, would seem to echo Leontes' treatment of Antigonus.

The old shepherd's reaction to this wintry blast is not too far removed from Antigonus' either. He hides behind Perdita's guilt as much as Antigonus hides behind his belief in Hermione's fault. There is the same kind of waking-dream texture about both their speeches (III. iii. 16-58; IV. iv. 452-463). The old shepherd conveniently forgets how his acquisition of fairy gold has made it impossible that he should be able to fill his grave in quiet, to die upon the bed his father died, and to lie close by his honest bones. Antigonus conveniently forgot the need to follow through his passionate defense of a new-born babe's innocence by practical application. Even Perdita's exclamation that her dignity "would last / But till 'twere known" (IV. iv. 476-477), and talk in terms of this dream of hers from which she is now awakening, would seem to reflect something of Hermione's inner insecurity, and belief that the journey she is going on is for her "better grace" (II. i. 122). Polixenes' tyrannical action is like the blast of January blowing through Bohemia, and it has very largely the same effects as Leontes' winter's rage in Sicilia. Leontes' actions send everything scurrying toward Bohemia: Polixenes' actions send everything scurrying toward Sicilia. Bohemia and Sicilia are inextricably bound up.

The play ends as it began with a visitation from Polixenes to the court of Leontes, and with talk of their friendship and its basis. The whole matter of the relationship between Polixenes and Leontes, and Leontes and Hermione, is resumed. Leontes does not greet Florizel as Florizel so much as an exact image of Polixenes, his very air, as Polixenes had been when he was twenty-one. He cannot refrain from recalling "something wildly / By us perform'd before" (V. i. 129). This is fairly good evidence that he is still thinking of Polixenes and himself in terms of the eternal boy, despite sixteen years of saint-like sorrow. It is only when Florizel brings him back to the present moment by reminding him of Polixenes' "infirmity / (Which waits upon worn times)" (V. i. 140-141) that Leontes is moved to think of Polixenes, sixteen years ago, at the time when he visited Sicilia, and then it is of wrongs he has done him. Leontes talks of Polixenes as a "holy father, / A graceful gentleman; against whose person / (So sacred as it is) [he] ha[s] done sin" (V. i. 169-171), and labels this sin as the reason for which the heavens taking angry note have left him issueless. It is almost as if he were his own Ariel-harp-y-revenge figure claiming that the "powers, delaying, not forgetting, have / Incens'd the seas and shores … / Against [his] peace" (The Tempest, III. iii. 73-74), and bereft him of his heir (75-76) for the "foul deed" of sinning against Polixenes! Thoughts of Polixenes dominate Leontes until Perdita makes him think of Hermione, and insists on bringing him to Paulina's house to see the statue of Hermione. It is true that the play's return to Sicilia is immediately characterized by Paulina's continual references to Hermione to prevent Leontes from heeding his courtiers' advice to wed again. But Leontes does not seem to be averse from the idea of marrying again, and despite his promise to Paulina not to marry till she bids him, Leontes makes a bid for Perdita (V. i. 222-223), and answers Paulina's criticism of this by claiming Perdita reminded him of Hermione. It is almost entirely Paulina and Perdita who keep the memory of Hermione alive for Leontes. He is preoccupied with thoughts of Polixenes. Even his advocacy of Florizel, his willingness to befriend Florizel in the face of Polixenes' displeasure, is basically motivated by his attempt to restore the youthful amity between Leontes and Polixenes when they were "but twenty-one" (V. i. 125).

The reconciliation of the two kings, joined by Camillo, is a fitting climax for Leontes. Not even the fulfillment of the oracle in the finding of Leontes' heir detracts from the importance of the meeting of the two kings—it is practically subsumed by it. Joy in sorrow links the recoveries of Polixenes and Perdita for Leontes, and again the only thought of Hermione comes in connection with Perdita to whom Leontes in his joy felt it necessary to relate the woe of the queen's death. It is Perdita who brings color to their marble, speech to their dumbness, and language to their gestures, but not because she represents the freshness of youth, nor yet its innocence, nor any reinvigoration. She is a living embodiment of the past. She herself is a dethroned goddess, fallen from the pedestal of false worship, and finding her identity, first by losing herself in the present guise of "dislik[e]ng / The truth of [her] own seeming" (IV. iv. 652-653), and then recovering it from the long past through the rough seams of the garments made as possible for her by the shepherds as for Pericles by the fishermen, with the vital distinction that the shepherds unlike Pericles' fishermen actually receive
condolements, and so preposterously so that they are in danger of needing an advocate themselves for the real purpose of living. They have been turned into statues of “gentlemen born.”

The statue of Hermione is so carefully prepared for throughout the whole play and particularly through Perdita that it is astonishing it should ever have been thought an unnecessary addition to the play. The stone rebukes its critics for being more stone than it. Leontes and Polixenes have rediscovered themselves in the gallery of their youthful statues, and almost accidentally stroll into the women's gallery. It is very questionable indeed whether Leontes really comes alive to Hermione. Paulina pushes him, prods him, into making the right moves to woo Hermione, but the situation is charged with the irony of Hermione once again “becom[ing] the suitor” (V. iii. 109), and of her dominant interest in the statue of her youth, Perdita, coming alive before her very eyes. There is no doubt that Hermione preserved herself, not so much for Leontes, but because the oracle gave hope Perdita was alive.

The awkwardness of all these restorations is pointed up particularly by Paulina claiming that everyone is a precious winner except herself, and then likening herself to an old turtle lamenting the loss of her mate, Antigonus, when there has not been the slightest indication in the play that the relationship between Paulina and Antigonus was marked by such lifetime constancy. The truth for Paulina surely lies in the fact that she feels she has no more mothering to do, and is lamenting this lack, which she conveniently projects on her lost husband Antigonus. Tied to Camillo she is symbolically presented with the image she has all along made of herself.

When each one demands and answers to his part performed in the wide gap of time's winter's tale, since first he was dissevered, it should result in recognition of how he has built statues to his own imagination and worshipped them in his heart, but instead, as always, he will look at the comfortable and comforting image he wants to see.

Notes

6. Despite the evidence in Simon Forman's Bocke of Plaies about productions of Cymbeline and The Winter's Tale at the Globe there can be no doubt that the Globe would have to adapt its productions somewhat if it were to compete in any way with the Blackfriars' productions.
7. Based on the ages of Mamillius at about 10, and Perdita at 16.
14. Pafford, Introduction, lix, fn. 4, where the vision is interpreted literally as derived entirely from outside.
15. Pafford, p. 69, fn. 58, rightly takes Coghill, op. cit., to task for treating the episode as comic.
Criticism: Character Studies: Wilbur Sanders (essay date 1987)


[In the following essay, Sanders examines the issue of Leontes's jealousy, citing several conditions that may be said to cause his reaction to Hermione's successful coaxing of Polixenes to remain in Sicilia.]

Critics need problems as slugs need cabbages, and I would not blame anyone who tensed in anticipatory resistance when I say that I am writing about The Winter's Tale because I find the play problematic. However, I do: I think it wonderful, moving, grand; but I am also niggled by small discontents which have a nasty habit of growing bigger the more I think about them. I don't believe I am alone in this.

For some readers the play is a sublime diptych, a two-movement symphony whose music is only made richer by its overt structural diversity. For others, equally flatly, it is a broken-backed drama, written in two distinct modes, where Shakespeare has stymied himself by trying to do two incompatible things at once. The dispute, at its most interesting, is about much more important matters than construction, and it's because I take it extremely seriously that I haven't, in what follows, tried to resolve it in any haste. I'm not even sure of the benefits of having it resolved; for this is, more than most, a play to be ‘wondered at’, and wondered over. So if readers find themselves wondering how long the wondering is going to continue, I can only plead a difficulty which I believe to be in the play itself, and hope that I shall have succeeded, by the end, in showing how rich a difficulty it is.

To begin at the beginning, then … well, almost the beginning: what is it that happens to Leontes in the second scene of The Winter's Tale?

The question has to be asked because readers and audiences, critics and directors keep disagreeing so spectacularly about it. Some of them will even dispute that anything ‘happens’ to Leontes at all. Inquiring into the matter, they assure us, is as foolish as trying to find out exactly how Cinderella's coach became a pumpkin. Don't we know a fairy tale when we see one? Leontes, patently, has taken a bite of the evil apple which turns a plain good man into a bewitched devil. And for as long as the poison lasts (which is just as long as the fable requires), he will be inaccessible to plain good feelings. The moment the poison is exhausted, he will emerge from his enchantment, bewildered and distraught, scarcely able to recognise the world which is now strewn with the wreckage of his evil possession. End of Phase One: the Triumph of Wickedness. And anyone familiar with the genre will then await, with minimal anxiety, the beginning of Phase Two: the Triumph of Time. That is to say, the deployment of the complementary good magic which will, after the usual pleasing delays, undo all the damage and launch us onto the calm, valedictory seas of the happy-ever-after. Easy. There's no problem except the needless one created by treating a tale for the winter fireside as if it were

19. Pafford, p. 95, fn. 104.
20. Pafford, p. 107, fn. 298, does not take into account the nature of the musical setting that has proved extant.
22. Pafford, Introduction, lxxx, fn. 5.
24. See George Sandys, Ovid's Metamorphosis (London, 1632 and 1640), The Table to the Commentary, under “Jupiter.”
a documentary account of marital conflict in contemporary suburbia. We perplex ourselves with irrelevant speculation about motivation, and thus invent a problem where none exists.

It would be foolish to pretend that Shakespeare's tale doesn't have this shape. It does make some sense to describe the Leontes of I.ii as ‘possessed’, and he does seem, at the end of the trial scene (III.ii) to awaken, as if from nightmare. In a score of ways the fabular paradigm is visible through the dramatic fabric.

But it is nevertheless a dramatic fabric. And in drama things do ‘happen’. Where the fairy tale deals in isolated, portentous events, linked only by a narrative ‘and then’, in drama the event has a location and conditions, causal roots and consequent branches. The actors who encounter each other in that curious acoustic space we call a stage, do so by imitating the forms of encounter that we recognise from other rooms—rooms, even, in contemporary suburbia: they stand nearer to, or further from, each other; they raise or lower their voices; they stress one word rather than another; they reach out to touch each other, or they shrink painfully from contact. And all this we interpret as behaviour—known physical behaviour in which one thing grows out of another. Concerning dramatic events it's the most natural thing in the world to ask (as Polixenes does concerning Leontes' monstrous suspicion, the moment it is revealed to him), ‘How should this grow?’.

‘Natural it may be’, comes the retort, ‘but with this play the question is illicit. It is only being asked because of a misunderstanding of modes.’ This sort of thing:

There is no psychological interest; we don't ask (so long as we are concerning ourselves with Shakespeare): What elements in Leontes' make-up, working in what way, explain this storm? The question is irrelevant to the mode of the play.

(F. R. Leavis, *The Common Pursuit*, 1952, p. 177)

So that's that. One is sorry one asked. Leavis' argument has all the subtlety of a slammed door. But, pausing for a moment … how do we establish the ‘mode’ of a play, if not by reading it first? And why, in a piece which notably shifts modes at its mid-point, should the word ‘mode’ be in the singular? I don't know who ‘we’ are, but we seem to make a pretty supine and incurious audience. Before we conclude that Leontes' jealousy is simply a plot postulate, mightn't it be worth inquiring how Shakespeare postulates it? It may be ‘notoriously unmotivated’, as S. L. Bethell claims (*Casebook*, ed. K. Muir, 1968, p. 116), only because it has been notoriously unexamined.

I said dramatic events have a location and conditions. And in the first scene—to begin really at the beginning—we are given them. It's an opening that has perplexed directors, and the usual consequence has been that the scene gets cut. Those who don't cut it remain perplexed, it seems; for one ingenious Stratford director was so puzzled by the Sicilian subjects who ‘desire to live on crutches’, that he actually brought on a bevy of them, complete with crutches, to clear up the difficulty. Perhaps it's worth trying a simpler solution—enteraining the possibility, for instance, that there is a joke in the air, and that the pervasive formality of speech in the scene may not be some Shakespearian lapse upon generic courtliness, but a careful registration of a particular courtly note which helps, in turn, to delineate a particular socio-political situation. What exactly is happening here?

Two courtiers are discussing the progress of Bohemia's visit to Sicilia. And the terms they use suggest a competition in state lavishness rather than an easy munificence born of affection. Archidamus the Bohemian, indeed (who never appears again), seems to be there chiefly to express the embarrassment this ostentatious hospitality is causing his party. He worries how it can ever be requited:

we cannot with such magnificence, in so rare—I know not what to say. We will give you sleepy drinks, that your senses, unintelligent of our insufficiency, may, though they cannot
praise us, as little accuse us.

(I.i. 12)

Camillo tries to rescue the entertainment from the suspicion of commercial competition—‘You pay a great deal too dear for what's given freely’—but only manages to still his guest's misgivings by appealing to the boyhood friendship, long in the past, which has brought the visit about, and by affirming its continuing and mature solidity. Here perhaps the hospitable contention can come to some rest?

Archidamus, the Bohemian, seems to think so:

I think there is not in the world either malice or matter to alter it.

Perhaps not. And yet when you deny a possibility, you also endow it with equivocal life; and Archidamus is moved, next, to shift his ground, as if to a more ‘comfortable’ topic:

You have an unspeakable comfort of your young Prince Mamillius.

The ‘unspeakable’ of courtly hyperbole, however, may yet be spoken of:

it is a gentleman of the greatest promise that ever came into my note.

The greatest ever? Well, no doubt he'd say as much for his own young Prince, on the appropriate occasion. But Camillo doesn't quibble. He takes it in the spirit it's offered, abating the hyperbole only a shade in the interests of a modest realism:

I very well agree with you in the hopes of him. It is a gallant child.

(On a similar occasion, Hamlet had qualified the praise of his dead father, in order to pay the finer compliment of moderation: ‘A was a man, take him for all in all: / I shall not look upon his like again.’)

But hyperbole, once you're entangled in it, is a net of fine meshes, and Camillo is not yet out of it. The royal child is, he assures his guest,

one that indeed physics the subject, makes old hearts fresh; they that went on crutches ere he was born desire yet their life to see him a man.

Archidamus tries briefly to imagine such prodigies of geriatric fealty, fails, and gives it up with a laugh:

Would they else be content to die?

‘Yes’, replies Camillo stoutly, choosing to impugn his intelligence rather than his loyalty, but avoiding fatuousness by adding a sly proviso:

if there were no other excuse why they should desire to live.

Which allows a sagely nodding Archidamus to administer the coup de grace. I see, he says, po-faced,

If the King had no son, they would desire to live on crutches till he had one.

That kind of loyal subject. Ah yes, we have them in Bohemia too.
Unless it is with an unscripted grin, Camillo doesn't bother to reply. They have returned (with some relief) to the real world. The easy accord, obstructed throughout their conversation by a contention in complimentary exaggeration, arrives effortlessly now, as they confess to an artificial inflation of sentiment, and agree to abandon it. *Exeunt*, says the text. ‘Chuckling’, I'd be inclined to add.

It is an *entente cordiale*, however, which their two principals, the Kings Leontes and Polixenes, have yet to arrive at—which, indeed, they are destined never to achieve. The questioning of *their* hospitable fictions produces no relaxation into laughter, only stubbornness (in Leontes) and discomfort (in Polixenes). The stakes, it seems, have been raised to a level where the game can only be played in deadly earnest. But what is it that's at stake for the Kings, which was not at stake for their servants?

In the Fifteenth Book of the *Odyssey*, Odysseus' son, scouring Greece for his lost father, is being hospitably detained by Menelaus. Like Polixenes, Telemachus is questioned by his fears of what may chance or breed upon his absence. He has left no custodian in charge of his property and has been warned by Athene that ‘sneaping winds’ may easily blow at home. He doesn't, however, insist on this spur to departure, but appeals broadly to the generosity of his host:

‘Sire,’ he said, ‘I beg leave of you now to return to my own country, for I find myself longing to be home.’

And he meets, in Menelaus, a most un-Leontean tact:

‘Telemachus,’ the warrior king replied, ‘far be it from me to keep you here for any length of time, if you wish to get back. I condemn any host who is either too kind or not kind enough. There should be moderation in all things, and it is equally offensive to speed a guest who would like to stay and to detain one who is anxious to leave …

‘However, do give me time to bring you some presents and pack them in your chariot—they will be fine ones, as you will see for yourself. And let me tell the women to get a meal ready in the hall …’


The warmth of Menelaus' welcome is not impugned by his readiness to part warmly; it is confirmed by it. He cares more for the guest's peace of mind than for the triumph of his own benevolence. Once he's satisfied that it isn't some over-polite scruple of ‘tiring his royalty’ that hastens Telemachus away, he presses him no farther. The boy clearly longs to be home. To detain him now would be ‘offensive’.

Leontes feels no such scruple. He seems to take umbrage at the mere hint of departure. His overbearing manner may contain some rough affection, but it certainly doesn't treat Polixenes' longing for home as meriting serious consideration:

*Stay your thanks a while,*

And pay them when you part.

POL.

Sir, that's tomorrow.

I am question'd by my fears of what may chance
Or breed upon our absence, that may blow
No sneaping winds at home, to make us say
‘This is put forth too truly.’ Besides, I have stay'd
To tire your royalty.
LEON.
We are tougher, brother,
Than you can put us to't.
POL.
No longer stay.
LEON.
One sev'night longer.
POL.
Very sooth, tomorrow.
LEON.
We'll part the time between's then; and in that
I'll no gainsaying.

(I.ii. 9)

There's no doubt that this plays best if it's handled jocularly. It could so easily be purely good-humoured—a little two-handed comedy of intransigence by which two friends act out the reluctance they feel at parting. But don't we also hear in Leontes' bearish gruffness an over-surfeited conviviality—as if the more he senses his own inhospitable weariness, the less able he is to admit it? Under this browbeating, at all events, Polixenes' tone becomes faintly harassed, as if (to put what is merely a glimpsed possibility, as a proposition) he is being forced to put their ‘rooted affection’ to a test that makes him unhappy:

Press me not, beseech you, so.
There is no tongue that moves, none, none i'th'world,
So soon as yours could win me.

(I.ii. 19)

But there is, of course, one such tongue, and we are shortly to hear it ‘win’ him with effortless ease. The intransigence, apparently, is not about the request but the requester. And we are also, at this point, being alerted to something overbearing in Leontes’ way of loving people—something which elicits these protestations-in-resistance from those who are close to him. In a minute, we are to hear a similar note from Hermione:

—Yet, good deed, Leontes,
I love thee not a jar o'th'clock behind
What lady she her lord.

(I.ii. 42)

You do not say such things to a man who is secure in his own sufficiency. Something unhappy haunts these assurances of affection, as if the speaker fears to be unbelieved—as, indeed, when once the assurances become necessary, there is a good chance she (or he) will be. But that is for the future. For the moment it remains a subliminal flicker of perception.

I have foregrounded this very ‘social’ embarrassment that the two Kings find themselves in, even at the risk of over-emphasis, because it may just be one of the ‘conditions’ of what ‘happens’ to Leontes. On one level it's a perfectly commonplace thing, a familiar foolish tussle of wills over a matter of small importance. Anyone who has paid an extended visit knows that it's easy to overshoot the right time for leaving and that, once that time has passed, it may be difficult to extricate yourself without offence. Both parties having now become committed to an exaggerated version of their cordiality, the admission by either that it is so, puts both of them in the wrong.

Polixenes plainly longs for the salt air and the open seaways that lead to home. His brother's love has become a ‘whip’ to him (I.i. 25). The hospitality may be ‘freely given’, but he's not feeling it that way any more:

\[
\text{Time as long again}
\]

\[
\text{Would be fill'd up, my brother, with our thanks,}
\]

\[
\text{And yet we should for perpetuity}
\]

\[
\text{Go hence in debt.}
\]

(I.ii. 3)

He is labouring under an unwieldy burden of obligation which seems to crush all remaining pleasure out of the visit. But he can't say so, any more than Leontes can say, ‘Go, if you must. But I wish you wouldn't’. Instead, Polixenes spins excuses (cares of state), which are promptly rebutted (only the bygone day he had satisfaction on that score: I.i. 31), fails to take up the ‘strong’ reason Hermione proffers him (that he ‘longs to see his son’), and is driven finally to the embarrassed insincerity of fearing to be ‘a charge and trouble’ to them—as if that could ever be an issue between real friends!

Real friends, though? Isn't that, with the dismal escalation of small misunderstandings into great, becoming precisely the question? Leontes seems to think so. That is why the friendship has to be ‘proved’ by the pointless extra ‘sev'night’. Perhaps it is also why, for the forty-odd lines that Hermione undertakes his pleading for him, he walks out on the conversation so completely that he has to inquire about its outcome. Perhaps that is why, having had a consent wrung for him, his first blurted reaction is one of resentment at the previous denial—‘At my request he would not’ (editors have no warrant for marking this as an Aside: its awkward clumsiness is there for everyone to hear). All this is the behaviour of a man plagued with a mistrust that he cannot admit to consciousness, and which he must therefore blame on someone else. ‘You don’t really love me at all’, is the accusation we level against the person we're beginning to cease loving ourselves.

Some readers have found it very puzzling that Leontes is so ready to suspect his dearest friend of the ultimate betrayal, as if Polixenes were no nearer an acquaintance, and no better known to him than ‘Sir Smile his neighbour’. But perhaps, as is not impossible with dearest friends, he is no better known. For decades, their encounters have all been by attorney—‘with interchange of gifts, letters, loving embassies’, as Camillo tells us (I.i. 25). In these years of separation they have traversed the critical years between puberty and manhood; they have grown up, married, had children, and assumed the government of their countries. The wide gap of time that has disсовered them will be hard to close. Hard, but not impossible, provided the gap is recognised, and their ‘more mature dignities and royal necessities’ form the basis of a re-established intimacy.
But this is a play about interrupted continuities; about gaps that remain unfilled by natural growth and maturation; about ruptured developmental bonds; about sixteen frozen years of fruitless penitence, and about equally frozen idealities which will tyrannise permanently over a budding nature, if ‘dear life’ does not redeem them.

Furthermore, natural growth and maturation is exactly what Polixenes, for one, finds it impossible to envisage. Nothing, for him, can bridge the gap between boyhood and manhood, because he has made the boy in himself nostalgically ‘eternal’, and he himself wanders like a phantom of regret in the lost green fields of youth. The processes that have intervened he mentions only to deplore. He is a man who demands that Time stand still, knowing that it won't. And we see him holding out this golden dream, to himself and to Hermione, while the man he is supposed to share it with, sullen as a rebuffed schoolboy, mooches about the stage or plays desultorily with his son, out of earshot and apparently careless of the outcome.

There are two boys eternal on stage, suffering, both of them, with all the child's capacity to be hurt and not to understand. But lamblike they are not!

I don't mean to be snide at these men's expense. The eternal child survives in all of us. It is the very quick of growth and change and hope. But a child must play. It needs to be able to giggle at its own absurdities—as we saw Camillo and Archidamus doing. It needs to be able to long irrationally for home, and be unashamed of it; to wish desperately that the friend would stay, but let him go if he wants. A child can be vulnerable without feeling humiliated. But the childness in these two Kings, obliquely reflected in their unusual attachment to their own children, is not the ‘varying childness’ Polixenes cherishes in his son—the childness that cures ‘thoughts that would thick my blood’. It has none of that spontaneous mutability. It has lost the capacity to play. The very word has become hideous with treacherous double meanings. To ‘play’ is to sin.

Shakespeare lays out for us the peculiar notion of maturation—the theology of it, almost—that has brought them to this pass:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{We were as twinn'd lambs that did frisk i'th'sun} \\
\text{And bleat the one at th'other. What we chang'd} \\
\text{Was innocence for innocence; we knew not} \\
\text{The doctrine of ill-doing, nor dream'd} \\
\text{That any did. Had we pursu'd that life,} \\
\text{And our weak spirits ne'er been higher rear'd} \\
\text{With stronger blood, we should have answer'd heaven} \\
\text{Boldly ’not guilty’, the imposition clear'd} \\
\text{Hereditary ours.}
\end{align*}
\]

(I.ii. 67)

So Polixenes.

That incorruptible critic and austere Jansenist, James Smith, points out what a heterodox brand of Christianity this is (J. Smith, *Shakespearian and Other Essays*, 1974, pp. 145-6): Polixenes speaks as if Original Sin were somehow avoidable! Smith is right. But more interesting is the way Polixenes further equates the birth of sin with the advent of sex (‘stronger blood’). Perhaps, listening to Hermione's charming persuasions and with an eye on the restless Leontes, he has already had a premonition of the dismal metamorphosis that can turn three friends into a triangle. Is he not already too susceptible to her womanliness? It seems to be beginning. He searches for a cause. What is it that went wrong? and when? Significantly, he doesn't examine the present situation. There's no need. He knows all too well the root of the evil. For Polixenes (in a pattern familiar to readers of Blake) the Fall is to be dated from puberty. The snake in the paradise is simply sex.
Hermione had started this train of thought with the kindliest of intentions. Hoping perhaps to soften her husband's graceless withdrawal from the conversation, she had proposed, as a happier topic, Childhood:

Come, I'll question you
Of my lord's tricks and yours when you were boys.

(I.ii. 60)

(understood: ‘still quirky enough, in all conscience … but never mind’?)

You were pretty lordings then!

But the topic is far from happy, charged with regret and guilt as it is; and her own warm presence makes it even less happy. The boy Polixenes feels profoundly threatened in this region of memory.

It's a strange enough boyhood that the King of Bohemia projects: lambs frisking in the sun is not the image most naturally suggested by the yelling hordes in a primary school playground. But it's an even stranger notion of maturation: one grows up only to learn ‘the doctrine of ill-doing’, to be reared with ‘stronger blood’ which is, apparently, vicious in its effects. As strange, certainly, it strikes Hermione, to judge by her slightly impish primness in reply:

By this we gather
You have tripp'd since.

(I.ii. 75)

Hermione knows the regions of experience Polixenes gestures towards, but her word for them is ‘tripp'd’. The ‘ill-doing’, ‘guilt’, and ‘stronger blood’ do not touch her, except to amuse by their blundering intensity. But Polixenes, quite deaf to the light rebuke, blunders on in, right up to his ears. Now we discover what it is about the 'stronger blood' that so alarms him:

O my most sacred Lady
Temptations have since then been born to's, for
In those unfledg'd days was my wife a girl;

(you can almost hear Hermione's jaw drop in amazement; but there is better to come)

Your precious self had then not cross'd the eyes
Of my young playfellow.

(I.ii. 76)

‘Grace to boot!’ interrupts Hermione, torn between incredulity and laughter,

Of this make no conclusion, lest you say
Your queen and I are devils.

(I.ii. 80)

If Polixenes doesn't blush at this point, he's thicker-skinned than I take him to be. This was, infallibly, the ‘conclusion’ he was about to make; and the moral disarray that has him call his hostess, in one breath, both ‘sacred’ and ‘temptation’ is profoundly revealing.
But Hermione takes mercy on him, deftly diverts the blow and tries to help him out of his absurdity. She has to treat him like the boy he says he wishes he was:

Yet, go on;

Th'offences we have made you do we'll answer,  
If you first sinn'd with us, and that with us  
You did continue fault, and that you slipp'd not  
With any but with us.

(I.ii. 82)

She employs his vocabulary of ‘offences’, ‘fault’ and ‘sinning’, but the words are enclosed in audible quotation-marks and mocked by her own word, ‘slipp’d’. And the sentiments are bathed in an unmistakable sensuous glow of one who can only hope that such happy faults, so begun, will ‘continue’—and ‘with us’. Her moral world is leagues away from Polixenes’.

I would not, however, trust Polixenes to hear the quotation-marks or to relish the glow. The guilt-culture of puritanism is not renowned for its responsiveness to humour. Nor is Leontes' sense of humour in much better fettle either. And it is exactly on this note that he rejoins them. We shall never know if Shakespeare meant him to overhear and misconstrue her words, but he easily might. It could explain his choice of a potentially bitter verb: ‘Is he won yet?’

‘He'll stay, my lord’, says Hermione, still in the backwash of her own kindly amusement at Polixenes (and therefore not noticing the tone?). Leontes' next remark, however, signalling deeper trouble, cannot and does not escape her—‘At my request he would not.’

I've already indicated the kind of Polixenes-oriented trouble it contains. But it is also unquietly directed at Hermione's unnatural powers of persuasion, and she has heard it. So, with a mixture of tact and urgency she directs the conversation away from both suspicions, onto a ground of confidence, as she hopes, for all three—reminding Leontes that they are husband and wife, irrevocably bound, and choosing to be so.

Here, with his usual consummate unobtrusiveness, Shakespeare is giving us the long perspective on this particular marriage and its origins. And he's doing so because this too has contributed to the unique situation—this and no other—in which the nightmare that comes upon Leontes has its own logic.

Their courtship, we learn, had some special vicissitudes:

Three crabbed months had sour'd themselves to death,  
Ere I could make thee open thy white hand  
And clap thyself my love; then didst thou utter  
‘I am yours for ever.’

(I.ii. 102)

Three months, some annotators say, was long for an Elizabethan courtship, and especially long for a marriage that was dynastic in origin, between a king and an emperor's daughter. It doesn't matter. It felt long to Leontes: its length is still ‘sour’ in memory. But of course the Hermione we see is exactly the woman to refuse to have her judgement hustled. The white hand opens only when the candid mind consents. She wants the words ‘for ever’ to mean what they say. And conversely, the Leontes we see is exactly the man to feel this delay as ‘crabbed’, a slur upon his sufficiency, and to be unable to grasp the importance, for a Hermione, of a clear resolution.
All marriages carry the stamp of the conditions under which they were contracted. They will crack at the point where they were least firmly cemented. And all marriages have an array of inequalities built into their mutuality. But the inequalities of this marriage are of the radical kind that may distil slow gall. The sourness lives on. Leontes speaks of the crabbed months with no softening suggestion that they have passed quietly into history. And that, too, is understandable—for Hermione, throughout this scene and beyond, seems in possession of an elasticity and largeness, a free ‘play’ of spirit which he cannot command and cannot rise to. It would be hard not to resent it, somewhere.

But the speech must go back into its context. For the way the recollection arises is just as important as the fact that it arises. Recovering from the grumpiness of ‘At my request he would not’, Leontes has tried to make amends:

_Hermione, my dearest, thou never spok’st_  
To better purpose.

(I.ii. 88)

This could, of course, bear a very bitter construction: something along the lines of, ‘You imagine yourself to be invisible in your “purpose”, but “you'll be found, / Be you beneath the sky.”’ Something in the tone, at all events, elicits a sharp note of interrogation from Hermione, as if her ear has caught an echo of inner disquiet. ‘Never?’ she queries, looking him keenly in the eye.

He would not appear to be meeting the eye. Though he must know her meaning, he's strangely recalcitrant in acknowledging it, muttering,

‘Never but once.’

They are now in very deep waters. There can be no mystery about the other ‘once’, but for Polixenes' sake at least, the tone must be lightened to include an observer of these intimacies. That's probably why Hermione begins almost archly, teasingly—

What! Have I twice said well? When was't before?  
I prithee tell me—

(I.ii. 90)

But she very quickly finds herself slipping into a bantering levity which can only make matters worse. And though she stops half-a-dozen times in hopeful expectation, Leontes will not rescue her. The ‘once before’ has become as impossible for him to name as she is determined to make him name it.

It plays unhappy tricks with her tone. He cannot know that what reaches him as provocative femininity deliberately flaunting itself before another male—

_you may ride's_  
With one soft kiss a thousand furlongs ere  
With spur we heat an acre,

(I.ii. 94)

and so on—is just a woman discovering distressfully that _anything_ she says is going to be received on the level of sexual provocation. The very foreignness of guilt to her temperament will make her sound ‘loose’ to guilty ears. Or, as she puts it at her trial,
Mine integrity
Being counted falsehood shall, as I express it,
Be so received.

(III.ii. 34)

Her life already stands in the level of his dreams. Her words have passed out of her control, subject to the nightmare metamorphosis that suspicion can always impose on them.

She tries to arrest that miserable momentum, valiantly cheerful, but her cajolery, repelled, takes on a tone that is almost silly:

My last good deed was to entreat his stay;

(Polixenes, notice, is now completely out of account—a mere parenthic ‘him’)

What was my first? It has an elder sister,
Or I mistake you. O, would her name were Grace!
But once before I spoke to th'purpose—When?
Nay, let me have't; I long.

(I.ii. 97)

Now Leontes must reply, wretched with misgiving though he is, and name the occasion which ought to be the root and ground of sunny confidence. But there can be no sunny confidence in what he remembers, only deeper misgiving—crabbed months souring themselves to death, the white hand reluctantly opening:

' I am yours for ever.'

(I.ii. 104)

That is the knife-edge. It can be the ceremony by which the bond is reconsecrated, as Hermione again opens her hand to receive his, breathing ‘Tis Grace indeed’ with a sober fervency from which all the silliness has vanished, and which registers immense relief, I think, at being clear of the minefields of mistrust. She was right! It was just one of those fantasms that can cloud the clearest vision; and by treating it as if it didn't exist she has exorcised it.

But Leontes' words have another resonance, a questioning, probing, unhappy one—'then didst thou utter / “I am yours for ever”’, but now … ? In the light of those crabbed months, were you concealing something? And are you now repenting? Can thy dam … may't be … affection? He is on the brink of committing himself to that hideous vision, at exactly the same moment as he struggles to affirm his trust in their mutual vows.

If Hermione hears that in his words, she hears it only to discount it as ignoble—ignoble in him, as it would be ignoble in her to respond to it. The response could only look like guilt, and does not become a lady like her. If he has put her in the false, ludicrous position of choosing between her husband and her husband's friend, she will show her superiority to the suspicion, by seeming unaware of its very possibility. He has placed his hand in hers again. She will use her renewed power over him to place her other hand in Polixenes' … and unite them, after the pitiful, trivial, transient cloud that has passed between them. Instead of being the cause of division, she will be the instrument of reconciliation.

It's an act of high courage, expressing the perilous extent of her trust in Leontes' wholesome integrity. Equally it is an act of folly. She cannot know it perhaps, but it is fatally miscalculated in its very eloquence:
Why, lo you now, I have spoke to th'purpose twice:  
The one for ever earn'd a royal husband;  
Th'other for some while a friend.

(I.ii. 106)

With a gracious smile for Polixenes, she stresses the antithesis between the ‘for ever’ of marriage and the 'some while' of friendship. But Leontes is already gone. The word he hears is ‘friend’. It's a neutral word which, like a lot of other innocent words (such as ‘play’ or ‘neat’ or ‘love’ or ‘satisfy’), must be used, because there is no other. But it reaches his ears as an obscene euphemism.

He lets the hand fall, resuming his restless pacings, toying fretfully with the bewildered Mamillius; and everything that is to follow is already there, fully formed—‘Too hot, too hot!’ He has given himself up to the foul, familiar imaginings—gone rag-picking among the ancient garbage of misogynist cynicism and misanthropic prurience, and the momentum of that will carry him far—past, even, the categorical denial of Apollo—before it is exhausted. The momentum is given us in the rhythms and cadences of his speech:

Too hot, too hot!  
To mingle friendship far, is mingling bloods.  
I have tremor cordis on me: my heart dances.  
But not for joy; not joy.

(I.ii. 108, Folio punctuation)

Yet one hears, potently, how, in its own demonic way, it is a kind of joy—a frenzied stimulation of the nerves and the blood, beside which everything else comes to seem pallid, insipid, and implausible.

It is also self-confirming in a thoroughly deadly way. By letting go the hand that gave her heart to him, Leontes leaves Hermione holding only … the hand of Polixenes—an action which, of necessity, must next be translated as ‘paddling palms and pinching fingers’. By the withdrawal of his hand, the breach of his trust, he has made it that. And Hermione has no redress. She cannot change her behaviour in the light of his guilty suspicion without becoming contaminated by it. It is the same merciless principle of integrity that is enunciated in Macbeth:

Though all things foul would wear the brows of grace,  
Yet grace must still look so.

It's open to us in the audience to wonder—when she has noticed that her husband ‘holds a brow of much distraction’—whether Hermione is well advised to obey his request and go off into the garden arm-in-arm with Polixenes. Yet how could she refuse, since ‘grace must still look so’? To change under suspicion is to license the suspicion. There is no integrity so strong that it can dictate its own interpretation. The drama is in motion.

I don't know whether Leontes' jealousy still seems 'notoriously unmotivated'. I would have thought that there is rather a profusion of explanations, than a scarcity of them. And they could be very easily multiplied. I might mention the curious freaks of feeling to which husbands are sometimes subject in the latter stages of pregnancy—especially husbands as emotionally centred upon hearth and home as Leontes seems to be. That is in play here, too. The parental bond is so essential to this man's stability that he clutches instinctively at a 7-year-old when he feels himself falling. Since so much hangs on it, such men are natural sniffers-out of bastardy. Rather like that idealistic family-man Leo Tolstoy, there is a passion of domesticity about Leontes which may easily turn tyrannical. Sixteen years later, you'll notice, he is still speaking of his wife as the sweet'st Companion that ere man.
In this man's mind, true breeding, hopes, and sweetness are indissolubly connected. And now to be discarded thence. …

But I would not want to lay all the stress on psychological idiosyncrasy, meticulously though it is charted in the text. That would be to make it too much of a special case, and to lose the essential and archetypal from the tale. For there is a sense in which, the moment Leontes starts drawing water from the poisoned wells of his prurience, there is no need for explanation at all. Harold Goddard offers an illuminating comparison. ‘Leontes’ jealousy of Polixenes’, he writes,

is like Shylock's hatred of Antonio (and Shakespeare uses the same two metaphors of wind and waves to convey it). In that case nothing personal, but centuries of mistreatment of the Jews, was the ‘motive.’ In this case nothing personal, but the whole history and inheritance of human jealousy, is the cause. What we are dealing with here is nature in the raw, with the fantasy-making of the unconscious mind and the emotional fury it engenders. Leontes' mind is like a fiery furnace at such a temperature that everything introduced into it—combustible or not—becomes fuel. That he threatens in turn to have his wife, the child, and Paulina burned is significant repetition and detail that indicate the volcanic depth from which his passion comes.


There is a realm of experience—and Shakespeare knew it well—where ‘nothing is but what is not’. It is something more than delusion. Enter it, and your ‘single state of man’ will be shaken by a ‘phantasma and a hideous dream’ which inverts the categories of reality. The mind begins to feed itself upon the fascination that lies at the shadowed centre of abhorrence itself. Nor can it easily be prised loose. If a well-intentioned friend, like Camillo, questions the new categories, you are furious, and on behalf of reality!

is this nothing?
Why, then the world and all that's in't is nothing;
The covering sky is nothing; Bohemia nothing;
My wife is nothing; nor nothing have these nothings,
If this be nothing.

(I.ii. 292)

‘Nothing’—though a pure vacancy of matter—can nevertheless, like a vacuum, suck reality into itself. It even has a supra-reality of its own. It brings a dizzying sensation of initiation, this ‘diseased opinion’. And Leontes (there's no mistaking it) has been infecting his brains with this hallucinogen. He is able, consequently, to give a classic description of its pathology:

Affection! thy intention stabs the centre.
Thou dost make possible things not so held,
Communicat'st with dreams—how can this be?—
With what's unreal thou coaxart art,
And fellow'st nothing.

(I.ii. 137)
Leontes has here formulated the straining apart of contradictory sensation that threw Othello into an epileptic fit. The reason perhaps that he does not fall down and foam at the mouth, is that he has located and begun to relish the pleasure that even this self-appointed vexation contains.

Yes, I do mean ‘pleasure’. Nobody embarks on a course of gratuitous self-torment without promising himself some perverse satisfactions along the way. And as Leontes thrusts Mamillius away to ‘Go play’, he is clearing a space in which he can more freely ‘play’, himself. The need to do so is so powerful that it will out, even in so mangled a form as this:

Go play (boy) play, there have been
(Or I am much deceiv'd) cuckolds ere now,
And many a man there is (even at this present,
Now, while I speak this) holds his wife by th'arm
That little thinks she has been sluic'd in's absence,
And his pond fish'd by his next neighbour (by
Sir Smile, his neighbour): Nay, there's comfort in't,
Whiles other men have gates, and those gates open'd
(As mine) against their will. Should all despair
That have revolted wives, the tenth of mankind
Would hang themselves. Physic for't there's none:
It is a bawdy planet, that will strike
Where 'tis predominant; and 'tis pow'ful: think it:
From east, west, north, and south, be it concluded,
No barricado for a belly. Know't,
It will let in and out the Enemy,
With bag and baggage …

(I.ii. 187, Folio punctuation)

The extraordinary rhythms of this, slipshod and angry-sulky, remind one of a sullen and ostracised child kicking at tussocks in the corner of the playground.

Nor is Shakespeare the playwright to forget—now, while he speaks this—the citizens who have brought their wives to the playhouse, or the gallants placing themselves strategically to catch the eye of those wives. And I daresay, as Leontes picked his grim way through the grimier alleys of his own mind, there was a citizen or two who found his grip on his wife's arm involuntarily tightening, and his eyes flitting helplessly towards his next (smiling) neighbour. The instinct touched is very primitive and very powerful. The sentiments, in a sense, require no explanation at all. They rise from a perennial stratum of the male mind, and one which (I think this is the impression conveyed by Leontes' tone of gloomy relish), one which has been made familiar by much frequentation. The frequentation is recorded in words like ‘Inch-thick’, ‘fork’d’, ‘sluic’d’, ‘fish'd’, ‘bawdy’, and in the whole swaggeringly hard-bitten manner (‘think it!’ ‘know't!’ ‘Be it concluded!’), which seems, utterly incongruously, to have a ring of gratified exultation about it: ‘Physic for't there's none’—as if the thing that torments him is also a source of unholy jubilation. ‘Nay, there's comfort in't’ has an irony beyond the fact that the fellowship of cuckolds would seem to provide scant ‘comfort’ for poor Leontes. The darker irony is that the comfort he is discovering is real and deep.

Just as the luxury of schizoid states can provide a real solvent for problems that are impervious to sanity, so jealousy consoles the man who believes himself to be merely its victim. And in Leontes’ unleashed fantasy, Shakespeare has tapped the region of the psyche where we are all accessible to that satisfaction-in-revulsion, the grim exultation of the unsurprised cynic in a bawdy world. Perhaps it's even misleading to call it a region of the psyche at all, implying some dark under-consciousness. Rather, by an imperceptible jar to the perceptive faculties, all that is natural and pleasing and delightful in one's sexual nature becomes lurid with lasciviousness—yet not just lurid, also thrilling as no natural sensuality could ever be. Pleasure with the additional edge that's put upon it by believing it sin. And the self-appointed victim will feed his imagination
with the picture of someone he loves committing the hideousness, rather than forgo the rapture of imagining it:

Is leaning cheek to cheek? Is meeting noses?
Kissing with inside lip? Stopping the career
Of laughter with a sigh?—a note infallible
Of breaking honesty. Horning foot on foot?
Skulking in corners? Wishing clocks more swift ...

(I.ii. 283)

I don't think the swiftness of events here allows us time to inquire how Leontes has become so inward with the gradations of breaking honesty (certainly not by watching Hermione); but the inwardness of the knowledge is striking to the ear.

So when he demands angrily,

Dost think I am so muddy, so unsettled,
To appoint myself in this vexation; sully
The purity and whiteness of my sheets—
Which to preserve is sleep, which being spotted
Is goads, thorns, nettles, tails of wasps ...
Without ripe moving to't? Would I do this?

(I.ii. 325)

without for one moment questioning the reality of his anguish (there in the uncontrolled association of sheets, spots, goads, thorns, tails—as if sexuality itself were torment and pollution), one can still reply, ‘Yes, you would do this! And that is not so strange as you think. Men do appoint themselves in this vexation, especially when they are already feeling muddy and unsettled. An Othello does not need his Iago. He can find “ripe moving” enough in the contradictory impulsions of his own nature.’

For jealousy is not a single emotion, but the confluence of many emotions. It doesn't even exclude a passionate wish to be rescued from jealousy. And Shakespeare in a masterly way also gives us the poignant wrestlings, the desperate signalings of the jealous man, as he is sucked into the quagmire. When Leontes' frantic behaviour draws the concerned eyes of his wife and his friend—‘How is't with you, best brother?’—it isn't a piece of transparent Macbeth-like lying that he offers in excuse (‘Give me your favour. My dull brain was wrought / With things forgotten’), but a kind of oblique truth:

Looking on the lines

Of my boy's face, methoughts I did recoil
Twenty-three years; and saw myself unbreech'd,
In my green velvet coat; my dagger muzzl'd,
Lest it should bite its master—

(I.ii. 153)

The ‘recoil’ is vivid as a snapshot, right down to the toy dagger and the remembered garment. What we are hearing is the small, childlike voice of Leontes’ embattled sanity. Trying to hold on. Trying to admit, trying to confess and, by confession, to neutralise, naturalise that terrifying recoil upon infantile vulnerability. The dizzying backward slippage across the wide gap of time has terrified him. He is feeling like that little green-coated boy—horribly dependent on a love that may not be forthcoming, reduced to childish stratagems,

600
to crude blackmailing appeals for sympathy—like the one that cries out to us from the beginning of this very speech:

How sometimes nature will betray its folly,  
Its tenderness, and make itself a pastime  
To harder bosoms!

(I.ii. 151)

The catch in the voice (‘its folly, / Its tenderness’) is almost tearful. It affects jocularity, but it is crying at the same time, ‘Save me, rescue me, mother me! Don't turn that adult imperviousness of the hard bosom on my “tenderness”!’

Leontes wants to be found out, and stopped, quite as much as he craftily evades detection:

Are you so fond of your young prince as we  
Do seem to be of ours?

(I.ii. 163)

(‘I only “seem” to be fond, you see: my bosom is as hard as the next man’s. And God knows whose bastard he mightn't be, if the truth were out. But if you're very smart you'll see that I only seem to be talking of this matter, because the other … the other is unspeakable.’)

And there is one last desperate throwing of himself upon Hermione's percipience, in the strangled unavowable torment of,

How thou lov'st us show in our brother's welcome;  
Let what is dear in Sicily be cheap.

And I don't see why we need disbelieve him, when he adds,

Next to thyself and my young rover, he's  
Apparent to my heart.

(I.ii. 173)

That's another grab at normality—if only it will hold. But the chuckling devil of equivocation picks his fingers loose: the Polixenes who is ‘apparent’ is not just the heir apparent to his love, but the one who is manifest, unmasked, exposed at his dirty work of betrayal. Leontes, probably, no longer knows which he meant; but there is no mistaking which angel it is that now has his ear:

I am angling now,  
Though you perceive me not how I give line.

(I.ii. 180)

He has identified himself, fully and finally, with the Tempter who, along with other damned souls, angles in the lake of darkness.

That's as far as I need go, I think.
Leontes' jealousy is not ‘causeless’, any more than it is justified. It is both helplessly involuntary and recklessly chosen. In the ensuing set-to with Camillo it is unmistakable that he only shallowly believes his own suspicion, that it is all a kind of diabolically wilful game. Contradicted, he can manage only petulance:

    It is; you lie, you lie.
    I say thou liest, Camillo, and I hate thee;
    Pronounce thee a gross lout, a mindless slave …

(I.ii. 199)

That is the peevish vehemence of the playground, which confirms its obstinacy by abusive repetition and has no interest in the truth. And yet we have also experienced, in the mesmeric violence of his utterances, the force of the current that has carried him away.

One only finds all this inexplicable, causeless, ‘unmotivated’, if one seeks explanation on too naïve a level. The objection to ‘psychologising’ (as so often) turns out to be simply an objection to crude psychology. To see how unconstrainedly the action accords with the known human heart and mind, is to free ourselves to grasp its huge importance.

An analogy may help. In Conrad's *Chance*, Marlow is reflecting on the tension of a false sexual situation, between Flora de Barral and Captain Anthony. Here, as in Sicilia, two potentially wholesome affections have ‘branched’ so drastically that they seem unable any longer to ‘embrace … as it were from the ends of opposed winds’. Marlow comments,

    Of all the forms offered to us by life it is the one demanding a couple to realize it fully, which is the most imperative. Pairing off is the fate of mankind. And if two beings thrown together, mutually attracted, resist the necessity, fail in understanding and voluntarily stop short of the—the embrace, in the noblest meaning of the word, then they are committing a sin against life, the call of which is simple. Perhaps sacred. And the punishment of it is an invasion of complexity, a tormenting, forcibly tortuous involution of feelings, the deepest form of suffering …

(J. Conrad, *Chance*, Part II, Ch. 6, 1949, pp. 426-7)

Out of this suffering, Marlow believes, ‘something significant may come at last’—as it shinningly does in Conrad's novel, and in Shakespeare's play. The noble embrace may be achieved and the life-affections satisfied. But we will understand the process better if we realise that the tormenting complexity arises from a defiance of simplicity. Is it possible, Shakespeare is asking at the outset of his play, that this primal, commonplace, momentous human imperative will prove stronger in the end than the tortuously involuted feelings produced out of its thwarting? Must there be tragedy?

As for the ‘mode’ of the play … what is one to say? After only one Act, it already has so many! Among them, certainly, we can make out the mythic triumph of wickedness, the paradigm of fairy tale. But this co-exists with, and is empowered by, a psychological naturalism of quite amazing depth and resourcefulness. What ‘mode’ do you call that?

The mode of *The Winter's Tale*, perhaps.
Criticism: Production Reviews: Charles Isherwood (review date 2000)


[In the following review, Isherwood assesses the Public Theatre's version of The Winter's Tale directed by Brian Kulick, arguing that the production is not successful in handling the shift from the tragedy and drama of the first half of the play to the pastoral comedy of the play's second half. Isherwood additionally comments on the shortcomings of Keith David's Leontes and Erica N. Tazel's Perdita.]

All of Shakespeare's plays pose formidable challenges for actors, but perhaps none are tougher than the upheavals and reversals that pepper the Bard's late “romances.” The Winter's Tale, for example, boasts a king whose emotional eruptions seem to arrive and recede by authorial fiat, and a doomed queen who disappears for a good hour, only to resurface posing as a statue in the play's final moments. Most surprisingly, the play's true heroine doesn't appear until the fourth act, and then spends most of her time talking about flowers. Rare, indeed, is the production in which all the emotional convolutions of the play—including a gear shift from high drama to pastoral comedy midway through—are negotiated with complete finesse. The Public Theater's new version in Central Park's Delacorte Theater is not, alas, that rare triumph. Despite a handsome design and largely competent, smooth staging, Brian Kulick's production fails to transmit much of the play's powerful attraction; it's a “lite” version of this rich and strange play, a pleasant midsummer's tale more than a fiery hot and icy cold winter one.

Challenge No. 1 is the task facing the actor playing Leontes, king of Sicilia. In the play's opening minutes, Leontes is possessed by a fit of jealousy that surpasses anything in the Shakespeare canon for sheer irrationality. After imploring his boyhood friend Polixenes (Graham Winton), the king of Bohemia, to remain as his guest in Sicilia, and receiving a gentle rebuff, Leontes prowls among his courtiers as his wife, Hermione (Aunjanue Ellis), sees her admonitions rewarded with success. With little provocation, he goes ballistic, mistaking friendliness for a more dubious intimacy. Kulick's Leontes is Keith David, an actor of authoritative stature and voice whose naturally regal demeanor gives significant force to his every utterance. When he raises an eyebrow upon observing the friendly talk of his wife and friend, it's like a curtain lifting on an abyss. What leaps from that abyss is a monster of sexual jealousy that threatens to destroy the kingdom. After navigating the sudden switch from benevolence to rage, the second challenge facing David is to give sufficient variety and emotional power to the verbal paroxysms of misogyny and irrational hate that follow, which take up much of the play's first three acts. He doesn't quite succeed. His Leontes never reaches the emotional crescendo that gives sufficient horror—or fascination—to his bloodthirsty acts. (These ultimately claim the life of his young son and, it appears, his wife, and lead to the 16-year exile of his baby daughter.) David's diatribes are convincing enough, but one too often hears forcefully declaimed poetry rather than madness itself versified.

Kulick's staging of these scenes is likewise too stately. We should see chaos descending upon the Sicilian court, and while darkness falls on Central Park in nicely timely fashion, Kulick's courtiers continue to array themselves with elegant symmetry, with placid court faces set atop Anita Yavich's tastefully sumptuous, vaguely Edwardian finery. Riccardo Hernandez's attractive set design relies on long, gilt-framed panels of a jumbo reproduction of Botticelli's “Venus and Mars” that are wheeled around in precise formations to suggest various royal localities.

Set against Leontes' irrational cruelty is the beautifully cool wisdom of his wounded wife. The Winter's Tale is about the unnatural madness into which man's excessive passions can lead him, and the regenerative force of woman's more wisely tempered emotions. (Later, Polixenes, too, will suffer a fit of emotional excess that
needs curing.) This contrast is somewhat muddied in Kulick's production, because Ellis' Hermione tries to beat her husband at his own game: Humiliated by his accusations, she happily descends to his level, becoming angry and eventually hysterical. Where is the heartbreaking resignation that's to be found in every line of Hermione's beautifully written speeches? “I am not prone to weeping,” she says at one point, but Ellis' Hermione apparently is. (Shakespeare provided a more hot-tempered but no less wise alternative to Hermione's piteous martyrdom in the person of Paulina, played here with earthy wit and fine spunk by Randy Danson.)

Also obscuring the play's contrast between man's hasty hate and woman's healing patience is the sweet but ineffectual Perdita of Erica N. Tazel. Sixteen years pass between acts three and four of The Winter's Tale, and when the play resumes it's in a pastoral paradise in Bohemia, where Perdita, the daughter of Leontes and Hermione, who has been raised by a shepherd, is being courted by Florizel (an appealing Jesse Pennington), the son of Polixenes, as it happens. Perdita is one of those no doubt maddening-to-play Shakespearean heroines who must exude spiritual wisdom and grace from her first entrance—in this case a decidedly late one. On one level she is simply a symbol: the power of nature and its beauty personified. But she is also an earthy figure who shares her mother's pragmatic wisdom.

Tazel, certainly a lovely girl, doesn't yet possess the technique to quickly and instantly command the stage and to communicate all she must through the verse. Her Perdita gets lost in the shuffle here, and her already dangerously small part is reduced further by some puzzling cuts taken in the text, including the debate with Polixenes on the qualities of art and nature. This is considered by some to be the thematic heart of the play; no less a Shakespearean authority than Harold Bloom calls it one of the most profound passages the Bard ever wrote. It's a somewhat obscure passage to everyday ears, of course, but its excision is unfortunate, to say the least, as is the loss of one of Florizel's loveliest speeches in praise of Perdita's beauty, furthering the diminishment of this pivotal character.

Overall, Kulick's production is most successful at the breezy comic business that fills much of the latter half of the play. Bronson Pinchot is an appealingly sly and vocally strong Autolycus, the petty thief whose shenanigans ultimately aid in the reunion of Perdita and Florizel with their parents. (He treats us, however, to perhaps one funny accent too many.) The performances of Bill Buell and Michael Stuhlbarg as Perdita's adoptive father and brother were warmly appreciated by the Central Park audience, as was the waspish wit of Danson's Paulina and the occasional wisecrack of her husband Antigonus, played by Jonathan Hadary.

But the evening's crowning comic moment was supplied by a presumably inadvertent sight gag. In the play's last scene, Paulina brings Leontes, Perdita and the assembled court to view the “statue” of Hermione she's been tending for 16 years. The gilt-framed Botticelli panels parted to reveal the, er, statuesque (and African-American) Ellis standing on a pedestal in a clinging white chiffon gown, its fabulously flared skirt fluttering in the breeze—in short, the living image of Diana Ross, sans Supremes! As Leontes approached in wonder, marveling at the lifelike nature of this statue, one half hoped Hermione would fling out a hand and launch into a chorus of “Stop! In the Name of Love.” She didn’t, of course, and it may have been the evening's bitterest disappointment.

**Criticism: Production Reviews: Matt Wolf (review date 2001)**


[In the following review, Wolf offers a mixed appraisal of the Royal National Theater's modern dress production of The Winter's Tale directed by Nicholas Hytner. Wolf praises the successful portrayal of the play's second half, but comments that this success does not fully compensate for the slow and uninspiring first half of the play.]
A substantial sea change takes place between the two settings of *The Winter's Tale*—the fraught court of Sicilia and the roisterous sheep-shearing of Bohemia. But in Nicholas Hytner's modern-dress production of Shakespeare's great late romance, that's nothing compared to the contrast between an underpowered and desultory first act, complete with an utterly perfunctory “exit pursued by a bear,” and the wonder induced after the intermission in a play virtually defined by that word. “My heart wept blood,” says the widowed Paulina (Deborah Findlay), and Hytner's initially hit-and-miss production eventually demands that you do the same.

Some 16 years take place between the jealous flare-up of Leontes (Alex Jennings), the Sicilian king seen here in jeans, and the Bohemian frolics that follow, which couple Shakespearean rap with a dope-smoking, tent-dwelling milieu. But as seen on the second night, the production seemed to shed a post-opening stiffness, loosening up as its revelers do. By the final reconciliation back in designer Ashley Martin-Davis' high-walled, monochrome court (giant photos of Hermione and the young Mamillius testifying visually to Leontes' grievous loss), all was restored—which is as it should be in a play about forgiveness, healing and deep despair.

Hytner came a cropper on this same stage some years back directing “The Recruiting Officer,” only to oversee one of the Olivier auditorium's biggest hits with the multiply reprised “Wind in the Willows.” So it's not a surprise that he should be well aware of the workings of a thrust space requiring intimacy alongside a presentational appeal. Not only that, this production is perfectly reasonably being regarded in England as an audition piece of sorts, given Hytner's frontrunner status to take over the National artistic directorship next year. (For an encore, he stages Mark Ravenhill's new play in the Lyttelton later this season.)

Luckily, *The Winter's Tale* ends up satisfying both sides of a tricky equation. We're wide-eyed innocents alongside Leontes confronted with the statue of his wife Hermione (Claire Skinner), presumed dead, just as Jennings’ exhilarating command of the verse caters richly for the ear.

That's why it's slightly disconcerting at the start to feel a hollowness to some of the verse, with Skinner a pale Hermione—at least at the outset—in more ways than one. Come the second act, and Phil Daniels' Autolycus kickstarts the action into far feistier life, his raspy-voiced rogue identifiable kin to the Jigger he played in Hytner's National “Carousel.” While this guitar-playing Autolycus riffs on the Bard, Florizel (a preppy Daniel Roberts) and Perdita (Melanie Clark Pullen) weave their way through proceedings like two incipient potheads eager to “get down”—until a circular tale returns to Sicilia and the lost Perdita, of course, is found.

The closing scene is one of the affective triumphs in Shakespeare, and it is here piercingly served by the Paulina of Findlay (the actress was the heartstopping distaff lead in “Stanley” at this address in 1997), who is no mere scold but a rather grand broker of people's affections. Still, what happens when you have catered to everyone else's happiness except your own? That's the question left lingering by a *Winter's Tale* that shows how some wounds never fully heal even as it gains its footing in time to induce a curative hush.

**Criticism: Themes: Mary Pollingue Nichols (essay date 1981)**


*[In the following essay, Nichols contends that the genres of comedy and tragedy are not equally balanced in *The Winter's Tale*; rather, comedy is victorious, particularly in the play's implication that the tragic condition is not universal.]*
At the end of the *Symposium*, Socrates tries to persuade a tragic poet and a comic poet that the same man can dramatize both tragedies and comedies (223d). Socrates' assertion seems paradoxical because of the great differences between tragedy and comedy as we ordinarily understand them. The choice of one of these dramatic forms seems to imply a view of the human situation—and consequently of the function of the poet—that is at odds with the choice of the other. One can see the different responses to life that characterize the two genres by contrasting the masks associated with each one.

Shakespeare, however, wrote both tragedies and comedies, and even plays that contain elements of both. *The Winter's Tale* is the most obvious combination of tragedy and comedy: it has the appearance of two distinct dramas, a three-act tragedy followed by a two-act comedy. The two parts of the play are separated by a sixteen-year time span and involve two sets of principal characters. What is the difference between tragedy and comedy? How can one man compose both kinds of plays? And, given what Shakespeare has done in *The Winter's Tale*, how can one play contain both a tragedy and a comedy and nevertheless not lose its unity? The answers to these questions and the whole formed by the play come to light through an analysis of the action of its parts: the tragedy, the transition to the comedy, and the comedy.

**THE TRAGEDY**

Archidamus, a lord of Bohemia, opens the play by reminding Camillo, a lord of Sicily, of a “great difference” between Bohemia and Sicily. Although Archidamus does not indicate what he means, he immediately reveals one difference between Bohemia and Sicily: when Leontes, king of Sicily, returns the present visit of his childhood friend and king of Bohemia, Polixenes, “our entertainment shall shame us,” for “we cannot with such magnificence—in so rare—I know not what to say” (I. i. 8-13). Archidamus is embarrassed by his country’s failure to match Sicily’s magnificent courtly entertainment. Sicily appears richer and more splendid in its court life than Bohemia. Archidamus jokes that Bohemia will give “sleepy drinks” to its visitors “that [their] senses (unintelligent of our insufficience) may, though they cannot praise us, as little accuse us” (I. i. 13-15). In Sicily desires are indulged and to some extent satisfied, while in Bohemia they are moderated, or perhaps dulled.

Camillo moves the conversation from the “insufficience” of Bohemia’s entertainments to the incompleteness of the kings’ friendship. Although the kings were “train’d together in their childhoods,” because of “royal necessities” their friendship continued through “interchange of gifts, letters, loving embassies,” rather than through personal contact (I. i. 22-29). Since Bohemia is now visiting his old friend, the affection “rooted betwixt them” in childhood “cannot choose but branch now” (I. i. 23-24). For Camillo, time does not destroy but only arrests. What Camillo presents as necessary, however, he soon prays for: “the heavens continue their loves” (I. i. 31-32).

In Camillo's commonplace appeal to heaven, Shakespeare warns us of trouble: a quarrel between the friends will initiate the play's action and the tragedy of the first part of the play. The “great difference betwixt our Bohemia and your Sicily” can refer to the quarrel between the kings, who are often called by the names of their countries, as well as to the differences between the countries. Shakespeare's pun prepares us to reflect on the relationship between dissimilarity and hostility. The tragedy of the first part of the play involves the impossibility of friendship between dissimilar human beings.

Archidamus turns the conversation, rather abruptly, to the excellence of Leontes's son, Mamillius, “a gentleman of the greatest promise that ever came into my note” (I. i. 35-36). (We see that Archidamus is revealing another difference between Bohemia and Sicily when we find out in the next scene that Polixenes also has a son, with whom Archidamus must also be familiar.) Mamillius, Archidamus says, is “an unspeakable comfort” to Sicily; Camillo agrees that the child “physic[s] the subject, makes old hearts fresh: they that went on crutches ere he was born desire yet their life to see him a man” (I. i. 37-40). The prospect of seeing the maturity of an excellent human being is a fit reason for living, Camillo believes, although one be
otherwise unfortunate. The conversation has moved from the anticipated completion of a friendship to the anticipated maturation of an excellent human being. As the scene ends, we see a disagreement between the lord of Sicily and the lord of Bohemia. Without anything to live for, men would be content to die, Camillo asserts. Archidamus, however, thinks that since men desire to live, they will invent a reason for living if they do not have one: “If the king had no son they would desire to live on crutches till he had one” (I. i. 44-45). Archidamus should know about this, for he comes from the country that boasts neither “magnificence” nor a human being “of the greatest promise.” Sicily seems to have greater goods than the more moderate Bohemia. The insufficiency of moderation might be suggested by the fact that it is Polixenes who apparently initiates the renewal of the old friendship. He is the visitor, and remains in Sicily for the rather long period of nine months.

Political duties now call Polixenes home, but Leontes, ignoring Polixenes's fear “of what may chance / Or breed upon [his] absence” (I. i. 11-12), urges him to stay another week. When Leontes asks his wife Hermione to try to persuade their friend to stay, she reproaches her husband for charging Polixenes “too coldly” (I. ii. 29-30). Her rhetoric proves successful. She first suggests to her husband that he should argue that “All in Bohemia's well.” She acknowledges the validity of public demands upon a ruler's private inclinations, but she denies that demands are now being made. Nor does love for his son move Polixenes to return home, she argues, for he does not give this as a reason for leaving. Hermione next attempts to bargain: if Polixenes stays now, Hermione will allow Leontes a longer visit in Bohemia. Hermione's concession, a move that in a political situation might indicate weakness, is premised on her own rule of Leontes. When Polixenes refuses her compromise, Hermione threatens to employ force: “Will you go yet? / Force me to keep you as a prisoner, / Not like a guest?” (I. ii. 51-53). Because Polixenes prefers to be a guest rather than a prisoner, he yields. If Hermione's rhetoric were simply political, she would have moved from gentleness to harshness, from argument, to compromise, and then to threats of force. But Hermione is obviously being playful, and Polixenes is not her political opponent but her friend. Because a friend desires to be with his friends out of affection for them, Polixenes would desire to be with Hermione and Leontes as long as there were no compelling reasons for departing. When Hermione assumes that she has overcome Polixenes's reasons for departing and proceeds to bargain and to threaten, she is pretending that a friend must be induced to do what he is naturally inclined to do. Hermione's playful threat of force succeeds because it implicitly appeals to Polixenes's friendship: indicating how much Polixenes's presence is desired, Hermione's threat of force says, in effect, stay because I want you to stay. Although Polixenes placed his political duties above his private desires in planning to return home, he is not always immune to the appeals of love or friendship. Underlying Hermione's playful political rhetoric is a rhetoric of love or friendship. Her speech masks what is playful and loving in a form that is serious and political.

Having charged less coldly than her husband, and succeeded where he failed, Hermione turns the conversation to the playful days of childhood that Polixenes and Leontes shared. Something that she notices in Polixenes apparently leads her to think that he is different from her husband: “Was not my lord / The verier wag o' th' two?” But Polixenes does not see any difference. The friends were alike in their childhood innocence as well as in their youth, when their “weak spirits” were “higher rear'd with stronger blood” (I. ii. 71-73). Because of their high spirits, Polixenes avers, they must admit their guilt to heaven. Perhaps to cover up his suggestion that he and his friend have yielded to sexual desires forbidden by God's law, Polixenes claims that the temptations that led them to sin were their wives. But Polixenes has only entangled himself further, for he has implied that sex, lawful or unlawful, is sinful. Hermione vehemently objects to such an implication (I. ii. 67-68). We may suppose that Polixenes is grateful to Leontes for interrupting by inquiring whether Polixenes has been persuaded to stay. Because Leontes has not been listening, he has not learned from Hermione how to appeal successfully to a friend. He does bring into the conversation, however, an example of his own success at persuading, and at the same time puts forward an approval of love and marriage that contrasts sharply with Polixenes's hint that even lawful sex is sinful. Hermione spoke only once to better purpose than she just spoke in winning Polixenes over, Leontes says, namely, when she accepted Leontes's marriage proposal. At that time Leontes had some difficulty in winning her: “Three crabbed months had sour'd themselves to death / Ere
I could make thee open thy white hand / And clap thyself my love” (I. ii. 102-04). He was the lover, she the beloved (see V. iii. 36).

Hermione agrees that she twice spoke to good purpose and offers Polixenes her hand. In an aside Leontes abruptly and violently speaks of Hermione's infidelity. His friend has made him a cuckold. Why else would he yield to his wife's entreaty to stay but not to his own? Perhaps even his son, Mamilius, is not his own. What has moved Leontes to such thoughts? Although his passion seems inexplicable, the insecurity underlying his jealousy might be fostered by his inferiority to Hermione—an inferiority that we glimpse in comparing Hermione's speech to Polixenes with Leontes's cold charge, and that Leontes himself suggests in his description of his courtship.

When Leontes is unable to hide his passion, Hermione asks the cause of his “distraction” (I. ii. 149). He thought he saw himself as a lad when he looked at his son, he says, but he lies: his passion involves his inability to see himself in his son with any certainty. Although Mamilius might bring comfort to subjects because of his great promise, he gives his father “some comfort” because he is said to look like him (I. ii. 208). But it is women who say this, and women will say anything (I. ii. 130-31). Mamilius might bring comfort to others, but he makes his father anxious.

Leontes's excuse for his distraction changes the subject to the king’s love of their sons. Polixenes claims that his son is

all my exercise, my mirth, my matter:
Now my sworn friend, and then mine enemy;
My parasite, my soldier, statesman, all.
He makes a July's day short as December;
And with his varying childishness cures in me
Thoughts that would thick my blood

(I. ii. 166-71).

Polixenes's son's “varying childishness” (or his ability to play even contradictory parts) gives his father a new perception of time and cures “Thoughts that would thick [his] blood”—perhaps thoughts as sad and fearful as death. In moving his viewer from sadness to mirth, the child prefigures the course of The Winter's Tale.

Leontes goes for a walk and meets Camillo. He assumes that his wife's adultery is well known and that he has been made a laughingstock (I. ii. 215-19). He insists that Camillo poison Polixenes. Camillo soon meets Polixenes, who has just encountered Leontes and noticed how upset he is. Perhaps conscious of Leontes's lack of restraint, Camillo had earlier warned him, “with a countenance as clear / as friendship wears at feasts keep with Bohemia / and with your queen” (I. ii. 343-45). Leontes cannot conceal his passion, and Polixenes supposes that Leontes's grief is that of a man who has lost some dearly loved province (I. ii. 370-71).

When Camillo warns Polixenes and they escape to Bohemia, they leave Hermione to feel the full force of Leontes's passion. Not yet suspecting danger, she asks Mamilius to tell her a tale. He chooses a sad tale rather than a merry one, for “a sad tale's best for winter” (II. i. 25). He offers one of “sprites and goblins”—of forces or elements over which man has no control. He evidently tells such tales frequently, for Hermione observes “you're powerful at it” (II. i. 27-28). By chance, a winter's tale, a sad tale, is appropriate now, for Leontes is on his way to imprison Hermione, and thus to initiate a series of events that have tragic consequences.

Enraged by Polixenes's departure, Leontes is certain that Polixenes, Camillo, and Hermione are plotting against his life and crown. Just as Leontes assumed that Polixenes's admiration for Hermione meant that he would try to commit adultery with her, he now assumes that Polixenes will try to replace him entirely. In assuming that Polixenes has no restraint, Leontes assumes that Polixenes is like himself. Leontes's mistaken
assumption about his similarity to Polixenes is the ironic counterpart to Polixenes's belief that he and his friend are alike.

Hermione gives birth to a daughter in prison. Her companion, Lady Paulina, takes the baby to Leontes because he "may soften at the sight of her child" (II. ii. 40). Paulina's boldness or hardness contrasts with the gentleness that Hermione has shown in previous scenes. Although Paulina undertakes the task of informing the king of the birth of his child because "the office / Becomes a woman best" (II. ii. 31-32), she expresses her determination in forceful terms:

I'll use the tongue I have; if wit flow from 't
As boldness from my bosom, let 't not be doubted
I shall do good

(II. ii. 52-54).

Paulina has a deserved reputation for boldness; after he imprisoned Hermione, Leontes commands "that audacious lady" Paulina not to come near him (II. ii. 42-44). Nevertheless Hermione lets Paulina take her baby to Leontes. Perhaps she sees that her own gentleness is insufficient to move Leontes and that she must rely on Paulina's boldness. Hermione's earlier threat of force was, after all, only playful. (See V. iii. 26-27.) But Paulina's boldness only makes matters worse. Leontes becomes more enraged. In the end Paulina leaves the baby with Leontes, who tricks Paulina's husband, Antigonus, into agreeing to abandon the baby on some deserted isle.

In the third act, Hermione is brought to public trial for adultery and treason. Leontes desires that her trial be public so that he may be "clear'd / Of being tyrannous, since we so openly / Proceed in justice" (III. ii. 4-6; cf. II. i. 163-65). Leontes depends greatly on the good opinion of others for his self-esteem. From the moment he suspected adultery, Leontes has shown a fear of being laughed at (I. ii. 188-90; I. ii. 217-18; I. iii. 23-26; II. i. 50-52; II. i. 196-98). Leontes wants neither to be ridiculed nor to be considered a tyrant. Yet his passion now forces him to dismiss all sensible advice, and his "most cruel usage of [his] queen," as Paulina says, "something savours / Of tyranny" (II. iii. 116-19). His desire not to be laughed at has turned him into a tyrant.

Although Hermione shows no concern over being laughed at, she does want to maintain her honor. She desires to do so less for her own sake than for her children's, for she passes her honor onto them. Indeed, this honor is more valuable to her than her life (III. ii. 42-45). When Leontes asks for her death, she claims not to consider it a punishment, for she has been deprived of the goods that made her life worth living: Leontes's favor, Mamillius (from whom she is now barred), her infant daughter, and her public dignity. She wonders "what blessings I have here alive / That I should fear to die?" (III. ii. 107-08). She confirms Camillo's opinion that people desire to live only if they have something good to live for. But while Camillo thought the sight of an excellent human being to be that good, the goods that keep Hermione alive appear to be private or personal.

At the news of Mamillius's death, Hermione swoons and is carried out. The chastened Leontes asks Apollo's pardon, and states his intention to reconcile himself to Hermione. But Paulina enters screaming tyranny announcing Hermione's death. She informs Leontes that his crimes allow no forgiveness (III. ii. 207-14).

Leontes has none of the reasons for living that Hermione earlier designated: a spouse's favor, Mamillius, an infant daughter, or public dignity. As for Leontes's public dignity, Leontes will engrave the cause of his wife's and son's deaths on their gravestones "unto / Our shame perpetual" (III. ii. 236-38). Leontes's model in Shakespeare's source, Pandosto, wants to "offer [his] guilty blood a sacrifice to those sackless souls whose lives are lost by [his] vigorous folly."² Leontes, in contrast, without any reasons for living, indicates no desire to die, although tears and mourning will characterize his future (III. ii. 238-43).
We are now in a position to ask why the action of the first part of the play has ended in sadness. What are the elements of a tragedy? Why did it happen? We begin with two men who are trying to be friends, yet who are different and do not understand that they are different. If each man did not act as if the other were like him, there would have been no quarrel. Polixenes is familiar with Hermione; he is a moderate man, and his moderation permits his familiarity. He is surprised when Leontes supposes that his familiarity implies impropriety. Polixenes acts as if his friend's judgment would be identical to his own. For the immoderate Leontes, familiarity without impropriety would be impossible, and he too supposes that his friend is like himself. If Polixenes were like Leontes, he would not unwittingly make Leontes jealous; if Leontes were like Polixenes, Polixenes' actions would not make him jealous. There would be no tragedy either if Leontes and Polixenes were alike or if they fully understood their differences.

Other factors contribute to the tragedy. By retreating from Sicily, Camillo and Polixenes convince Leontes that his suspicions are justified. Their flight seems weak and unmanly. Leontes did threaten Camillo's death. Paulina, however, argues vehemently with Leontes, and nevertheless does not suffer the cruel punishments that he threatens (II. iii. 94-95; 113; 132-40). In contrast to her, Camillo appears too cautious. His lack of boldness contributes to the outcome. On the other hand, part of the tragedy is the “loss” of the new princess, and for this Paulina's boldness is responsible. Paulina claimed that showing the princess to Leontes would be a bold move to soften his anger, but when Paulina leaves her with Leontes in a rage, she divorces boldness from a reasonable calculation of success. Tragedy occurs because Camillo's cautious acts and Paulina's bold ones strengthen Leontes's passion. Just as Camillo should not have left Hermione in the hands of Leontes, so Paulina should not have left the princess in his hands.

Tragedy occurs also because Mamillius languishes and dies, and Hermione collapses when she hears the news. Their desire to live is not so strong that it endures even when they are deprived of the good things for which they live. Too much nobility leads to tragedy (III. iii. 12-17). It is not surprising that Leontes cannot see himself in his son. Mamillius's weak will is no doubt related to his propensity to tell frightening winter tales of sprites and goblins. A world inhabited by such beings is irrational and hostile to man—a world man cannot make his home. If men are necessarily separated by their differences, if friendship is impossible, if human actions necessarily have undesirable and even tragic consequences because of their one-sidedness, then the world does appear irrational and hostile to man—a condition metaphorically expressed by a belief in fearful sprites and goblins.

Tragedy occurs not least because of Leontes's passion. His violent jealousy reveals his desire to be loved by his wife and by his friend. Underlying a desire to be loved is a desire to be lovable, but Leontes can demand their love with justice only if he is worthy of it. His anger at the supposed injustice done him indicates that he believes he is in fact worthy of their love. At the core of his passion, which is most obviously the cause of this tragedy, is a suppression of the disjunction between wish and reality. Leontes's actions deny that he is less than perfect and result in great disorder.

A tragedy occurs when human beings with certain imperfections interact with one another. Their imperfections do not always indicate their vices, but often seem concomitant with their virtues. Men's differences, manifested in their virtues, lead them to misunderstanding and hostility. (Polixenes's moderation and Leontes's inordinate desire for good things are examples, as well as Hermione's gentleness, Paulina's boldness, and Camillo's caution.) Since the good things that men do harm them, and the good things about them are mixed with imperfections, there seems to be something in the order of things, whether natural or divine, that is hostile to man. Two attitudes toward this situation, a soft one and a hard one, are presented as leading to tragedy. One may be so resigned to the frustrating character of life that one loses one's will to live, as does Mamillius. The frightening sprites of his tales, inexplicable and threatening, appear to control the actions of those most dear to him. On the other hand, one might rebel against the sprites, and act as if nothing mysterious will have any effect on one's life. Specifically, Leontes acts as if he can understand his wife, who is superior to him, and his friend, who is different from him. He assumes he can righteously dispense justice
upon the guilty. He acts as if the world permitted complete understanding and control. In the last part of the play, comedy appears possible not simply because there is a mean between resignation and rebellion, but also because some men may not be subject to a condition that demands resignation or rebellion.

THE TRANSITION TO THE COMEDY

The last scene of the third act and the first scene of the fourth act provide a transition to the play's comedy. The former involves Antigonus's abandonment of the princess and his death; the second is a soliloquy by the deathless chorus Time, who informs us of the passage of sixteen years and its interim events. The two scenes, taken together, provide reflection on man and the natural order and thereby help us to understand how comedy can supersede tragedy in _The Winter's Tale_.

Antigonus is at sea, looking for a place to abandon Hermione's daughter. A storm threatens. While the mariner believes that the storm reveals that the heavens oppose the loss of Perdita, Antigonus views the storm as heaven's means to her destruction. Natural phenomena are presented as opaque guides to heaven's will.

Antigonus abandons Perdita in Bohemia. A shepherd, who is trying to find his lost sheep before they are devoured by a wolf, finds the baby and takes it up “for pity” (III. iii. 76). He believes that the gold he finds with the baby is fairy gold, for “it was told me I should be rich by fairies” (III. iii. 116). We are moving from a world in which sprites and goblins frighten men to one in which fairies are thought to bring joy. The shepherd also supposes that the baby is “some changeling”—a child left by fairies in exchange for some mortal one. At the same time that there arises the possibility of a world inhabited by fairies who bring joy, there also arises the possibility of a human being who somehow transcends ordinary human limits.

A clown, the shepherd's son, reports that Antigonus's ship is destroyed at sea and that Antigonus himself is being torn and eaten by a bear. When Antigonus saw the clown, he called for help, but the clown did not interfere. The clown is unlike his father, who wishes that he would have “been by to have help'd the old man!” (III. iii. 106-07). Antigonus's misfortune reminds us of his earlier wish for the child he is forced to abandon:

Some powerful spirit instruct the kites and ravens
To be thy nurses! Wolves and bears they say,
Casting their savageness aside, have done
Like offices of pity

(II. iii. 185-88).

But a bear, from whom Antigonus expected pity, mauls him to death. He dies not because of nature's malice, but because of its indifference, for, as the clown notes, bears “are never curst but when they are hungry” (III. iii. 128-29). Antigonus dies also because of human vice, the clown's cowardice.³ The office of pity is performed by the shepherd, who takes Perdita “for pity.” Nature's indifference, human baseness, and human goodness operate in Antigonus's destruction and the baby's salvation.

At the beginning of Act IV, the chorus Time reveals the existence of an amoral order that overlooks human events: Time is both joy and terror for the good and the bad, a force that both makes and unfolds error (IV. i. 1-2). Not only is Time indifferent to the virtue and the vice of those whom it affects, Time inclines equally to making error and bringing it to light. Time also claims an absolute power over man: “it is in my power / To o'erthrow law, and in one self-born hour / To plant and o'erwhelm custom” (IV. i. 7-10). Time is a force that lords over and limits the structures resulting from human striving. Time nevertheless observes that the audience would pass its time well by watching the play, and wishes that its time never be worse spent than in this manner. By concluding with an expression of goodwill for all its audience, Time surprises us, inasmuch as Time began by proclaiming an indifference to man.
The beginning of the fourth act repeats the end of the first part of the play—the indifference of Time to man is reflected in the indifference of nature (the storm and the bear) to the mariners, Antigonus, and Perdita. The pity that moves the shepherd is a reflection of Time's benevolence. The new beginning of the play generalizes the end of the tragedy in that it provides a cosmic restatement of what has happened on a human level. The question of the relationship between the two halves of the play, at which juncture the chorus Time appears, turns on the possibility of goodwill or benevolence in a world where destruction and salvation occur at random.

THE COMEDY

The chorus Time, having chronicled the passage of sixteen years, sets the scene in Bohemia. Time tells us of Leontes's grief, of Polixenes's son Florizel, and of Perdita “now grown in grace / Equal with wond'ring” (IV. i. 24). We look forward to the possibility that Perdita will fulfill the promise that Mamillius was thought to bear. If Time's effect has not been to heal all wounds, the passage of Time nevertheless allows for the birth of new possibilities. (See III. i. 105-07.) Shakespeare violates the traditional dramatic unities in order to present a fuller vision of human life.

The play has begun again in another sense as well, for again someone is expressing a desire to leave someone who persuades him to stay. This time Polixenes persuades Camillo to stay in Bohemia, although Camillo desires to return to Sicily to die at home and to comfort the penitent Leontes (IV. ii. 5-9). As Polixenes earlier wanted to leave Sicily for political reasons, he now wants Camillo to stay for political reasons: “Thou, having made me businesses, which none without thee can sufficiently manage, must either stay to execute them thyself, or take away with thee the very service thou hast done” (IV. ii. 13-17). Because we have just been reminded of time, we can see more clearly what Polixenes does not reckon on. He should not so completely depend on what is mortal: Camillo wants to go home because he foresees his death. But for Polixenes it is “death” to permit him to return to Sicily (IV. ii. 2). His attempt to hold off change is reminiscent of his description of his own childhood, when he thought “there was no more behind, / But such a day to-morrow as to-day, / And to be a boy eternal” (I. ii. 63-65).

Polixenes abruptly changes the subject to his own son, Florizel, who is spending time at the cottage of a shepherd girl “Of most rare note” (IV. ii. 43). Polixenes and Camillo agree to go disguised to the shepherd's cottage to find out what is going on.

Meanwhile on a country road we meet the rogue Autolycus, very ragged, but singing a happy song. He gives a brief account of himself, and therefore stands out not simply as the only singer in the play but as one of its most reflective characters. Autolycus used to wear fine clothes and serve Florizel, but he has been dismissed. According to his song, he does not mourn over his misfortunes, for he has means to live still (IV. iii. 1-22). While he claims to have joy because he has life, it also appears that he has life because he has joy. His second song praises the virtues of being merry: mirth is more useful than sorrow, because the merry can accomplish their goals more quickly (IV. iii. 119-22). Autolycus can obtain what is necessary for life, as a despondent man might be unable to do. We see the truth of this statement confirmed when we witness a playful rendition of its converse: sorrow is not conducive to life. When Autolycus sees the clown approaching, he grovels on the ground, and pretends to be a gentleman who has been beaten, and robbed of his money and clothes by Autolycus, who dressed him in his present rags. Implying that his condition is so miserable as to warrant death, he groans to the oncoming clown, “pluck but off these rags; and then, death, death” (IV. iii. 52-53). In this condition Autolycus cries the classic tragic lament, “O that ever I was born!” (IV. iii. 56). He reminds us of a tragic teaching that life is miserable, that the best thing is not to have come into existence, and the next best is, having come into existence, to leave it as quickly as possible. In his feigned despair, Autolycus acts out playfully the truth conveyed by Mamillius's death. Now, however, tragedy appears as something to be mocked and to be used as an instrument to cloak one's purposes.
Autolycus's pretense brings the clown close enough to have his pocket picked. Autolycus then looks forward to the sheep-shearing festival of which the clown spoke, where like a wolf he himself will shear the unsuspecting sheep (IV. iii. 115-18). Autolycus's name literally means “the wolf itself.” His pretense before the clown, however, is in one sense not a pretense at all. If one assumes that Autolycus is responsible for having been thrown out of court, it is indeed Autolycus who has beaten, robbed, and dressed Autolycus in rags. The facts of Autolycus's story are true, but his reaction to those facts is a pretense. Only to the better man Autolycus pretends to be is death an appropriate response to disgrace or misfortune. Autolycus does not justify his life by finding reasons for living any more than does Leontes, whose name also is the name of a beast. The similarity between the two men, however, goes only so far. Autolycus's indifference to his petty vice finds no counterpart in Leontes's grief for the great harm he has caused. While Leontes does not consider suicide, he does not, like Autolycus, parody the possibility. The lion is the king of beasts; the wolf is the antithesis of the good shepherd.

When we reflect on Autolycus's relation to tragedy, we can see how the same man might write both comedies and tragedies. A comedy in which Autolycus starred would be a lowly imitation of a tragedy: a character less noble than one finds in tragedy acts in a way that would bring a nobler character to grief. Autolycus has lost the favor of the one he served, disgraced himself at court, and disrupted his life; he has suffered a pallid version of what Leontes has suffered. But he is joyous, and even ridicules the possibility of being distraught in such circumstances: he playfully pretends to be someone who wants to die in the face of the world's evil. His joke doubly serves life: the humor and the mirth of the joke support life, if we may view his joke in the way in which he views his merry song; and his joke brings him the sustenance of life out of the clown's picked pockets. Autolycus thus lacks the nobility of a tragic figure. Without the nobility, there is no pain; when we see comedies we can forget or blind ourselves to the suffering about which tragedy reminds us, and laugh at what with nobility and without forgetting would cause tears. A comedy of Autolycus's exploits could be written by a tragedian who abstracts from nobility. Such a comedy serves life, just as Autolycus's joy serves life. But since this kind of comedy blinds and therefore deceives us, it is a joke on us, just as Autolycus's joke is on the clown. Perhaps being deceived or blinded is a small price to pay, if our knowing necessarily brings sorrow and defeat.

Before the guests arrive at the sheep-shearing festival, we meet Florizel and Perdita. Florizel sees the festival as “a meeting of the petty gods, / And you [Perdita] the queen on 't” (IV. iv. 3-5). Perdita, in contrast, is ill at ease with her goddess' costume as well as with the prince's country garb. Florizel tries to console her with the thought that he merely imitates the gods, who “Humbling their deities to love, have taken / The shapes of beasts upon them” (IV. iv. 26-27). He then claims superiority to the gods, since “my desires / Run not before mine honour, nor my lusts / Burn hotter than my faith” (IV. iv. 33-35).

When Perdita claims that Florizel will not be able to resist his father's opposition to their marriage, Florizel protests:

Or I'll be thine, my fair,
Or not my father's. For I cannot be
Mine own, nor anything to any, if
I be not thine. To this I am most constant
Though destiny say no

(IV. iv. 42-46).

Florizel resists not merely the authority of his father and king, but also that of destiny itself. Whatever Florizel means by destiny, he does not mean something powerful enough to determine his life in a way contrary to his desires. Perdita responds to Florizel's view of destiny with a prayer: “O lady Fortune, / Stand you auspicious!” (IV. iv. 51-52). Florizel appears not to realize that fortune may turn out badly for him, that chance may not be a force that, without any activity on his part, will conform events to his benefit or desires. Perhaps the chance...
that brought him to Perdita supports his confidence: “I bless the time,” he says, “When my good falcon made her flight across / Thy father's ground” (IV. iv. 14-16). Perdita immediately cautions, “Now Jove afford you cause!” Florizel's faith in chance is evinced by his lack of any plan to counter his father's certain opposition to his marriage to Perdita (IV. iv. 412-14). The difference we see between Florizel and Perdita may be a reflection of a difference between life in court and life in the country.9 “Florizel's greatness,” Perdita says, “hath not been us'd to fear” (IV. iv. 17-18). Because Florizel is the son of a king, she means, necessity has imposed upon him no need to limit his desires. He is accustomed to getting whatever he wants.

Florizel stands in contrast to Mamillius. While Mamillius told sad tales that provoked fear, Florizel attempts to remove fear. When Perdita fears the future, he counsels her “let's be red with mirth” (IV. iv. 54), “be merry” (IV. iv. 46), “darken not / The mirth o' th' feast” (IV. iv. 41-42; see also IV. iv. 24-25). The word “mirth” appeared in the tragic part of the play only in Polixenes's description of his son (I. ii. 165-71). Florizel is merry and urges others to be so because he senses no restrictions on his ability to fulfill his desires. It is not surprising that he sees no cause for sadness. The sad tales of Mamillius portrayed a world in which frightening goblins affected men's actions.

Perdita, in her awareness of human limitation, resembles her brother. Consistent with this awareness, she is not inclined to rule. When the guests arrive at the festival, Perdita's stepfather chides her for not presiding over the feast (IV. iv. 62-70; see also IV. iv. 71-72). Although Perdita begins to play the feast's mistress when rebuked by her stepfather, her silence soon allows others to make the decisions concerning the entertainment (IV. iv. 153-54; 214; 310-14; 341-42).

Perdita's primary act as mistress of the feast is distributing flowers to her guests. When the disguised Polixenes and Camillo receive flowers that last throughout the winter, Polixenes observes that Perdita appropriately “Fit[s] our ages / With flowers of winter” (IV. iv. 78-79). True to character, Perdita derives from his remark a standard by which she tries to distribute flowers to all her guests—each guest should receive flowers appropriate to his age. Her dispensation of flowers will remind the recipient of his relationship to time, that is, of his mortality.

Perdita's distribution of the fitting soon encounters an obstacle. Polixenes and Camillo deserve not the flowers of winter but the flowers of autumn, she asserts, but the fairest flowers of autumn are “nature's bastards,” which she refuses to cultivate because they are grown by crossbreeding, which she thinks repugnant to nature (IV. iv. 87-88). Because Perdita will distribute only what nature produces, she is doubly limited by nature: autumn flowers, appropriate for Polixenes and Camillo, do not bloom in midsummer, when sheep-shearing occurs; even if it were autumn Perdita could not give them the fairest flowers because she will not crossbreed.

It is fitting that a ruler responds to Perdita's intimation that the role of art in human affairs is illegitimate. If art is illegitimate, the laws by which rulers govern and the art of statesmanship are also illegitimate. If art is an art that improves nature's products, Polixenes says,
can improve men. Unlike his counterpart in Pandosto, Polixenes does not attempt to arrange a marriage for his son with a suitable princess. He seems unaware that the statesman must manage the passions. Perhaps like Florizel he trusts to chance to make things work out well.

Although Perdita now says she agrees with Polixenes's theory of art and nature, she still refuses to crossbreed, arguing that the improvement is only cosmetic. She will cultivate nature's bastards, she says, “No more than, were I painted, I would wish / This youth to say 'twere well, and only therefore / Desire to breed by me” (IV. iv. 101-03). But even if one disapproves of cosmetics, it does not follow that all art is similarly worthy of disparagement. For example, Perdita does not show how her censure of cosmetics applies also to gymnastics. Appropriately, since Perdita's disapproval of art allows no place for education, her excellence does not proceed from education (IV. iv. 582-84). Later a servant announces that she could rule everyone, for everyone would love and follow her (V. i. 105-12). Her excellence is the product solely of nature, and she could rule everyone, it is said, without art. That we cannot accept the servant's assertion is shown by Polixenes's resistance to her marriage to his son. He rejects for his son the naturally beautiful in favor of the conventionally sound. Similarly, sixteen years earlier, he did not try to make the beautiful Hermione his own in defiance of all convention.

Perdita's failure to rule Polixenes simply by beauty is matched by Polixenes' failure to persuade Perdita to cultivate by art the most beautiful flowers. His rhetoric is defective: Perdita will not cultivate nature's bastards, just as Camillo will not, at Polixenes's request, stay in Bohemia. And Florizel and Perdita later respond to Polixenes's command that they never see each other again with silence (IV. iv. 426-42). They will immediately disobey it. We wonder whether Polixenes thinks that speech alone is sufficient to rule, whether Hermione's playful threat of force pointed to his own weakness.

Continuing her distribution, Perdita gives to some guests flowers of summer, because they are men of middle age (IV. iv. 103-08). She earlier told Polixenes that he and Camillo should have autumn flowers, not winter ones as he had suggested, in order to match their age. At that point the reason for her correction was ambiguous: either Polixenes and Camillo are not old, or winter flowers are not appropriate to the old. Because midsummer flowers belong to men of middle age, Perdita must have given autumn flowers to Polixenes and Camillo not because they are of middle age but because autumn flowers are appropriate to the old. Her distribution thus reserves a place for the dead: winter flowers must be appropriate for the dead. Polixenes's belief that the last flowers of the year belong to the old neglects the dead. The man who argues that art should improve nature and therewith defends the possibility of human achievement, perhaps defends the possibility so strongly because he forgets to give a place to death. He ignores whatever might limit his powers. In spite of the difference between Polixenes and Florizel, Florizel is the true son of his father. Perdita's correction of the flowers due to the old silently calls to mind what the statesman omits from his reckoning.

When Perdita comes to Florizel and the other youths, she wishes that she had “some flowers o’ th' spring, that might / Become your time of day” (IV. iv. 113-14). To all except the middle-aged, to the group no member of which is named, Perdita lacks the appropriate flowers to give. Because it is midsummer, she has only midsummer flowers; her criterion for distribution is absurd. Only the least important are given their due.

Shortly after Perdita's distribution of flowers, a servant announces a singing peddler, who turns out to be the disguised Autolycus. The servant claims that the peddler's singing resembles the pied piper's piping (IV. iv. 183-88). If all men's ears do grow to Autolycus's tunes, as the servant says, he would rule all men by means of his singing. (We are reminded of another servant who declares Perdita to be so beautiful that all men would follow her.) But Autolycus's powers fall short of his promise. The clown suggests that Autolycus continue his singing for the clown and the shepherdesses, for “My / father and the gentlemen are in sad talk, and we'll / not trouble them” (IV. iv. 310-13). Others, therefore, are unaffected by the “merry ballad” Autolycus sings (IV. iv. 287); preoccupied with discovering his son's intentions concerning Perdita, Polixenes does not listen to Autolycus. Neither Perdita's beauty nor Autolycus's music can relieve him from concern over Florizel's
intentions.

Autolycus “hath songs for man or woman, of all sizes,” the servant says, and “no milliner can so fit his customers with gloves” (IV. iv. 193-94). According to this description Autolycus can give to each what is fitting—the very thing Perdita attempted to do. It is obvious at once that Autolycus's distribution does not suffer the limitation to which Perdita's is subject. Since he dispenses man-made ballads, he need not wait the bounty of nature. The servant gives us no hint whether Autolycus fits ballads to his hearers' souls, as Perdita tries to fit flowers to her guests' age, or to a specific condition of their bodies.

While Perdita distributes out of hospitality or goodwill for her guests, Autolycus distributes in his own interest. Not only does he demand payment for his ballads, but he sells such things as laces, ribbons, and clothing. Autolycus deifies man-made articles by means of his singing, the servant informs the gathering, so that his listeners desire to have them; his singing renders what he sings about lovable (IV. iv. 209-13). Because Autolycus uses his ballads to sell his articles, he might be said to give his listeners a desire for what is not necessary or appropriate to them. In this regard, however, Autolycus is not omnipotent: just as his merry songs cannot distract Polixenes from his sad talk, his songs fail to make his merchandise attractive to Florizel and Perdita (IV. iv. 357-61).

Only the clown and the two shepherdesses want to purchase Autolycus's ballads. Before they request ballads, an interchange among the three of them reveals their relationships. The clown has made love with one of the women and has promised to do the same with the other. Both women are aware of the situation and neither is jealous of the other, nor does either seem to have ill will for the clown. They joke about their situation (IV. iv. 233-50).

The clown and the two women ask for ballads, buying the third, after rejecting the first two Autolycus offers. The clown evidently seeks a ballad that combines joy and sorrow, for he loves “a ballad even too well—if it be doleful matter merrily set down, or a very pleasant thing indeed and sung lamentably” (IV. iv. 189-92).

The first two ballads offered involve outlandish predicaments that fit the crime. In the first, a usurer's wife gives birth to money bags (IV. iv. 263-66). True to character, Autolycus here rebukes an excessive love of gain; Autolycus is only a “petty cheat,” because of the punishments attached to the greater crime of highway robbery (IV. iii. 27-30). His moderation is in the service of his self-preservation. He sees only that one is punished for immoderation, and not that excessive desire may bring a reward: if the usurer's wife loves money excessively she might prefer to give birth to money bags more than to children. Later Autolycus acknowledges that he is insufficiently a rogue, for he does not thrive as much as he might if others were ignorant of his knavery (V. ii. 113-23). While all Autolycus's disguises succeed, Autolycus fails to disguise the fact that the undisguised Autolycus is a rogue (IV. ii. 13-14; 98; 103). By showing that Autolycus fails to thrive because he is not more a rogue than he is, Shakespeare playfully indicates that he disagrees with Autolycus's immoderate condemnation of immoderation.

The villain of Autolycus's second ballad is a woman “turned into a cold fish” because she “would not exchange flesh with one that loved her” (IV. iv. 176-82). Autolycus understands the resistance to bodily impulses, a kind of attempt to conquer nature, as ridiculous rather than tragic. Far from having any dignity, the woman is only “a cold fish.” Again, Autolycus reveals himself in his ballad. He also reveals his listeners: they are moderate lovers of gain and do not hesitate to “exchange flesh”; they follow the teachings of the ballads Autolycus wants to sing for them. The clown expresses his love for the shepherdesses by paying them with trinkets that peddlers sell, and the shepherdesses are satisfied with such favors. They are all selfish, but they do not desire very much for themselves. Shakespeare emphasizes the low aspect of the relationship among these characters by later contrasting a love that delights in giving and receiving trifles with the love of Florizel and Perdita (IV. iv. 357-61).
Perhaps because the clown does not see that these two ballads about the punishment of vice actually teach the virtue of his own vices, he rejects them in favor of a third, "Two maids wooing a man" (IV. iv. 290). Mopsa and Dorcas join Autolycus in singing, for the ballad has three parts—two maids each speak to a man who has promised his love to each of them. Singing the third ballad evidently with reference to the clown and the shepherdesses, Autolycus shows them their own situation as merry rather than as reprehensible or dangerous. A triangle without jealousy and with mirth, provides a contrast to what is dramatized in the first part of The Winter's Tale: a triangle with jealousy and without mirth. The first two ballads together help us to understand why a triangle may be without jealousy and hence without tragedy. The characters of this triangle neither want enough nor sacrifice enough to involve themselves in tragic situations.

Autolycus and the characters about whom and to whom he sings are not noble enough for tragedy. Shakespeare contrasts the love of the clown and the shepherdesses not only with the tragic triangle of the first part of the play, but also with the love of Florizel and Perdita, who are the main characters of The Winter's Tale's comedy. He thus indicates that low comedy is not the only alternative to tragedy. Aristotle said that tragedy involves better men, while comedy involves baser or lower men who are ugly without giving pain. Autolycus, the clown, and the shepherdesses fit Aristotle's description of comic characters, but Florizel and Perdita do not. In fact, they impress us as being no less noble than the characters of the tragedy of the first part of the play. Shakespeare's comedy would fit Aristotle's definition if it involved only men like Autolycus.

After Autolycus exits, the guests are treated to a dance by countrymen dressed up like satyrs. During the dance, Polixenes and the shepherd whisper about Florizel and Perdita. As a consequence of the conversation, Polixenes decides that the affair is "too far gone" and "tis time to part them" (IV. iv. 345). Since the shepherd has already informed Polixenes of Florizel's declarations of love for Perdita (IV. iv. 170-78), he now evidently tells him of Florizel's intention to marry her. Not until his son confirms the shepherd's report does Polixenes's anger burst forth. Florizel's intention reveals that he places love above every political concern. Unlike Leontes, Polixenes can conceive of a man loving a woman without attempting to possess her.

Not only does Florizel choose a wife without considering what is politically advantageous, but he also tells his disguised father that no goods are for him worth possessing unless it be for the sake of placing them in the service of Perdita (IV. iv. 372-79). When Florizel thus shows himself to be so different from his father, Polixenes reveals his identity and threatens the lovers. Like Leontes, he has difficulty in seeing himself in his son.

Polixenes's anger and his threats of harsh punishments are reminiscent of Leontes's anger and threats in the first part of the play. Here the potential for tragedy arises, since Florizel and Perdita might be separated, or Polixenes might carry out his threats if the lovers remain adamant. As the earlier conflict turned on the difference between Leontes and Polixenes, the present conflict turns on the difference between Polixenes and Florizel. Despite Polixenes's anger, however, it is Florizel who parallels Leontes. Both Leontes and Florizel are passionate and determined lovers who reject anything that runs counter to their passions. Moreover, as the jealous Leontes will not listen to reason, Florizel refuses to listen to the reason of Camillo and will be advised only by his "fancy." If his reason does not obey his fancy, he welcomes madness (IV. iv. 479-80). The problem of the last part of the play is why the events we witness do not result in tragedy.

When Florizel determines to avoid his father's commands by running away with Perdita, Camillo recommends that the couple go to Sicily. He plans to inform Polixenes of their destination and then go with him in pursuit, thus fulfilling his desire to return home. How this will help Florizel and Perdita is not clear. Camillo decides that Florizel should disguise himself in order to reach the ship safely. Autolycus enters, musing on the success of the sheep-shearing and on the gullibility of men. “Admiring the nothing” of his song, men have come close enough to have their pockets picked. To Autolycus's delight, Camillo proposes to exchange Florizel's courtly dress for Autolycus's rags. Autolycus, formerly in Florizel's service, now serves him again. And Autolycus, thrown out of court by Florizel, is now dressed in courtly garments by him. This servant and master appear to
be in need of each other. Florizel has recently declared his intention to risk all for love (IV. iv. 539-42). But Florizel also risks the lives of Perdita, the shepherd, and the clown, along with his own (V. i. 151-52). Autolycus, on the other hand, although a lover of gain, does not seek gain if he must risk his own life (IV. iii. 26-30; see also IV. iii. 102-03). When he runs into Camillo and Florizel, he shakes in fear lest they have overheard his boasting of roguery (IV. iv. 628-30). We first encounter Autolycus after a quarrel with Florizel. Later, in the last act, once the recognitions and reunions occur, Autolycus persuades the shepherd and the clown to give a good report of him to Florizel (V. ii. 156-57). Perhaps Autolycus and Florizel will be reconciled.

In the last act, Leontes's counsellors try to persuade him to forget his past sins for which he has paid the penance of sixteen years of sorrow. He should remarry, they believe, so that his kingdom will have an heir (V. i. 27-29). Paulina opposes his remarriage by reminding him that he killed the flawless Hermione (V. i. 12-16; 34-35). Leontes is definitely a changed man, for he is now easily ruled by Paulina. However, he is ruled by Paulina only because she exploits the passion and grief that control him. In speaking to him of the good of his kingdom, his counsellors are reasonable.

Soon after Florizel and Perdita arrive at the Sicilian court, a lord announces Polixenes's approach. Florizel appeals to Leontes to try to persuade Polixenes to allow his marriage to Perdita. He appeals to Leontes's youth, when “you ow'd no more to time / Than I do now” (V. i. 218-19). In contrast to Polixenes, whose admiration of beauty (e.g., IV. iv. 156-59) does not sway him from convention's restraints, Florizel and Leontes ignore conventions of social station when attracted by beauty. Not only does Leontes think that Perdita's lowly station is no impediment to her marriage to a prince, but he even desires to have her for himself. Paulina must rebuke him, and remind him of Hermione (V. i. 223-26).

Meanwhile Perdita's stepfather, who has come along on Florizel's ship, has been apprehended by Polixenes. The scene is set for recognitions and reunions, for the shepherd will reveal how he found Perdita. Father and daughter are united, and Florizel may now wed Perdita without opposition. The joyous assembly goes to Paulina's house to see a statue of Hermione that so apes nature that one expects it to speak. Had the sculptor “himself eternity and could put breath into his work,” he “would beguile nature of her custom” (V. ii. 93-101). All are filled with wonder at the sight of the statue. Leontes believes that he sees Hermione herself; he knows that to think the statue lives is madness, but he prefers “the pleasure of the madness” to the “settled senses of the world” (V. iii. 71-73). (Here again we see a resemblance between the old king of Sicily and its future king, Perdita's husband. See IV. iv. 483-85.) Paulina soon claims that she can make the statue move. Leontes would have her do so, apparently unconcerned whether she is assisted by “wicked powers” or about some “lawful business” (V. iii. 89-98). When the statue moves, Leontes asserts “If this be magic, let it be an art lawful as eating” (V. iii. 110-11). What he declares lawful is coincident with the means to the fulfillment of his desires. Just as he earlier declared lawful the means by which Hermione would die, he now declares lawful the means by which she will live.

It is soon clear that there has been no statue and Hermione is alive. Collecting clues the poet has laid, we suppose that some sleep-inducing drug gave her the appearance of death and that she has lived these sixteen years at Paulina's house (V. iii. 18-20; V. ii. 104-07). She has preserved herself, she says, to see Perdita, for the oracle gave hope that Perdita would be found. We are reminded of the beginning: subjects on crutches would desire to live to see Mamillius mature, so excellent a man he promised to be. Hermione, however, has had no way of knowing Perdita's excellence; she preserved herself to see her because she is “mine own” (V. iii. 123).

Paulina encourages everyone to rejoice, while she, “an old turtle, / Will wing me to some wither'd bough and there / My mate, that's never to be found again, / Lament till I am lost” (V. iii. 132-35). The play would end with this reminder of death if Leontes had not at this point proposed that Paulina marry Camillo. Since these two characters have been implicitly contrasted throughout the play, their marriage appears to be a marriage of
opposites that will have a good effect on each. Leontes's proposal appears not as something planned beforehand, but as a reaction to Paulina's plan to lament the death of her husband until her own death. Leontes appears exasperated when Paulina introduces a sad note into the general rejoicing, and he acts immediately to stamp it out (V. iii. 135). (His reaction resembles Florizel's reaction to Perdita's warning that events may not turn out well for them.) While Leontes can replace the prospect of death with the prospect of marriage so that the play ends on one note rather than the other, marriage cannot forestall death, at least not for long. While joy may promote life, there are limits. Leontes can rejuvenate his subjects little more than he can resurrect the dead Mamillius.\textsuperscript{16}

The end of the play, by means of its references to the statue of Hermione, raises the question of the power of art (V. ii. 94-101; V. iii. 15-20; 65-68; 110). If man can make perfect reproductions of men, and then cause them to live, he might nullify the power of death. Here art is not imitating nature (V. iii. 19-20; 68), but human beings are deceiving others by suggesting that art can do so.

Shakespeare, however, does what the imaginary sculptor and Paulina are supposed to be able to do, for he creates lifelike figures and makes them move and speak. Because Shakespeare's art is not a pretense, like Paulina's, his imitation is not a mockery of men. But what kind of nature is Shakespeare imitating? The nature embodied in Mamillius's winter tale is hostile or at least indifferent to man—a world of frightening sprites and goblins. The nature that tragic man faces is characterized by disunity: the good things cannot be conjoined because they are contradictory. Tragedy occurred when characters interacted who had some virtue, but who seemed necessarily to lack an opposite virtue. As long as one human excellence contradicts others, the good for which men strive does not exist. Men might resign themselves to this fact, rebel against it, or make themselves callous to it by forgetting it. As we have seen, the first two reactions lead to tragedy, the last to the low comedy of Autolycus. But Shakespeare's play ends not with the disunity that prevails in the first part of the play, but with the unions and the reunions of the characters. The differences among the characters do not appear to be in conflict at the end. Unity appears as natural as disunity. Man can respond to nature not with resignation, rebellion, or forgetting, but with joy. Moreover, the unions and the reunions that the poet shows on stage may be a reflection of a unity of the various human goodnesses in his own soul.\textsuperscript{17}

At the beginning of the play, Camillo maintained that seeing the completion of an excellent human being made life worth living. Just as Shakespeare finishes the winter's tale that Mamillius left unfinished, he may also point to the fulfillment of the prophecy Camillo made about Mamillius. Mamillius's understanding of the meaning of a winter's tale is as one-sided as Mamillius himself. He understands a winter's tale to be a sad one, one appropriate to a winter's day. But a winter's day does not necessarily connote the gloom of winter. A winter's day is a short one, or one when time flies because it is well spent (I. ii. 169). The chorus Time provided the transition between the tragedy and the comedy. The neutral or indifferent Time was transformed by the end of his speech into a beneficent one, who wished man to spend his time well and suggested that watching \textit{The Winter's Tale} was the way to do it. Time wished men well as if he loved them. Perhaps the poet himself speaks at the end of Time's soliloquy. Or perhaps we are seeing the poet remake Time in his own image. His benevolent influence on the affairs of men replaces the indifferent influence of Time. His benevolence is possible because of his comprehensiveness.

Comedy and tragedy are not equally commingled in \textit{The Winter's Tale}; rather, comedy triumphs over tragedy. We do not have a low comedy that blinds us to suffering and to the situation that necessitates suffering, but a comedy that asserts that this tragic condition is not universal. If man can satisfy his desires, then life need not be a ceaseless striving, and death does not necessarily find man unfulfilled. At least in this sense, death would not be as great a cause of sadness as it otherwise would be.\textsuperscript{18} Shakespeare's comedy brings not the blindness of laughter but the joy of insight. Midst the general rejoicing, the assembly exits, each of the cast looking forward to telling his part “in this wide gap of time since first / We were dissever'd” (V. iii. 152-53). Leontes reminds us that the play has been about the differences that separated the characters and that now those differences no longer dissever them. Unity appears to reign.
Notes

1. All citations to The Winter's Tale are to the Arden edition (London: Methuen, 1866).
3. The clown later responds to a call for help when there is no risk to his own life (IV. iii. 51-77).
5. Paulina, rebuked by Leontes's lords for blaming Leontes for what he has done, acknowledges, “Let me be punish'd, that have minded you / Of what you should forget” (III. ii. 225-26). Does Paulina's later contrivance of a resurrection scene serve as her penance?
6. This kind of poetry would be like Archidamus's “sleepy drinks” that prevent awareness of “insufficience.” Camillo protests that such drinks are unnecessary (I. i. 11-18).
8. Soon at the sheep-shearing festival, Perdita reminds others of limits to human achievement. When the disguised Camillo envisions Perdita as a shepherdess who cares for mankind, he claims he “would leave grazing … and only live by gazing” at her (IV. iv. 109-10). “You'd be so lean that blasts of January / Would blow you through and through,” Perdita reproaches him. She reminds men not only of the limitations of chance and of the wills of other men, but also of bodily necessities.
9. Shakespeare makes no attempt in The Winter's Tale to represent country life as idyllic, either with respect to the natural setting or with respect to the inhabitants. He omits any rendering of the conversation in Greene's Pandosto between Dorastus and Fawnia (the counterparts of Florizel and Perdita) in which Fawnia praises country life in contradistinction to court life (p. 208). In the first scene in the Bohemian countryside, we see a bear who mauls Antigonus to death (III. iii. 57-58), and then a shepherd who complains of the vices of the young (III. iii. 56-68).
11. Egistus (Polixenes), realizing his own age and his son's age, tells him that “the only care that I have is to see thee well married” (Pandosto, p. 203). “Thy youth warneth me to prevent the worst, and mine age to provide the best” (p. 202). Although his foresight proves ineffectual, Egistus does understand that he should be a matchmaker and that he should be watchful over his son's passions.
12. Compare Florizel's “what I was, I am” (IV. iv. 465) with the characterization of Polixenes presented above.
13. Aristotle, Poetics, 1448a1-5 and 1449a31-38.
14. The clown, in spite of his simplicity, perceives that Autolycus must become courageous in order to amend his life, or that his fear of death is his strongest passion (V. ii. 154-75). Does the clown perceive Autolycus's defect because he too is a coward (III. iii. 96; 126-28)?
15. Florizel earlier reminded Leontes of other “affections” of youth. When Florizel entered, Leontes is so reminded of Polixenes that he is tempted to “call [Florizel] brother, / As I did him, and speak of something wildly / By us perform'd before” (V. i. 127-29). Does Leontes still not perceive that Polixenes would not, like Leontes, delight in reminiscing about the errors of youth?
16. Paulina enacts a kind of resurrection from the dead when she summons Hermione down from the platform or pedestal. It has often been observed that Christianity makes tragedy impossible because it removes the sting of death. (See, for example, Paul's Letter to the Corinthians, I Corinthians 15: 55-57.) Here, however, Paulina can “resurrect” Hermione only because she has not died. The Christian imagery at the end of The Winter's Tale points to the contrast between Christianity's triumph over tragedy and Shakespeare's.
17. The union of boldness and moderation in the complete human soul, for example, is reflected on the political level not only in the union of Paulina and Camillo, but also in the reconciliation between Florizel and Autolycus and the marriage of Florizel and Perdita. Florizel is a man who would resist even destiny itself in order to fulfill his desires (IV. iv. 42-46); he immoderately risks his life and even the lives of others. Autolycus, with his strong desire for preservation, and Perdita, with her more
elevated submission to nature, serve as correctives to Florizel. But if either of these characters simply ruled Florizel, the marriage between Florizel and Perdita might not have taken place: Perdita might have submitted to Polixenes’ demands (IV. iv. 442-51), and Autolycus would not see the point in risking one’s life for the woman who appeared to him only as an encumbrance (IV. iv. 678-80).


**Criticism: Themes: François Laroque (essay date 1982)**


[In the following essay, Laroque asserts that possible correlations exist between *The Winter's Tale* and the cycles of the year associated with pagan, Christian, and folk traditions.]

In traditional Christianity the religion is learned less from the Bible than from the cycle of the Christian year, which is a ritual re-living of the life of Christ. Within this cycle the events of the Old Testament are interwoven in such a way that they form, not a continuous story, but a system of oracles or prophecies.

(Alan Watts)¹

With its “solstitial title”,² its rich and syncretic religious vocabulary and its multiple allusions to ancient myths and to both Old and New Testaments, *The Winter's Tale* may well appear as the happy hunting ground of allegorical or ritualistic approaches. I shall not enter here the debate of whether the play is closer to a medieval Miracle play or to the initiation drama of the pagan mysteries of ancient Greece, but I shall insist on the possible correlations between the play and the cycles of the year viewed, if not necessarily reconciled, in their pagan, Christian, and popular perspectives.

In “Myth and Miracle”, his introductory essay to his study of the last plays, Wilson Knight rightly speaks of the “pseudo-Hellenistic” theology of *The Winter's Tale*.³ The pagan pantheon of the ancient Greeks would appear to be strangely monotheistic here as Apollo seems to reign, Jehovah-like, in the kingdoms of Sicilia and Bohemia, even though *Jove* or the *gods* are perfunctorily referred to here and there in the play. The language seems more pagan (in spite of the recurrence of such coded words as *grace* or *faith*) and the general spirit of the play more Christian, but strict orthodoxy is to be found on neither side.

In the first half of the play, Shakespeare uses pagan ritual for its rich and romantic supernatural paraphernalia. *The ear-deaf'ning voice o’ th’ Oracle / Kin to Jove’s thunder* (III.1.9-10) dispells at once the paradisiac atmosphere of the fortunate isle where Cleomenes and Dion consult *Apollo’s great divine* and it discloses the black storms that are now looming large over Sicilia. The voice of the god reduces men to nothing, as Cleomenes realizes (III.1.10-14)⁴ and the revelation which it provides is more shattering and destructive than restorative. The thunder of his voice sounds more like an echo of Lear's *all-shaking thunder*, more likely to *crack Nature’s moulds* [and] *spill its germains*⁵ than to restore harmony and fertility to the kingdom of Leontes. The surprising intervention of this *deus ex machina*, with its tragic consequences in the middle of the play, is to be contrasted with the miraculous coming to life of the *dea ex machina* at the end. Although both episodes are borrowed from pagan myth and ritual (the anti-metamorphosis of a stone statue into a flesh and blood woman is clearly borrowed from Ovid's version of the myth of Pygmalion and Galatea), the first with the connotations of the mysterious revenge wreaked by a god against a mortal (Leontes' sudden jealousy being probably part of this very revenge plot) is more decidedly Greek than the second. Even more confusing is Antigonus' monologue in III.3, when the latter, who is both frightened by the impending storm and in two minds about the meaning of the dream where the ‘dead’ Hermione has appeared to him in *pure white robes* (l.
22), finally makes the right choice for the wrong reason:

Yet for this once, yea, superstitiously,
I will be squar'd by this. I do believe
Hermione hath suffer'd death; and that
Apollo would, this being indeed the issue
Of King Polixenes, it should here be laid,
Either for life or death, upon the earth
Of its right father.

(III.39-46)

By choosing to follow superstition against the voice of his reason, Antigonus will save the life of Perdita and lose his own, as he is briefly to find out. The tempest-beaten coast of Bohemia is full of ambiguities and contradictions which are not wholly justified by the devious ways of Apollo to men nor by the entangled ironies of the dramatic construction.

Contrasting with the awesome and inhuman sphere of Myth, where violence and barrenness prevail in connection with the wintry nature of the first half of the play, the pastoral scenes, presided over by Perdita, present us with the seasonal ritual of rebirth in an atmosphere of festive rejoicing. Perdita's often commented invocation of Proserpina in IV.4.116-18, while it introduces a rather adequate analogy between the situations of Hermione and Perdita on the one hand and Ceres and Proserpina on the other, thus presenting the estrangement between mother and daughter in a nutshell and in a low key, also calls attention to the central question of fertility since the Ceres-Proserpina myth was in the background of the Eleusinian mysteries.

Now, one of the effects of the Perdita-Proserpina metaphor is to establish a parallel between the sacred calendar of Greek ritual and the profane calendar of agricultural activity and of seasonal rejoicing. As the May Queen is turned into Flora, the shepherds and shepherdesses into satyrs and nymphs, the celebration of the rustic sheep-shearing becomes a pagan rite of spring to praise the rebirth of greenery. If Sicilia is the land of myth, Bohemia is the place where the elements of the myth are being re-enacted.6 Far from the old world where the curse of jealousy has rotted the root of his [Leontes'] opinion,7 a fresh generation is buoyantly participating in its re-creation by celebrating the metamorphic powers of good goddess Nature.8 Florizel's light-hearted tone to evoke the metamorphoses of the gods in love (IV.4.25-31) stands poles apart from Leontes' initial obsession with horns and bestiality. So the blending of folk-customs and pagan myth serves to introduce a playful element in the performance of the festive ritual9 which is no longer felt as sinful but as restorative. Myth is tragic in its uniqueness, whereas the ritual gestures and prayers that are repeated to re-enact it bring about an effect of distance and detachment. This failure to suspend disbelief is repeatedly stated by Perdita when she says she feels prank'd up and not quite at ease in the role she is required to play.10 Such a sense of distance, reinforced by the sixteen-year gap between the two halves of the play, is here essential and quite appropriate both to the change of key introduced in the passage from winter to spring and to the nature of folk festivals. Although these seasonal customs were undoubtedly pagan in origin,11 the villages where they were still observed in Shakespeare's days had lost all distinct memory of their ancestral links and they remained mostly as an occasion for the community to get together and to indulge in riotous merry-making. Ancient custom and pagan rituals degenerated into games and sport, as local historians and anthropologists have remarked.12

But it would be wrong to limit the religious background of those open-air games to pagan antiquity. Perdita's anachronic reference to Whitsun pastorals (IV.4.134) is one sign among others in the play that the hints at the English church year and at its annual cycle of religious festivals were almost inseparable from the more obvious pagan allusions. The jolly moments of popular rejoicing were probably intended by Shakespeare as a titbit to the groundlings in the public theatre,13 but they also serve as a transition between the pagan and the
Christian worlds. To be sure, the educated people and the courtiers who attended the first performance of the play on one of the main festival occasions (which one it was exactly in the case of *The Winter's Tale* is not known) that were selected for theatrical productions at Court, would have been more attentive to the possible correlations between the rich and complex religious content of the play and the texts prescribed to be read from *The Book of Common Prayer* on those liturgical occasions.\(^{14}\)

In his book on *Renaissance Drama and the English Church Year*, Chris Hassel establishes a distinction between two main types of correlations between the liturgical tradition and the plays and masques performed on a given festival. The first he calls ‘genetic’ to describe “each work which was clearly named or written for festival performance”. The second category, which he calls ‘affective’, simply designates the larger number of plays and masques with no specific or straightforward correlation with the festival day of their performance at Court, but which offered easily perceivable parallels with a biblical or liturgical passage.\(^{15}\) In the case of what this critic calls an “unusual fitness”, the Master of the Revels could put the play on the bills of the ceremonies of the day, and among other examples, the author quotes *The Winter's Tale* as particularly “apposite […] for Easter Tuesday”.\(^{16}\) The source of this correlation is the record of a Court performance on Easter Tuesday 1618 which is listed by G. E. Bentley in *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*.\(^{17}\) Indeed one can only agree that the parallel between Christ's resurrection and the coming to life of the statue of Hermione is as apposite as it is inevitable in our Christian culture. According to *The Book of Common Prayer*, among the lessons prescribed to be read for Tuesday in Easter week one finds Luke 24: 1-12 for matins and I Corinthians 15 for evensong.\(^{18}\) Now fairly close correspondences in words, imagery, and situations may be found between the first ten verses of Luke 24 and the last act of *The Winter's Tale*. The word ‘stone’ is used to designate both Hermione's statue (Leontes addresses it as *dear stone* in V.3.24) and Christ's sepulchre, while Paulina, a Greek version of Mary Magdalene, indirectly evokes the gaping sepulchre of resurrected Christ when she declares *I'll fill up your grave* (V.3.101). Furthermore, the repetition of the phrase *like an old tale* used by the Second and Third Gentlemen to convey the mixture or surprise and doubt brought about by the unexpected news of the fulfilment of the Oracle does sound like an echo of Luke 24: 12, *And their words seemed to them as idle tales and they believed them not*, when the holy women reveal to the apostles that the body of the Lord Jesus was not to be found in the sepulchre and that he was risen from the dead.

If we now consider the lesson to be read on the same day for evensong prayer, I Corinthians 15, we will find another interesting parallel between the gospel and the play, particularly in verses 35-7 which run:

> But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?  
> Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die:  
> And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be,  
> but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain  

(35-7).

To convey the abstract idea of resurrection, St Paul resorts to images borrowed from the agricultural and seasonal cycles, which transform the hidden corn seed into a green stalk rising above the surface of the earth. This short passage seems quite close to Shakespeare's dramatization of the return of spring to the earth through the celebration of the shepherds' feast which is presided over by Perdita-Proserpina, the corn maiden. The conjunction of pagan and Christian symbolism at the time of the Easter liturgy is even more evident when one reads the following gloss for Easter Sunday from Robert Nelson's widely used *Companion*: “the consideration of things without us, the natural courses of variations in the creatures, raise the probability of our resurrection. The day dies into night and rises with the next morning; the summer dies into winter, when the earth becomes a general sepulchre; but when the spring appears, nature revives and flourishes; the corn lies buried in the ground, and being corrupted revives and multiplies”.\(^{19}\) This might well be considered as a general description of the essential symbolic motifs developed in *The Winter's Tale*.  

623
So far, the analogies which have been suggested between the religious symbolism of the play and the liturgy of the Christian year only concern the summer half of the play and the final reconciliation scene. No correlations have yet been established between the texts of the Christian liturgy and the winter half, in spite of the similarities which can be pointed out between Christ's and Perdita's life schemes. Christ's birth in winter is followed by his death and resurrection in the spring, thirty-three years later, when he is reunited with the Father in Heaven. Perdita, also born in winter-time, spends sixteen years in another world before she is allowed to recover her true parents in the most miraculous way (an equivalent of resurrection). In that specific context, Leontes' sudden fit of jealousy and suspicions about a new-born child, leading to the death of the innocents (Mamilius dies and Perdita is abandoned on a desert shore full of wild beasts), recall Herod's tyranny and his ordering the slaughter of all the children that were in Bethlehem. The flight from Israel into Egypt and the navigation from Sicilia to Bohemia are also comparable ordeals for the infant Christ and the newly-born Perdita. The liturgical source for this is to be found in Matthew 2: 13-18, which was the reading from the Gospel prescribed for the celebration of the Innocents' Day (28 December) according to The Book of Common Prayer.

In the words of Chris Hassel, “error seems to have been the traditional hallmark of Innocents' celebrations”, as was fit for the period of licence and misrule which characterized the festivities of the twelve days of Christmas, and the same author goes on to say that “until the time of the Spectator, Innocents was considered […] ‘the most unlucky day in the calendar’”. In the first half of The Winter's Tale, Leontes' jealousy is a form of tragic error just as the confusion that follows its outbreak is a consequence of misrule, that is of his bad government and tyranny. Moreover, the sudden, uncanny fit of sexual insanity on his part is seen by the women as the effect of some evil astronomical conjunction. Paulina speaks of dangerous, unsafe lunes i' th' king (II.2.30), while Hermione exclaims:

I must be patient till the heavens look
With an aspect more favourable.

(II.1.105-07)

These lines, echoing the unlucky character of the day in popular prognostications, would have seemed particularly relevant for a performance on Holy Innocents' Day. On the other hand, the fact that Childermas, as this festival was also known, was normally associated with folly and rejoicing may be taken as a suggestion to the audience that comedy is not very far behind the furies of the tragic tempest. Indeed tragedy and comedy are very often side by side in this Janus-like play, which does not simply divide into a tragic and a comic half. As in the Miracle plays, laughter lies close to horror and things profane and things sacred sometimes mix to produce a grotesque atmosphere.

Another central motif of this liturgical festival of the Innocents is described by Chris Hassel as that of “the dispersal and reunion of families”. One of the lessons prescribed for the day at matins was Jeremiah 31: 1-17, which, if present to the minds of those who were watching the play on this festival occasion, could have been applied to Leontes' blighted kingdom as bringing hope of its future regeneration. As it prophesies both the return of the people of Israel from the North country and the return of fertility to the earth in a merry dance of shepherds that will put an end to sorrow, it might have been used by whoever was aware of the correspondence, as a foreshadowing of the happy reconciliation of Act V:

Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together; a great company shall return thither […].
Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the
goodness of the Lord, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and
of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden: and they shall not sorrow any more
at all.

Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn
their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow.²⁴

Furthermore, if we place the general situation of The Winter's Tale against Alan W. Watts' idea that “in the
cycle of the Christian year […] the events of the Old Testament are interwoven in such a way that they form,
not a continuous story, but a system of oracles and prophecies”,²⁵ we see that, in its own way, the oracle of
Apollo (III.2.132-6) is also looking forward to the possibility of the reunion of families. As in biblical
exegesis, where typological cross-references between episodes of the Old and of the New Testament have
been established, similar sets of correspondences may be found between the old world of Sicilia and the new
world of Bohemia (as well as of that of reconciled Sicilia). The sentences which we have underlined in
Jeremiah's prophecy can be easily transposed in the situations presented in the second half of the play,
although in an inverted order as the return from the north country will take place only after the virgin [has
rejoiced] in the dance. Pastoral images and festivities are another link between the biblical lesson and the
play. Finally, both texts resort to natural symbolism so that it is hardly pushing things too far to say that, when
the lost Perdita is found and the statue of Hermione unveiled in front [of] Leontes by Paulina, Leontes' soul
shall be as a watered garden after sixteen years' penitence and spiritual purgation:

No settled senses of the world can match
The pleasure of that madness.

(V.3.72-3)

The sweet madness of ecstatic revelation and mystical illumination stands poles apart from his earlier bitter
fury. After the destructive passion of jealousy has calmed down, the notable passion of wonder (V.2.15-16)
allows the waste land of Sicilia to be redeemed when the people from the north country return after their
pastoral interlude of sixteen years.

So, the analogies between the sacred texts and The Winter's Tale point to a double, rather than a single
liturgical correlation, with the Innocents' Day on the one hand and Tuesday in Easter week on the other. In the
first half of the play, the lessons selected for the festival of the Innocents give scriptural reinforcement to the
themes of error, confusion and of the destruction of innocence, but they also prepare the future recreation and
reconciliation when placed in the perspective of Jeremiah's prophecies. In the second half, correlations with
Tuesday in Easter week introduce lessons that help visualize the abstract notion of resurrection through
seasonal and pastoral images. All the same, this double correlation is perfectly suited to the strongly
emphasized bipartite structure of the romance.

The dual nature of The Winter's Tale is also reflected at the level of pagan allusions, which are working along
a clear-cut frontier between the tragic uniqueness of myth, on the one hand, and its festive re-enactment
through the ritual-like games of the sheep-shearing on the other.

As for folk customs, which were known to be the relics of paganism, they were more or less tolerated on the
side of the official religious celebrations of the Church year. They were also hybrids. In the play, they serve to
bridge the gap between two worlds and between the pagan and Christian levels of interpretation. Their
presence in the play is as indispensable to the syncretic approach of religion developed in the romances as to
the restoration of the comic mode indicative of the return of fertility and felicity.
Notes

2. The phrase is borrowed from Northrop Frye's A Natural Perspective (Columbia, 1965), p. 121.
4. This feeling that mortal nature is annihilated in front of the awesome voice of the Oracle, which was part of the numinous experience of the sacred for the Greeks, may also be interpreted as the god's punishment for the hubristic pretension of the tyrant to destroy the world for nothing (the word is repeated six times by Leontes in his furious tirade in I.2.284-96).
5. King Lear, III.1.5 and 8.
11. The denunciation of the relics of paganism in the Church is found in most Puritan pamphlets of the time (Philip Stubbes and William Prynne in particular). The parallel between ‘Popery’ and ancient paganism is extensively developed in such works as T. Moresinus' Papatus, seu depravatae religionis Origo et Incrementum (Edinburgh, 1594). Thomas Hobbes also deals with the problem in chapter 45, Part IV, “Of the Kingdom of Darkness” of his Leviathan. A catalogue of precise analogies between folk customs and pagan ceremonies is to be found on p. 681 of the Penguin edition, C. B. Macpherson ed. (London, 1968, reptrd. 1979).
13. Indeed Shakespeare was anxious to avoid repeating Fletcher's unfortunate experience with his pastoral tragicomedy, The Faithful Shepherdess, the production of which turned out to be a complete failure because, as Fletcher himself puts it, the people […] missing Whitsun-ales, cream, wassail, and morris-dances, began to be angry, in Select Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher, G. P. Baker., Everyman (London, 1953), p. 242.
14. These main festival occasions were the following: the three days after Christmas (St Stephen's, St John's Day and The Innocents), New Year's Day, Twelfth Day, Candlemas, Shrovetide, Eastertide, St Bartholomew's, Michaelmas, and Hallowmas. See R. Chris Hassel, Renaissance Drama and the English Church Year (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1979), Chapter I, pp. 1-21. The edition of The Book of Common Prayer (1559) is that of John E. Booty, The Elizabethan Prayer Book, Charlottesville (1976). Besides the Collect, The Epistle and the Gospel prescribed to be read for each Sunday service in the year, this edition lists the Proper Lessons to be Read for the first Lessons Both at Morning Prayer on the Sundays throughout the Year, and for Some Also the Second Lessons, pp. 27-33. The Lessons for Holy Days, which were generally not Sundays, are listed on pp. 29-32. It is from this table that we derived the information used in the subsequent analyses.
17. 7 vols. (Oxford, 1968), VII, p. 27. (The exact date is 7 April 1618.)
18. Tuesday in Easter Week, Second Lesson, p. 31.
20. p. 88:

The angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a sleep, saying, Arise and take the child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there till I bring thee word. For it
will come to pass that Herod shall seek the child to destroy him [...] . Then Herod when he saw that he was mocked of the Wise Men, he was exceeding wroth, and sent forth men of war, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts (as many as were two years old or under) according to the time which he had diligently known out of the prophet Heremiah, whereas he said, in Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, weeping, and great mourning: Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted because they were not.

22. See O.E.D. ‘misrule’, entry no. 2. Leontes looks like a tragic Lord of Misrule who introduces topsy-turvydom in the hitherto peaceful and fertile kingdom of Sicilia.
25. Alan Watts, op. cit. See epigraph to this article.

Criticism: Themes: Walter S. H. Lim (essay date 2001)


[In the following essay, Lim studies the way in which elements of The Winter's Tale, particularly the animation of Hermione's statue at the play's end, represent the conflict between Reformation and Catholic thought in Shakespeare's England.]

At the narrative moment immediately preceding the animation of Hermione's statue, Paulina exhorts Leontes, “It is requir'd / You do awake your faith.”¹ Faith in what? For Leontes, it is faith in the reality of miracles, the coming back to life of a queen who has been dead sixteen long years. For William Shakespeare's audience, it is faith tied to the willing suspension of disbelief, a readiness to accept that theater is capable of representing just about anything. But it is not only in the representational space of theater that the dead find themselves coming back to life. Scripture itself purports to offer inerrant accounts of people who have come back from the dead: the daughter of the Shunamite woman in the Old Testament book of 2 Kings, Jarius's daughter, Lazarus, and, of course, Christ himself, described typologically as “the first-fruits of them that slept.”² The animation of Hermione's statue in The Winter's Tale finds its informing source not only in the mythic account of Ovid's perennially popular Pygmalion, but also in the stories of resurrection afforded by Scripture. With regard to the Bible, one source Shakespeare appears to have had in mind when producing The Winter's Tale is the book of 2 Kings. The bear's devouring of Antigonus is Shakespeare's revision of the story found in this book, of how the prophet Elisha called up a bear to kill off some young kids who had the audacity to mock his bald pate.³ The book of 2 Kings also offers the following account of miraculous resuscitation that might have constituted a central scriptural source informing Shakespeare's representation of the enlivening statue:

And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, and laid upon his bed. He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the Lord. And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the child waxed warm. Then he returned, and walked in the house to and fro; and went up, and stretched himself upon him: and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes.

(2 Kings 4:32-5)
Any raising of the dead marks an epochal fracturing of natural law, an infringement that is also an indelible sign of the miraculous. Such miracles can heighten the experience of faith and reinforce religious conviction. So, when Shakespeare invokes the language of faith and religious conviction to attend the restoration of Hermione, is he propounding a specifically scriptural vision of faith?

Clearly Scripture offers an important context for framing the phenomena of enlivened statues and rising corpses, but, as this play reminds us, so does classical mythology. Myth announces its presence in *The Winter's Tale* in a self-conscious way. In addition to the informing presence of Ovid's Pygmalion that enables the resolution of Shakespeare's romance plot, *The Winter's Tale* also locates its setting in Sicily, where the Vale of Anna—the meadow from which Persephone is abducted by Pluto—is located. Perdita's expostulation—

*For the flowers now that, frightened, thou let'st fall*
*From Dis's waggon!*

(IV.iv.116-8)

—ties Shakespeare's tale told in the winter directly to Persephone's presence in Hades and her absence from the natural world. In general, the Renaissance poet is equally at home in both the worlds of the classics and of Scripture, facilitating them with ease within the representational space of his literary production. This ease, however, not the exclusive norm, and tensions do sometimes surface, as famously registered in Jesus' repudiation of the kingdom of classical learning and knowledge offered by Satan in Milton's *Paradise Regained*. Theologically grounded tensions of the kind found in a poem such as *Paradise Regained* are not there in *The Winter's Tale*, where the relationship between the classical and scriptural traditions is defined not so much in terms of ontological contestation as through the provocative proposition that classical (pagan) myth and Scripture (the inerrant Word of God) both enjoy equal status and validity. Shakespeare foregrounds classical mythology in *The Winter's Tale* not simply to facilitate the demands of plot but also to accentuate his interest in the status of different generic forms: the ballad, the ghost story, classical myth, and even the Bible itself. *The Winter's Tale* tantalizes its audience by finally raising the question of how one can know with absolute certainty and total conviction that the faith to which one adheres is indeed valid and true.

When Paulina tells Leontes to awaken his faith, her exhortation evokes resonances tied to a Reformation reading of its theological emphasis. The Reformation emphasis has always been on the indispensability of faith to the mechanism and economy of salvation. The crucial text in the formulation of this doctrinal emphasis is the book of Romans, in which St. Paul specifies distinctly that the sinner can only be saved by grace through faith. On one level at least, then, the idea that it is indeed Leontes' faith that enables the statue of Hermione to return to life makes the play appear to endorse a vision of the Christian faith through affirming the presence of miracles. But the status of miracles in *The Winter's Tale* is never fully clarified, for there always exists the possibility that putting one's faith in miracles entails believing events that are not, in fact, displays of divine power. If, for example, Hermione and Leontes' reconciliation was indeed enabled by Paulina's own careful scripting and stage directing—and the play never permits its audience to discount completely this possibility—then any faith that an audience is asked to exercise is, in reality, faith in the miracles of the stage or stage illusion.

Witnessing Hermione's enlivening can only prove to be an uneasy affair, especially for a Protestant. To begin with, the statue scene that takes place in a “chapel” stages, as Julia Reinhard Lupton has pointed out, the visual conditions of Catholic image worship (V.iii.86). Paulina's gallery is strikingly loaded with the signs of both Italian secular art and Catholic forms of worship: there is the reference to Julio Romano, whose name cannot be extricated from the contaminating context of papal politics; and then, of course, there are the pervasive images evocative of Marian iconography. Perdita kneels, for instance, before the statue of her
mother, only to find herself beset by the Protestant awareness that such an act of adulation is akin to superstition:

And do not say 'tis superstition, that I kneel, and then implore her blessing.

And give me leave, (V.iii.42-4, emphasis mine)

Shakespeare appears reluctant to let go of the discourse of (Catholic) veneration and supplication, stretching it beyond even the point of Hermione's bodily return from the dead. For, immediately following Hermione's embracing of Leontes in this scene, Paulina exhorts Perdita in distinctively liturgical diction: “Please you to interpose, fair madam, kneel / And pray your mother's blessing” (V.iii.119-20). And then she supplicates: “Turn, good lady, / Our Perdita is found” (V.iii.120-1). “Mother” and “lady” signify in two linguistic and cultural domains—the secular and the sacred. Within the context of the sacred, these two terms of address amplify in their allusion to the cult of the Virgin Mary and the Catholic Church that ratifies its mystification.

What the animation of Hermione's statue does is bring into conjunction conflicting perceptions of the icon in both Reformation and Catholic thought. The idea of the icon is not something associated exclusively with Catholic thought and practice. Significantly, the icon also occupies an important place in Reformation theology, where it is applied to a definition of the elect, “the true figurae of Protestant religion.”7 Opposed to this elect is the reprobate, the living image of opposition to God's living image of grace. In Calvinism especially, a powerful interpretation of what constitutes the iconic and the idolatrous emerges within the framework of a sacramental theology built upon the trope of metonymy. False idols are perceived to have the ability to simulate life just as living people are responded to as material shapes. According to the logic of this Calvinistic emphasis, the elect—those whom God, in his sovereign pleasure, had chosen for himself from all eternity—are given the means of grace outside of the capabilities of human agency and free will. Grace is God given and totally independent of the sinner who is dead in sin. This outpouring of grace from the divine prerogative, which enables regeneration itself, is a familiar motif in the English devotional lyric. In George Herbert's poem, “The Altar,” for example, it is God himself, the archetypal artist/creator, who breathes spiritual life into the otherwise dead text of the poet's creative endeavor. In Protestant poetics in general, human art, like the sinning soul, is circumscribed by limits and depends, therefore, upon divine inspiration for “life.” In The Winter's Tale, the statue of Hermione occupies the analogous position of the dead text, subsequently infused with quickening power.

At one level, the faith that Leontes is asked by Paulina to exercise before the statue can and does, in fact, return to life, may be read as affirming a Reformation understanding of things. The audience's acceptance of the coming-to-life of a statue means, by implication, that it is capable of practicing Leontes' kind of faith, albeit produced at a moment's notice. After all, faith, as the Bible puts it, has the power to move mountains. But, to accept the statue as possessing the efficacious power to bring itself to life may also mean succumbing to a system of belief associated by the Reformation with an idolatrous Catholicism. Is The Winter's Tale engaging in a critique of Catholicism in its portrayal of a dramatic moment that suggests Catholic belief and practice?8 Alternatively, is the play attempting to elicit from its audience pro-Catholic sympathies? By not offering a clear answer, Shakespeare makes The Winter's Tale gesture in the direction of Hamlet, another play in which a Catholic framework coexists uneasily with a Protestant one. In Hamlet, a “Catholic” ghost (the late Hamlet tells his son that he comes from a purgatorial state) reveals himself to a Protestant prince. If Hamlet is to respond to this ghost from an unswervingly Reformation perspective, the spirit can only logically be a “goblin damn'd.”9 Otherwise, belief in the ghost as one that has been released momentarily from purgatory must necessarily entail a turning upside down of the prince's epistemological universe. With regard to the relation between the belief structures of the Protestant and Catholic traditions, both Hamlet and The Winter's Tale raise questions more than they offer solutions.
The Winter's Tale intertwines the narrative of faith and its miraculous possibilities with a discourse of doubt and radical uncertainty. If faith, as the scriptural formulation has it, involves a belief in things not seen, and this belief has the mystical efficacy of enabling the infallible certainty of salvation itself, it is also something that Leontes is certain he possesses. In a parodic version of faith, Leontes believes, even though he has not directly witnessed, Hermione's infidelity. Nothing that comes by way of council can convince him of the fallacy of that belief, and what Shakespeare's play does in portraying Leontes' obdurate blindness is foreground the gulf separating conviction from truth. Translated into the discourse of religious conviction, belief in things unseen does not necessarily add up to possessing the truth. Such belief in, for example, accounts of the dead being raised to life, or even the story of God assuming human form in the Incarnation, may be nothing more than superstition. Superstition functions as an important motif in The Winter's Tale. Antigonus invokes the idea of superstition immediately after he recounts the eerie and disturbing dream of Hermione that is experienced “like a waking” (III.iii.19):

Dreams are toys:
Yet for this once, yea, superstitiously,
I will be squar'd by this.

(III.iii.39-41; emphasis mine)

By describing dreams as toys, Antigonus reveals he had never put stock in dreams before the appearance of Hermione's apparition; he is willing to make an exception this once, offering, however, no reason for doing so. What there is in the dream that launches him off in this different direction is far from clear: its ostensible purpose is to get Hermione to name her infant daughter and reveal the death penalty Antigonus must pay for undertaking Perdita's disposal. Antigonus agrees to be directed and regulated (“squar'd”) by Hermione's injunction to name the baby “Perdita” and to accept her pronouncement of his necessary death, but he does so “superstitiously.” The gloss on this adverb in the Arden edition of the play—“against accepted Protestant doctrine”—10—captures well the uncertain and liminal status of Hermione's apparition. Is Hermione a body or a dream, and therefore insubstantial? Is this the spirit of the dead queen or a “goblin damn'd”? From which doctrinal perspective is the audience meant to respond to the precise character and nature of this apparition—Catholic or Protestant? Once again, the answer is not forthcoming, reinforcing the play's destabilization of the familiar terms of reference grounding religious conviction and theological understanding.

Antigonus's dream pressures the audience into giving some thought to the place of superstition and the supernatural in the scriptural tradition that is the play's informing context. From the Protestant perspective, the indelible sign of Roman Catholicism's spiritual apostasy is found in the expressions of its devotional practice and in the glaring errors of its doctrinal understanding. Any person who believes that Hermione's statue is capable of reassuming life stands on dangerous doctrinal ground. As Francis Bacon glosses with reference to the errors of the Roman church, venerating the Virgin Mary and the saints involves adhering to “pleasing and sensual rites and ceremonies” and engaging in “over-great reverence of traditions.”12 Such superstition is, in Bacon's words, “the reproach of the deity.”13 In his Advancement of Learning, Bacon's anti-Catholic discourse centers on the “facility of credit and accepting or admitting things weakly authorized or warranted.”14 Ecclesiastical history, he clarifies, “hath too easily received and registered reports and narrations of miracles wrought by martyrs, hermits, or monks of the desert, and other holy men, and their relics, shrines, chapels, and images.”15 The ignorance of the people and the superstitious simplicity of some have led to a belief in these reports of miracles as “divine poesies,” unveiled by the Reformation to be “old wives' fables, impostures of the clergy, illusions of spirits, and badges of Antichrist.”16

The Winter's Tale proceeds to complicate the theological discourse of faith by dramatizing the experiences of “belief” and “opinion,” two crucial terms that must be focused on in order to appreciate how watching an animating statue involves the audience in the epistemological (un)certainty underwriting the play's events.
The word “opinion” is first employed by Camillo when describing Leontes’ conviction that Hermione is having an affair with Polixenes, the king of Bohemia:

Of this diseas’d opinion, and betimes,  
For ’tis most dangerous.

(I.ii.296-8, emphasis mine)

In II.i, Leontes himself equates verity with “opinion,” when he says:

In my just censure! in my true opinion!  
Alack, for lesser knowledge!

(II.i.36-8, emphasis mine)

And, in II.iii, Paulina tells Antigonus that “The root of [Leontes’] opinion, … is rotten / As ever oak or stone was sound” (II.iii.89-90, emphasis mine).

“Opinion” resonates with all the uncertainty that does not attend the conviction of faith, because the belief that constitutes faith is, in the metonymic equation of Scripture, the position of truth itself.17 Not only does “opinion” not enjoy a categorically enviable position in this play, linked specifically to Leontes’ unfounded suspicion and his destructive tyranny, it raises yet once again a central question in the development of epistemology—how does one negotiate the progression from “opinion” to “knowledge”? To Plato, for whom this question is all-important, the difference between the two is found in the indeterminacy of the former. In Plato’s dialogues, the theory of ideas is to be understood as acts of knowing; knowledge is inseparable from the permanent entities, distinct from those we know through the senses. In The Winter’s Tale, Hermione tells Leontes that the folly and consequences of his suspicion will grieve him when he “shall come to clearer knowledge” (II.i.97, emphasis mine). Ironically, of course, this “knowledge” that Leontes must finally obtain concerning the integrity of his wife is given within the context of a play that, consciously proclaiming itself a tale, complicates without resolution the issue of faith as it is generated within and in response to the overlapping spaces of religious conviction and theatrical representation.

In The Winter’s Tale, Shakespeare focuses his sustained engagement with the issues of belief and knowledge by invoking the concept of original sin and questioning the basis of the Protestant and Catholic view that this doctrine is sacrosanct and therefore cannot be controverted. Indeed, the play appears intent upon denying the inviolability of this theological doctrine, an impulse inscribed in that complex moment of Polixenes’ reply to Hermione’s inquiry into his childhood days with Leontes:

We were as twinn’d lambs that did frisk i’ th’ sun,  
And bleat the one at th’ other: what we chang’d  
Was innocence for innocence: we knew not  
The doctrine of ill-doing, nor dream’d  
That any did. Had we pursu’d that life,  
And our weak spirits ne’er been higher rear’d  
With stronger blood, we should have answer’d heaven  
Boldly “not guilty,” the imposition clear’d  
Hereditary ours.

(I.ii.67-75)

The imagery evoked in this passage has affinities with conventional representations of pastoral innocence.
The word “innocence” appears twice in one line, registering Polixenes' deep pre-adolescent and pre-sexual fantasy, linked to the desire never to have to grow up. Looking back at this early moment of his relationship with Leontes, the adult now declares:

The doctrine of ill-doing, nor dream'd
That any did.

In a psychoanalytical reading of the play, Janet Adelman has described this space of innocence conjured up in Polixenes' nostalgic and wistful reminiscence as his “pastoral myth”; this is the space he wishes he could have inhabited forever with Leontes, his “mirroring twin.” Like Leontes, Polixenes is beset by an identifiable male anxiety relating to the presence of the maternal body. He responds to his sense of vulnerability in the presence of this body as the originating site of male anxiety by figuring it as contaminated. For Polixenes specifically, sin or “ill-doing” comes into the picture when his wife is no longer “a girl,” and after Hermione had “cross'd [Leontes'] eyes” (I.ii.78, 79). Masculine anxiety in The Winter's Tale manifests itself then as a general distrust of genital sexuality, which is linked directly to sin(ning).

Invoked at the moment when the sexual(ized) presence of the woman is identified as rupturing the idealized mirroring relationship between Leontes and Polixenes, sin or “ill-doing” gives a name to the female contamination responsible for inaugurating the economy of gender(ed) differentiation. The pastoral and idyllic world whose loss is deeply lamented by Polixenes may show up as the masculine fantasy of a world sans woman, but it is also, significantly, a textual site registering the play's heretical questioning of the logic of one of the church's central doctrines. Historically, the codification of the idea of original sin—the understanding that Adam and Eve's transgression caused the fall of the entire human race—came as the result of Augustine's theological (and ideological) quarrel with Pelagius. Unlike Augustine, Pelagius denies the presence of evil in the newborn child; for him, the idea of morality cannot be extricated from the premise that personal assent always operates in the commission of a sin. The newborn infant is the site of the doctrinal battle waged by Augustine against Pelagius, for if there is one visible sign of sin's terrifying reality as it is transmitted, like some dreadful disease, it is the presence of the infant itself. Augustine underscores his point graphically and sensationally in The Confessions by giving monstrous babies to his reader. Augustine's infant is manipulative, violent, avaricious, jealous, and bitter. Following Augustine, Calvin will later refer to the nature of babies as the “seed-bed of sin.”

Denying the doctrine of original sin renders one a heretic, a heavily charged designation describing someone who subscribes to a false belief in contravention of an orthodoxy defined as truth. This idea of adhering to a false belief or heresy informs the dramatic vision of The Winter's Tale, for it is in embracing such a belief that the play insists on locating the source and site of sin. Leontes is specifically presented as a character that sins because he falsely and wrongly believes Hermione had defiled the marriage bed. Ironically, of course, it is Leontes himself who refers to those people in the court who believe in Hermione's innocence as possessing an “ignorant credulity” that “will not / Come up to th' truth” (II.i.192-3). But he is not alone in holding to his heretical belief. The shepherds are also credulous in their simplicity, and they are portrayed as trusting and putting their faith in the rascally Autolycus. As Mopsa the shepherdess proclaims: “I love a ballad in print, a life, for then we are sure they are true” (IV.iv.261-2). What the language of theological conviction refers to as faith Autolycus calls “Honesty” and “Trust” (IV.iv.596). And, according to Autolycus, “what a fool Honesty is! And Trust, his sworn brother, a very simple gentleman!” (IV.iv.596-7, emphases mine). Where Leontes' active belief in bad things leads to paranoia and distrust, establishing a deep relation between paranoia and faith in the play, the shepherds believe good things credulously. In the response of the simple rural folk to Autolycus, Shakespeare highlights the experience of ignorant credulity. If there are people who are credulous in their ignorance, there may yet be others susceptible to believing that all benevolent things must be good, however irrational or illogical they may be—the susceptibility of positive credulity. In the play's recognizable interest in responses to generic forms that lay claim to different types of authority, the entire issue of ignorant
and positive credulity extends to touch upon the topic of believing in scriptural revelation. Shakespeare's general attitude toward the credulous man and woman in this play is non-condemning; his stress on credulity is meant to interrogate even further that certitude with which truth is accepted as being accessible in the experience of faith and religious conviction. Shakespeare's tone is not the same as the harsh one adopted by Bacon who, in *The Advancement of Learning*, finds that “a credulous man is a deceiver” because “he that will easily believe rumours, will as easily augment rumours.”  

It is interesting that *The Winter's Tale* is a play especially open to deconstructionist readings. This is perhaps because it registers a deep interest in complicating the very strictures of faith and belief that make the apprehension of theology possible in the first place. In an influential essay written for *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, Howard Felperin reads the play as a deconstructing text, innately subject to the interminable deferrals of reference. And more recently, Lynn Enterline has further argued that *The Winter's Tale* postulates that language is not a “transparent description” and that truth cannot, therefore, be present in the medium of language as its content. In Enterline's effectively poststructuralist reading, Shakespeare's play makes use of the Ovidian-Petrarchan legacy to create a dramatic narrative that demands to be read metalinguistically and metatheatrically. Dealing with representation, theater communicates in a self-reflexive manner the resistance of language to efforts aimed at ordering it through the logic of equivalence. In identifying those moments of instability in the text that generate resistance to readily endorsable interpretations, both Enterline and Felperin push for the position that the deconstructive enterprise is the enabling condition as well as effect of this particular Shakespearean production. Implicit in their readings is the assumption that *The Winter's Tale* has an inordinate preoccupation with the subjects of truth and knowledge, and with the difficulties (or impossibility) of gaining access to both. My reading of the play argues that this assumption is rendered explicit in the theological and philosophical interests of the text, specifically where these are inscribed in the identifiable anxieties traceable to Shakespeare's and early modern England's encounter with the boundaries of the (un)knowable.

In an exchange between Autolycus and some gentlemen in V.ii, Shakespeare fleshes out the complex representation of faith and the nature of religious conviction central to the play's thematic structurings. In this scene, Autolycus asks to be given information on what transpired at the meeting of the two estranged kings Leontes and Polixenes. The account of the happy reconciliation is suggestively communicated by the First Gentleman as “a broken delivery of the business” because he happened to have been commanded out of the chamber (V.ii.9). After this account, two others follow, each of them supposedly in possession of further and more complete knowledge. The point impressed in this scene is that there is always some gap in the individual apprehension of an actual event. After the Third Gentleman offers his own contribution toward completing the story of the event, he proceeds to make use of a language that we have by now come to associate with the play's insistent and subtle interrogation of the premise that knowledge can be absolute and truth certain. He specifically likens the death of Antigonus to “an old tale still, which will have matter to rehearse, though credit be asleep and not an ear open” (V.ii.62-4).

“Wonder” appears to form the central experience of imagining what the scene of reconciliation must have been like (V.ii.16, 23). And this wonder always nudges the event ahead of the ability of language to offer an apt description. In other words, representation is defined by a gap that always exists between literary portrayal and the object portrayed. In the particular context of this scene we are considering, “wonder” refers to the remarkableness of the event, one marked by its extraordinary character; the audience is urged to bring to its reception of the play a sense of wonder so as to obtain a fuller appreciation of what is happening. The experience of wonder is independent of a narrative's subscription to the norms of realism. Indeed, it constitutes the proper response to an apprehension of the miraculous. Obviously this same sense of wonder is meant to be present when one witnesses the coming back to life of Hermione's statue, which is nothing less than a miraculous event.
There is another side to the experience of wonder, one that, though not foregrounded in the play, nevertheless constitutes a deeply felt reality as early modern England relates to the entanglements of faith and a distinctively emerging discourse of skepticism. Wonder does not always necessarily serve to amplify or ratify the amazing workings of divinity as these are manifested in the miraculous suspension of natural laws governing the normal operations of things. People who believe they have been privileged to witness the wondrous workings of God may, in fact, be revealing their immense gullibility and credulity. Such gullibility and credulity are, from the skeptic's point of view, especially susceptible to manipulation. They can facilitate horrifying acts of social persecution, as exemplified powerfully in the general acceptance by a credulous populace of the church's identification and destruction of witches. The victims themselves—such as those old women identified in Reginald Scot's *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* who believe themselves capable of performing supernatural feats because of their fond credulity or melancholy—can fuel the very persecutorial machinery seeking their annihilation.24 Likewise in Samuel Harsnett's *A Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures*, a work deeply indebted to Scot's particular method and skeptical discourse, the emotive experience of wonder may very well be the product of careful scripting.25 Indeed, the entire project of *A Declaration* is, as Stephen Greenblatt has highlighted, to unveil the “theatrical” apparatus at work in the production of an episode of demonic possession and exorcism.26 Scot and Harsnett both demonstrate that there is a dark side to religious conviction, tied to ignorance, fraud, and the exercise of arbitrary power.

Compared to Scot and Harsnett, Shakespeare's treatment of the trope of wonder is much more benign, dealing not so much with the dark side of religious conviction as with the teasing and ironic destabilizations of the assumptions and premises underwriting the experience of faith. In *The Winter's Tale*, wonder registers itself in the language of hyperbolic expression. The First Gentleman describes the moment when Leontes and Camillo finally set eyes on one another in theologically resonant terms, referring to both salvation and the Apocalypse: “they looked as they had heard of a world ransomed, or one destroyed” (V.ii.14-5). If the unbelievability of the events that have transpired is described with reference to theological motifs, it is also spoken of as “an old tale,” a phrase repeated, in fact, twice in one scene (V.ii.28, 62). Unlike scriptural revelation, the story or narrative that makes up a tale does not purport to be truth. The Second Gentleman says: “This news, which is called true, is so like an old tale that the verity of it is in strong suspicion” (V.ii.27-9, emphasis mine). This statement links wonder to unbelievability even as it is the exuberant expression of an uninhibited joy. And the word “tale” extends beyond the immediacy of the dramatic moment to encompass and engage the generic identity of the play, suggestively registered in its very title, *The Winter's Tale*. Indeed, it draws self-reflexive attention to the play's larger preoccupation with the identity of truth and with the (in)ability of the audience to gain access to that truth. Any text that declares itself to be in possession of truth is doing nothing more than making a declaration. How one proceeds to verify the existence of truth is beyond prescription. The Third Gentleman's statement, “that which you hear you'll swear you see, there is such unity in the proofs,” complexifies the experience of proof and verification by making hearing synonymous with seeing (V.ii.32-3): it offers a false closing of the gap, interrogating further the discourse of religious conviction and its premise that truth is accessible. The point is that hearing about something is not the same as seeing it. With sight one is at least present at the occasion of an event, even if its meaning is necessarily obtained through the mediations of one's interpretive faculties and therefore subjective. What I am proposing is that the entire thematic movement of *The Winter's Tale* complexifies precisely the Third Gentleman's premise: that you can gather “unity in the proofs” of what you hear, and proceed from there to an affirmation of its “verity.” If there is one thing to learn from the treacherous figure of rumor in English Renaissance texts, it is that putting stock in what you hear but have not seen and verified can prove destructive.

In *The Winter's Tale*, performance neither kills belief nor elicits from its audience reflexive complicity in accepting the illusory and fictive status of theatrical representation. Indeed, when art draws attention to itself as art, as the statue of Hermione does, at least at one level, it opens up an entire domain of controversy that is the conflict of belief structures in Renaissance England. The conjoining of Reformation and Catholic motifs results in producing a highly uncomfortable and uneasy reader, who is then compelled to interpret and make sense of the play's apparent ideological contradictions and the meanings toward which they gesture. The
experience of grappling with this destabilizing conjunction of theological and doctrinal motifs in *The Winter's Tale* appears not to be very different from the kind of response readers generally bring to the playfully controversial and ironic literary production of another English Renaissance poet, John Donne. In Donne's poem, “The Canonization,” for example, the conflation of sacred and profane motifs in a lyric poem that transforms two carnal lovers into the saints of love resonates with distinctly Catholic echoes. Translating the lovers into saints also confers on them iconic status; these lovers now get sought after and revered by the very same people who had begun by criticizing and castigating them. One question persists after reading Donne's “The Canonization”: Is the poem registering sympathy for the Catholic faith through the opaque structures of the lyric's ironic performance, or is the poet critiquing identifiable structures in the Catholic faith by associating these with a carnal and secular love? When framed in a slightly different way, these questions are equally applicable to engaging the specific dramatic conditions of *The Winter's Tale*, where theological structures are invoked not to endorse specific doctrinal positions but to facilitate consideration of the distinctions, if any, existing between knowledge and opinion, faith and gullibility. The play refuses to grant to faith a privileged position in the apprehension and interpretation of experiential reality, suggesting that the efficacy it possesses in bringing (dead) texts to life is finally no different from powers conventionally ascribed to art. Likewise, whatever mystified authority scriptural revelation is perceived to possess appears to be no different from the validity of the classical and pagan traditions themselves. By not permitting faith and theological dogma the final say on what the ultimate significance of the highly provocative reanimating of Hermione's statue may be, *The Winter's Tale* interrogates the very ground on which claims of access to definitive knowledge and transcendent truth are built.

One perspective on the experience of faith in the play is offered in an unlikely place: Autolycus's successful sale of the ballads he had been advertising. After this resounding success, Autolycus enjoys a hearty laugh at the expense of the rustic folk he had just gulled: “Ha, ha! what a fool Honesty is! and Trust, his sworn brother, a very simple gentleman! I have sold all my trumpery: not a counterfeit stone, not a ribbon, glass, pomander, brooch, table-book, ballad, knife, tape, glove, shoe-tie, bracelet, horn-ring, to keep my pack from fasting: they throng who should buy first, as if my trinkets had been hallowed and brought a benediction to the buyer” (IV.iv.596-603, emphasis mine). When Autolycus looks at the credulity of the rustic folk, he imagines a crowd moved by religious fervor. Autolycus offers a comment linking faith directly to superstitious belief and ignorance. His “hallowed” trinket and the “benediction” it brings to the buyer and seeker provide terms of reference directly relevant to reading the reconciliation scene at the end of *The Winter's Tale*. The exercise of Leontes' faith, we recall, takes place at a narrative moment redolent of the superstition embedding Roman Catholic practice and thought. If we, like Leontes, must exercise our faith in relating to the play, and this faith cannot be extricated from superstition, then it may be that the foundation of our sure knowledge is perhaps nothing more than ignorant or fond credulity—the acceptance of events that the play suggests are even more ridiculous than a tale told in the winter.

**Notes**


3. For an interesting account of the connection of the (Candlesmas) bear to a range of practices and observations marking the end of Christmastide leisure and the beginning of the agricultural work year, see Michael D. Bristol, “In Search of the Bear: Spatiotemporal Form and the Heterogeneity of Economies in *The Winter's Tale*,” *SQ [Shakespeare Quarterly]* 42, 2 (Summer 1991): 145-67, especially pp. 158-62.

4. I depart here from Stanley Cavell's conclusion that central to the scene in which Hermione returns to life is Shakespeare's interest in theater's competition with religion: see the chapter, “Recounting
Gains, Showing Losses: Reading *The Winter's Tale,*” in *Disowning Knowledge: In Six Plays of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1987), pp. 193-221. For Cavell, Hermione's resurrection obtains its primary significance not in relation to a theological framework, but to the power of the dramatist to bring words to life through art.


8. For the argument that *The Winter's Tale* is a play sustaining an anti-Catholic satire, see David Kaula, “Autolycus' Trumpery,” *SEL* 16, 2 (Spring 1976): 287-303. In his reading, Kaula focuses on the figure of Autolycus that, as the merchant of popish wares, becomes an important vehicle for facilitating and enabling this satire. While Kaula draws attention to Catholic resonances tied to Shakespeare's characterization of Autolycus and his craft(s), he ends up being overly deterministic in his allegorized reading of Autolycus's significance. For a more nuanced reading of the place of the Catholic discourse on idolatry in relation to Jewish, Greco-Roman, and Protestant ones, see Lupton, pp. 175-218. With regard to Perdita, a character that Kaula's reading transforms into an allegory of Christ's bride, Lupton finds a Catholic saint “debunked by the Reformation”; Perdita is, for Lupton, “both icon and idol, both pure image and material relic” (p. 205).


11. Interestingly, superstition occupies an important place in the pre-Christian world of Shakespeare's plays. In *Julius Caesar,* for example, Cassius speaks of Caesar as one who

\[
\text{is superstitious grown of late,}
\]

Quite from the main opinion he held once
Of fantasy, of dreams, and ceremonies.

In that play, the motif of superstition and use of supernatural machinery—“the strange impatience of the heavens,” Calphurnia's dream of the statue spouting blood, and the appearance of Caesar's ghost—serve to enhance dramatic effect by creating mood, tone, and atmosphere. See Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar,* ed. T. S. Dorsch (1955; rprt., London and New York: Methuen, 1983), II.i.195-7, I.iii.61. And, in *King Lear,* Edmund, the new political man, refers to society's habit of turning to superstition to explain unfortunate occurrences that have their true source in “the surfeits of our own behaviour.” In experiencing *Lear,* the audience does not find itself responding to the dramatization of the supernatural in these two plays by questioning its validity with reference to a theological understanding. See Shakespeare, *King Lear,* ed. Kenneth Muir (1964; rprt., London and New York: Methuen, 1982), I.ii.116-7.


15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.
“Opinion” also has a political dimension. For contesting accounts of how the Genesis story of Babel functions as an allegory for the subversive, destabilizing, and destructive force of opinions, see Sharon Achinstein, *Milton and the Revolutionary Reader* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1994), pp. 83-8. In *The Winter's Tale* itself, a striking feature is Shakespeare's specific portrayal of the king who mistakes opinion for truth as a tyrant. The resultant fracture in the relationship between the king and his queen possesses political meanings and resonances. Referring to how the representation of the family in early modern England, and specifically in Shakespeare's romances, is ideologically coded and possesses political significations, Constance Jordan has recently argued that Leontes' refusal to accept the ability of his subjects, indeed even his wife, to articulate themselves and have agency, points to an aspect of absolutist authority that poses great danger to the health of the body politic. In the portrait of the life of the royal family, one can indeed decipher the conditions governing the relationship between ruler and subject, between state and citizenry: see Jordan's *Shakespeare's Monarchies: Ruler and Subject in the Romances* (Ithaca and New York: Cornell Univ. Press, 1997), especially pp. 1-33 and 107-46. For a reading of how the motifs of resistance and disobedience found in *The Winter's Tale* may be read in conjunction with the matrix of radical political thought, see Richard Strier, *Resistant Structures: Particularity, Radicalism, and Renaissance Texts* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1995), pp. 200-2.

Janet Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays, “Hamlet” to “The Tempest”* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 221 and 223. Interestingly, the phase that Adelman identifies with the fantasy of a masculine “pastoral” uncontaminated by female presence corresponds culturally with the “androgyneous” phase in the raising of children in early modern England. Covering the first seven years of a child's life, both boys and girls were dressed in skirts. At about seven years or so, boys were formally breeched in a literal and symbolic enactment of their movement out of this phase in which the mother is primary caretaker. Citing Stephen Orgel on the subject, Louis Montrose has this practice in mind when discussing Shakespeare's treatment of the yielding of the changeling boy to Oberon by Titania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the play's articulation of its culture's “man-made system of sex and gender” (Montrose, *The Purpose of Playing: Shakespeare and the Cultural Politics of the Elizabethan Theatre* (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 167; see especially chap. 9 and p. 126.


Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft, Wherein the Lewde Dealing of Witches and Witchmongers is Notablie Detected, the Knauerie of Conjurers, the Impietie of Inchantors, the Follie of Soothsaiers, the Impudent Falshood of Couseners, the Infidelitie of Atheists, the Pestilent Practises of Pythonists, the Curiositie of Figurecasters, the Vanitie of Dreamers, the Beggerlie Art of Alcumystrie* (1584). Remarkably, Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft* is marked by numerous outbursts of deep compassion for the “witches,” who are, in reality, merely poor, old, and helpless women. For a study of the presence of the discourse of witchcraft in the practice of Shakespearean theater, see Stephen Greenblatt, “Shakespeare Bewitched,” in *New Historical Literary Study: Essays on Reproducing Texts, Representing History*, ed. Jeffrey N. Cox and Larry J. Reynolds (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1993), pp. 108-35.

Samuel Harsnett, *A Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures, to Withdraw the Harts of Her Majesties Subjects from Their Allegiance, and from the Truth of Christian Religion Professed in*


For the initial conception of this essay, I must express my debt to Richard Strier who first pointed out to me the importance of “opinion” and “knowledge” to the theological interests of The Winter's Tale. I have also enjoyed the benefit of vibrant responses to early versions of this paper presented publicly at the invaluable forum provided by the “Departmental Staff Seminar” at my university and also at the Kent Medieval Colloquium in Ohio.

The Winter's Tale (Vol. 68): Further Reading

CRITICISM


Summarizes the thematic implications of The Winter's Tale and demonstrates the ways in which theme is expressed through the play's structure.


Argues that challenges to the male-dominated social order in The Winter's Tale serve to reveal its inadequacies and suggests that patriarchal order is ultimately restored in such a way that includes and values women.


Asserts that Leontes's jealousy and its results are dramatized through Shakespeare's usage of tragic forms.


Investigates Shakespeare's exploitation of the stock comic relationship between tyrant (Leontes) and shrew (Paulina) to generate some level of sympathy for Leontes in order to allow him to participate in the play's comic resolution. Hartwig further demonstrates that other elements of the play similarly contribute to this blending of the tragic and comic in The Winter's Tale.


Contends that Shakespeare used women's language and silence to construct a resolution to the play that values femininity more positively than his earlier plays.


Studies Paulina's role in The Winter's Tale, maintaining that, in addition to her role as a major participant in the action, she comments on the key events of the play, serves as an agent of reconciliation, and assists in
controlling the audience's responses to other characters and scenes.


Contends that the tragic and comic elements of The Winter's Tale are deliberately presented as a parado of two supposedly incompatible genres that in reality exist side by side. Krier further studies the role of time in the relationship of the tragic and comic portions of the play.


Discusses the play's competing perspectives of time: one represented by the symbolic pattern of death and rebirth, the other by a scheme of steady progress or growth.


Explores the way in which Shakespeare used “wonder” to overcome the power of the rational in The Winter's Tale.

The Winter's Tale (Vol. 81): Introduction

The Winter's Tale

Although The Winter's Tale (ca. 1609) is generally classified as a romance, many critics view the play as a tragicomedy because of its two-part structure. The first part of the play, featuring the onset of Leontes's jealousy over his wife's relationship with his friend Polixenes, her subsequent public trial and humiliation, and the death of their son, includes elements common in Shakespearean tragedy. The second part of the work, however, with its pastoral setting and eventual happy ending, includes elements of comedy. The main source for The Winter's Tale is Robert Greene's novel Pandosto (1588), a tale of the destructive jealousy of the King of Bohemia ending in the deaths of his wife and infant son. Although he followed some of the details of his source very closely, Shakespeare drastically changed the ending of his version, eventually uniting Leontes with his wife and banished daughter. Although some critics have dismissed The Winter's Tale as a dramatic failure, criticizing the play for its thematic improbabilities and uneven structure, most modern scholars view the play as one of Shakespeare's most profoundly human dramas, as well as an example of Shakespeare's continuing development as an experimental dramatist. Scholars continue to analyze the play's dramatic structure, genre, and the enigmatic character of Leontes, attempting in a variety of ways to account for his seemingly irrational jealousy.

Character-based study of The Winter's Tale has primarily focused on Leontes. The King initiates the action in the play by his seemingly sudden outburst of jealousy, and this change in character has prompted much critical debate about the plausibility of the play's action. While many critics in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries regarded Leontes's behavior as unrealistic and unexplainable, modern critics have attempted to find clues to Leontes's state of mind prior to his outburst in the beginning of the play. Roger J. Trienens (1953) contends that the character is beset with feelings of distrust from the very beginning of the play, and that his invitation to Polixenes to extend his visit is merely “the device of jealousy seeking proof.” Richard H. Abrams (1986) also examines the source of Leontes's jealousy. Abrams notes that “[u]nder the spell of jealousy, Leontes is changed. His good angel, reason, abandons him, and the tempter, imagination, does his thinking for him.” Leontes's characterization is often contrasted with that of his wife Hermione, who
According to Wilbur Sanders (1987), rescues the play from a descent into utter failure. Sanders is appreciative of Hermione's serenity and calm in the face of terrifying accusations, noting that it is her presence that lends grace to the play despite Shakespeare's dramatic lapses.

Although popular in Shakespeare's day, *The Winter's Tale* has been less well-received in modern times. The play's structural irregularities has made *The Winter's Tale* a challenge for producers, directors, and actors alike. Many reviewers have noted that while the work is full of powerful characters and emotions, its two-part structure, which changes from tragedy to comedy, makes it difficult for actors to portray their characters in a believable manner. Michael Feingold, (see Further Reading) reviewing Brian Kulick's 2000 production of *The Winter's Tale* at the Delacorte Theatre in New York City, contends that although Kulick did an admirable job of creating a somber stage, his actors were unable to tap into the “inner life” of their characters, thus taking much of the passion out of a play that depends on the power of human emotion to overcome its dramatic challenges. Reviewing Barry Edelstein's 2002 Classic Stage Company production, Charles Isherwood (2003) acknowledges the difficulty faced by Edelstein in directing a modern-day production of this play, but notes that the performance suffered not from the efforts to reconcile the two worlds, but from the lackluster acting of the cast. In a complementary assessment of the same production, Charles McNulty (2003) claims that while Edelstein's modernistic staging of the play was elegant and unhurried, the acting failed to display authentic emotion, leaving the audience unable to connect to the far-fetched story. In contrast, Nina daVinci Nichols (see Further Reading) praises Edelstein's production, particularly John Strathairn's powerful and subdued rendering of Leontes's character. The fantastic elements of *The Winter's Tale* allow for innovative interpretation, such as Mathew Warchus's 2002 Royal Shakespeare Company production, which took place in a modern American setting. Reviewer Kenneth Tucker (see Further Reading) praises Warchus's imaginative use of twentieth-century parallelisms in the production, noting that despite occasional lapses, the production commanded the audience's attention.

Late-twentieth-century criticism of *The Winter's Tale* has focused heavily on its dramaturgy and structure. Critics such as Peter G. Platt (1997) regard the contrasting action of the play as a symbolic device used by Shakespeare to convey the oppositional nature of rationality and wonder. Platt contends that the first part of the play, with its focus on logic and facts, reveals the ultimate absurdity of speech and meaning when interpreted using only rationality and logic. Platt examines Leontes's misguided attempts at reason and rationality, which lead him to make misguided decisions. The second part of the play, focusing on the more romantic elements of the story, including a reconciliation based on grace and forgiveness, highlights the power of wonder and emotion. Other critics, such as Martine Van Elk (2000), have studied *The Winter's Tale* as an example of a play that clearly reflects the social and cultural concerns of contemporary Jacobean society, especially in regard to class and gender. Elk contends that the language of the play is a key indicator of how Jacobeans viewed issues of social mobility and identity, and proposes that the play “explores the contradictory constructions of class and gender that emerged from the Stuart court and the courtesy literature of its day.” In his critique of *The Winter's Tale*, Jerry H. Bryant (1963) places the play within the English pastoral tradition, and examines Shakespeare's transformation of the stereotypical elements of the pastoral style to create a tale that is “an involved and subtle commentary on appearance and reality.” In contrast, Joan Hartwig (1970) places *The Winter's Tale* in the realm of tragicomedy, arguing that the play ultimately demonstrates the benevolence of the power that controls the universe. Despite Leontes's seemingly unpardonable behavior, Hartwig maintains that his ultimate repentance and reunion with Hermione is characteristic of Shakespeare's tragicomic perspective, forcing the audience and readers to suspend rational judgment in favor of appreciating the wonder of humanity.

**Criticism: Overviews And General Studies: Jerry H. Bryant (essay date autumn 1963)**
It is curious that no appraiser or appreciator seems to have puzzled over the kinship of *The Winter's Tale* with the pastoral tradition. Most commentators tacitly assume the connection, then abandon it to court other features. Some explain the drama as tragicomedy, some as one of the “last plays”. Others see it against the background of Elizabethan thought. Still others, lately, have examined the grammar, the vocabulary, and the reverberations of the imagery. All these approaches are good, cogent, helpful; but the pastoral element has gone begging for an analyst. For that matter, Sir Walter Greg once went so far as to say that “it is characteristic of the shepherd scenes in that play, written in the full maturity of Shakespeare's genius, that, in spite of their origins in Greene's romance of *Pandosto*, they owe nothing of their treatment to pastoral tradition, nothing to convention, nothing to aught save life. …”¹ This persistent neglect of an important historical precedent deserves correction. I should like, therefore, first to try to show that Shakespeare is in fact very much a part of the pastoral tradition and that *The Winter's Tale* can be seen as an example of the English pastoral drama, which has roots in classical, Italian, and English literature. Then I should like to go on to a consideration of the freshness and vitality which Shakespeare brings to the tradition, showing how he transforms the hackneyed conventions of the pastoral into an involved and subtle commentary on appearance and reality.

The most indirect influence upon the English pastoral drama and hence upon *The Winter's Tale* is the classical one. First of all there was the pastoral eclogue, given most of its forms and themes by Theocritus. His shepherds were isolated in the hills of Sicily where they were safe from the fever of the city and court. They piped to their flocks, contested in song with their companions, wooed their nymphs, complained of unrequited love. They spoke of milk-white lambs, pretty shepherdesses, and gifts of red apples. Theocritus' pastoral world was also a place where gods and goddesses rubbed shoulders with human Sicilians. But even the mythological deities were drawn with an exactness and a benign humor which have given the Theocritan idyls their hallmark of refreshing and delightful realism.

The Greek pastoral idyl was extended into the Roman world by Virgil, who imitated Theocritus. In the exchange, something of the original freshness was lost. Virgil's mind was largely upon either his own problems or those of the world, and he used the eclogue to disguise contemporary allusion or direct satire upon the shortcomings of the civilized world.² Thus, though the complaints, the singing contests, the talk of love remained, they were included for something more than the simple delight they in themselves could bring. And so we get a noble prophecy of Astrea's return, some waspish complaining about the politics which caused Virgil trouble with his farm, and Silenus' philosophical song describing the progress of earth's creation.

The other aspect of the classical influence upon the English pastoral drama is the Greek romance. The long prose tales of Heliodorus and Achilles Tatius, in particular, received enthusiastic audience during the Renaissance for the endless adventuring to exotic shores contained in them. Unlike the stories of chivalry, which spotlighted the activities of a single knight, the Greek romance focused upon two protagonists, a boy and a girl. The typical tale begins with their falling in love. But before the two youths are able to consummate their passion, the gods send down on their heads every conceivable kind of adversity. They are kidnapped, singly or in pair; they are captured by pirates, separated, sold into slavery; re-united, they are cast adrift in a violent storm. The reader follows these exciting characters from one end of the world to the other. Other things keep the lovers apart. In the *Aethiopica* of Heliodorus, the hero cannot marry the heroine because of her inferior origins. But after the two have been tossed about the world's seas, she is discovered to be the daughter of the Ethiopian king. The disparity resolved, the two marry amidst much rejoicing.
The eclogue and the Greek romance went pretty much underground during the period of the Middle Ages. But they both reappeared in the Renaissance with considerable force. Virgil's pastoralism was adopted by Boccaccio, Petrarch, Mantuan, Tasso, Marot, and Spenser. Latin and vernacular eclogues sprang abundantly from these writers' pens. The artificiality which was incipient in Virgil's pastorals became the identifying trait of the Renaissance ecloguists' work. The pastoral scene is used to disguise hyperbolic praise of patrons or monarchs, to mask satire upon the sham and hypocrisy of contemporary society, to cover up discussions of religious and political issues. Since the aim of these writers was not to recreate an accurate picture of the shepherd's life, the scene became idealized and stereotyped, a quality which we always associate today with the pastoral as a form, ignoring the realistic beginnings of the tradition. Nevertheless, this genre was extremely popular and it is important to the pastoral drama.

The first direct influence upon the English stage which I want to examine is the Italian pastoral drama. It is Greg's thesis that this drama grew out of the pastoral eclogues discussed above, which were read with enthusiasm at the court of Ferrara. The plays which came to be written to meet the demand for more drama than the mere eclogue provided contained echoes of the Greek romance. The best examples of the Italian pastoral drama are Tasso's Aminta, first acted at Ferrara in 1573 and translated into English in 1591, and Guarini's Il Pastor Fido, performed at Ferrara in 1585 and translated in 1602. Aminta, in Tasso's play, is unsuccessful in his suit to the huntress Silvia. When Aminta rescues his love from the clutches of a rude satyr who has bound her to a tree, Silvia, with rather questionable modesty, runs away into the forest. Later it is thought that she has been devoured by a wild beast. In despair Aminta leaps off a cliff. But Silvia has not been killed and she returns from the forest. Upon being informed of the results of her hard-heartedness and Aminta's great love and fidelity, she goes to recover his body. Luckily, Aminta was not killed when he jumped, and the two join their loves.

Il Pastor Fido is longer and more complicated than the Aminta and has more resemblances to the Greek romance. Mirtillo, the faithful shepherd, cannot marry his Amarillis because of his low birth. The oracle has assured the country that it will not be delivered from a certain curse until

```plaintext
  two of heavens issue love unite
And for the auncient fault of that false wight,
A faithful Shepherds pittie make amends.(5)
```

Mirtillo, doggedly faithful throughout, turns out to be the shepherd spoken of in the prophecy, for his fidelity “makes amends”. And at the auspicious moment, he is also found to be of “heavens issue”, i.e. of royal shepherd birth. These brief synopses show that the dominating interest in the Italian pastoral drama is the youthful love affair, as it was in the Greek romance. They also show that fidelity and honor can overcome any impediment to the realization of love. What they do not reveal are the rich appendages to the main action: the lustful satyrs, the wanton shepherds and shepherdesses, the disguise, the mistaken identities—in short, any of the dramatic devices which provide conflict by threatening the chastity, honor, and fidelity of the hero or heroine. The more obstacles to overcome the better, but fidelity always wins out; maidenheads are retained; chaste Jack gets his chaste Jill.

The other direct influence upon the English pastoral drama is the pastoral prose romance. Sidney's Arcadia, Greene's Menaphon and Pandosto, Lodge's Rosalynde—all eventually were acted, in one form or another, upon the stage. Like the Italian pastoral drama, the romance has roots in classical literature, that is, the Greek romance; all three genres, in fact, share several features. All are preoccupied with the honor of the heroine, an honor kept intact so long as she remains a virgin. All produce conflict by throwing up obstacles in the course of true love. And the theme of fidelity in love is central in all three forms. Finally, all rely extensively upon mistaken identity or disguise. In the pastoral romance a maiden of royal birth is for various reasons, usually parental dissatisfaction, sent into the wilds where she is raised by shepherds. Variations have the abandoned person a child, either male or female. Then, the banished character's lineage unknown, he woos a princess.
(who might be disguised as a shepherd); or she is wooed by a prince. The disguise motif is carried out in a variety of ways—change of clothing, magical transformation, or confusions surrounding the birth of the hero or heroine. These disguises, however, are no match for the protagonists' powerful love. The heroes' passion sweeps away appearances; a prince's love will be drawn to a princess in spite of the fact that she is dressed in shepherd's weeds. All of this suggests a further contribution of the pastoral romance: the court element, for the pastoral episode usually is presented within a frame of action which begins and ends in the court. With the ejection of one or more characters from court the action is set in motion, and the resolution is made when those characters are accepted back into the active life after finding the necessary answers in a pastoral setting.

Examples of the English pastoral drama show a wide range of borrowing from all of these traditions. George Peele's *The Arraignment of Paris*, an odd, masque-like little play, is very much like a pastoral eclogue. On the other hand, Fletcher's *The Faithful Shepherdess* begins a large debt to the Italian pastoral drama with its title. A composite of the Greek romance, the Italian pastoral drama, and the pastoral romance occurs in *The Maydes Metamorphosis*, which contains the court frame, features dancing and singing, and peoples itself with mythological deities, shepherds, nymphs, princes, and princesses. It also uses the oracle. Love and fidelity, impeded by the forces of disguise and lust, form the main plot motives. A companion piece to *The Maydes Metamorphosis* is *The Thracian Wonder*, an incredibly complicated dramatization of Greene's incredibly complicated romance *Menaphon*. This play deals not only with several sets of lovers, but several generations of them.

The debt of *The Winter's Tale* to the pastoral tradition which I have sketched can be made clear through some specific citations. For instance, the humor and realism in the fourth act have been cited as examples of Shakespeare's freedom from the pastoral tradition. The fact is that the tradition began in a humorous spirit with Theocritus. In Idyl IV two herdsmen gossip about the state of local herds and flocks, a neighbor's journey to the Olympics, the death of Amaryllis, and the fact that their cows are grazing in the wrong place. Battus gets a thorn in his foot. The talk turns to the pursuit of a young girl by an old man, who is apparently successful. In the next Idyl a goatherd and a shepherd hotly accuse each other of robbery. They resolve their argument through a singing contest. Thievery, thorns in a shepherd's foot, cows grazing in the wrong place—Theocritus is amusingly frank and quite realistic.

Perhaps the humor which was potential in the pastoral was smothered by the serious purposes of Virgil and his imitators, but clearly Theocritus' impulse was valid. The low characters which the poet must treat make the form ripe for comedy. Even Guarini sees the comic possibilities. In Act I, Scene v, of *Il Pastor Fido*, a satyr embarks upon an amusing discourse concerning the artifice of women in decorating their faces with make-up and plucking their eyebrows. There is also a pretty scene in which Dorinda, a determined shepherdess in pursuit of the young bachelor hunter Silvio, withholds the boy's hunting dog until he gives her a kiss.

Comic realism abounds in much of the English pastoral drama. *The Maydes Metamorphosis* contains three comic characters who are the ancestors of Autolycus. Joculo, Mopso, and Frisco are a spry lot, rogues and singers. In one of the longest acts of the play the three comics enter upon the stage singing, as Autolycus does when we first see him. Joculo, the page of the hero Ascanio, is recognized by the rustic Mopso: "Yes, if you be the Joculo I take you for, we have heard of your exploits / For cosoning of some seven and thirtie alewives in the villages here about." Neither thievery nor humor is new to the pastoral tradition, and Perdita's foster brother, as attested here by Mopso, can take some comfort in the fact that he was not the only innocent cozened by a rogue who once served a nobleman. Autolycus, too, is a thief and rogue, adept at changing his roles and his clothes. Even more, he has an irrepressible bent for song, and that, of course, is the indispensable requirement of the pastoral character.

There are other links between *The Winter's Tale* and the pastoral tradition. It has already been said that the pastoral eclogue became in the Renaissance an instrument for satire and commentary on present-day events. By the sixteenth century the conventional object of the satire had become the courtier, pompous and artificial,
mouthing deep emotions but not feeling them. Guarini pays lip service to the convention. The ideal life of the country invokes unfavorable criticism of the city and the court, for in the country the swains are not bothered with “vaine and most immoderate hope”, as Uranio says in Il Pastor Fido. Not to be outdone by Uranio's praise of the rural scene, Carino levels a few acid remarks at the court, where he found

People in name and wordes right and curtuous
But in good deedes most scarce, and Pitties foes:
People in face, gentle and pleasant still;
But fiercer then th'outragious swelling sea:
.....The greater showes they make, the less troth they mean.(10)

The lively pages of The Maydes Metamorphosis use less invective and more fun. Joculo has told Frisco that he has never heard his master Ascanio swear “six round oaths”. Frisco, snorting, says, “I will stand too't hee's neither brave Courtier, bouncing Cavalier, nor boone Companion if he swear not some time; for they will sweare, forswear, and sweare.” “How sweare, forswear, and sweare?” asks Joculo. Why, retorts Frisco, “They'll swear at dyce, forswear their debts, and swear when they lose their labour in love.” 11 Autolycus is the kinsman of these characters, but he is a better satirist. After he has put on Florizel's clothing, Autolycus meets the Clown and the Old Shepherd. The latter, fooled by the clothes, asks him if he is a courtier. Autolycus in his answer captures the superficiality of the courtier's vain affectations:

Seest thou not the air of the court in these enfoldings? Hath not my gait in it the measure of the court? Receives not thy nose court-odour from me? Reflect I not on thy baseness court-contempt? Think'st thou, for that I insinuate, or touse from thee thy business, I am therefore no courtier? I am courtier cap-a-pie.

(IV.iv.754 ff.)

The parallels continue to accumulate. One of the principal characters in The Arraignment of Paris was Flora. As goddess of flowers, she bestows her blooms upon Juno, Pallas, and Venus, according to their degree. For her perfection in this she receives great praise from Venus. The first words addressed to Perdita are, “These your unusual weeds to each part of you / Do give a life; no shepherdess, but Flora, / Peering in April's front” (IV. iv. 1-3). Perdita carries out Flora's activities, distributing flowers, as part of her office, according to the age of her visitors. The exactness of her floral knowledge moves Polixenes to utter his famous speech on Nature and Art. The common tradition which the two plays share is even more emphasized when we compare the discussion between Perdita and Polixenes with the pronouncement of the chorus in Peele's play concerning Flora's activity:

What living wight shall chance to see
These goddesses, each placed in her degree,
Portrayed by Flora's workmanship alone,
Must say that art & nature met in one.(12)

At the end of the flower episode Camillo, as Venus did Flora, praises Perdita: “I should leave grazing, were I of your flock, / And only live by gazing.” Shakespeare, given a pastoral situation, turns to the broad outline presented by tradition.

Shakespeare's use of what seems to be a conventional sequence occurs again. The two lovers of The Thracian Wonder, disguised and unknown to each other and living in pastoral seclusion, take part in a celebration similar to the sheep-shearing festival in The Winter's Tale. The high point of the celebration comes with a dance, and the disguised lovers, Radagon and Ariadne, find themselves partners. So clearly superior are they to the others and so suited are they to each other that they win the garland. Following the dance, Tityrus, another of Autolycus' ancestors, appears as Janus. In this guise he entertains the guests. Then the stage is
cleared except for the Clown. He climbs a tree when he sees the love-sick Palemon enter. Palemon mistakes him for his loved one and threatens to climb up the tree in pursuit. The Clown descends, braving the misguided ardor of Palemon in the hope of getting at the banquet left on the tables. But Palemon, the complete lover, feels it is dangerous to eat. The Clown, however, takes the realistic approach: “Let’s fill our bellies and we shall purge the better.”

Shakespeare’s feast is more polished but the same actions occur in like order. After the guests have gathered, Florizel claims the hand of Perdita for “our dance”. The stage-directions call for “a dance of Shepherds and the Shepherdesses” to follow. The appropriate comments are made about the grace of Perdita, fit partner for the princely Florizel. Then the attention is turned, as in The Thracian Wonder, to the comic characters. Autolycus enters, again singing, and the Clown becomes the willing purchaser of some bawdy ballads for Mopsa and Dorcas. The correspondences go even to the satiric handling of love in both plays at the same point in the action.

The last scene of Act III, in which Antigonus deposits Perdita in the wilds of Bohemia, has crowded into it several conventions. The storm which sinks the ship is the same storm which cast the lovers adrift in more than one Greek and pastoral romance. Here it covers up the origins of the abandoned child. The famous bear that eats up poor Antigonus has its counterparts in both the romance and the pastoral drama. In Tasso’s Aminta, as we have seen, the heroine is seen pursuing a wolf. Later she is thought to have been devoured by the animal. And the princely cousins of Sidney’s Arcadia display their courage by saving their princesses from a raving beast. Where, however, in Shakespeare’s forerunners the animal usually came off worst, here we get a vivid description of the bear’s triumph over Antigonus. This does serve to cut the last strand of Perdita’s connection with her origins. But so horrible are the accounts of the killing that it seems likely Shakespeare was spoofing the clichés of storms and wild animals, in spite of G. Wilson Knight’s solemn assurance that “We must take the bear seriously, as suggesting man’s insecurity in the face of untamed nature.”

Chasing parallels is a pointless game which I do not want to play for itself alone. I wish only to establish that the presence in The Winter’s Tale of the conventions I have referred to indicates that Shakespeare wrote within a well-defined tradition and that the material he used was chosen consciously from that tradition. But at the most important points, Shakespeare becomes unconventional, and the departure from his models shows us the playwright in control, modifying the conventions considerably because they do not offer a vessel capacious enough for his meaning. His treatment of the most important theme in the pastoral, fidelity in love, illustrates such modification clearly.

Fidelity and disguise go together. In The Maydes Metamorphosis, Eurymine, a lady of “obscure birth”, is banished from the court because Ascanio, the Duke’s son, is in love with her. She is conducted to the forest and cast into the wilderness. Her beauty attracts several lovers, one of them the god Apollo. To remain true to her Ascanio she must escape the god’s advances; so she tricks him into transforming her into a boy. When Ascanio arrives in the forest looking for Eurymine, he is understandably nonplussed by his feelings for the “boy” he finds there. He remains faithful, however, and is rewarded. Eurymine returns to girldom, her noble birth is discovered, and the two children are happily accepted back into the court fold. Chastity is maintained through disguise; fidelity wipes away the disguise.

The romantic ethic based on a fidelity which is either impeded or assisted by disguise is set out clearly by Fletcher in The Faithful Shepherdess. Clorin, the faithful shepherdess, is drawn as the epitome of fidelity. Remaining true to her dead shepherd, Clorin has retired into a little glade to make her hut near a life-giving fountain, a pleasant little retreat full of symbolism and similar to the fountain of Diana in Daphnis and Chloe. She has learned much forest lore and in the course of the play she uses herbs to cure the wounds of various shepherds and shepherdesses. These latter characters stand for all degrees of faithfulness, from the lustful, calculating Chloe to the innocent Amoret. Chloe indiscriminately tries to seduce every man who happens along. Amoret, however, has vowed her love to Perigot, who returns her passion as long as she is chaste. But Amarillis also wants Perigot and sets out to win him. By magic Amarillis changes her appearance into that of Amoret and in this disguise offers herself to Perigot. Since Perigot’s love for Amoret goes only as far as her
virginity, her overture revolts him. In a fit of anger he wounds the disguised Amarillis and runs off into the woods. There are many variations upon this incident in the play, but in the end the good and the evil are rewarded in correspondence to the magnitude of their sins and virtues. Chloe is ejected from the forest; Amoret and Perigot, both wounded, are reunited; Amarillis is forgiven; the rest get their just due. Presiding over all and curing those worthy of being cured is Clorin, who, chaste and faithful above all human powers, wields, in the name of fidelity, the regenerative services.\textsuperscript{15}

As most other pastoral playwrights and romancers, Fletcher has given a shallow treatment of a noble virtue, even though he explores more than one face of the motif. The interest is in chastity, the refraining from sexual intercourse. Love goes no further. Within this limited frame there is no lack of stereotyped characters representing degrees of good and bad. Real human feelings are hardly given a chance. Moreover, the truth behind the disguises is a very narrow truth. Reality and right are seen only in the cramped sphere dominated by a shallow concept of love. Further implications of this attitude are explained by Greg, who, in speaking of Tasso's \textit{Aminta}, says that there is present "a degeneration of sexual feeling … [that is] primarily of an animal nature, and this in a sense other than that in which physical love may be said to form an element in all natural relations between men and women."\textsuperscript{16} The same holds for almost all of the precursors of \textit{The Winter's Tale}, since the romancers and the playwrights seem more interested in arousing excitement in their audience than honestly exploring human feelings.

Greene, in \textit{Pandosto},\textsuperscript{17} paid fealty to the convention of fidelity. A brief glance at the main action of the book will show this. Pandosto (Leontes) in fact does lose his wife Bellaria (Hermione). She dies after Pandosto, in a jealous rage, has caused the death of their son, sent away Egistus (Polixenes), and set adrift Fawnia (Perdita). This story comprises about a third of the narrative. The remaining two-thirds of the book focus upon Dorastus (Florizel) and Fawnia. Unguided, Fawnia lands upon the shores of Sicily, is found by a shepherd, and is raised by him and his wife. In time she meets Dorastus and, as is traditional in the romance, the two youngsters fall in love at first sight. Greene spends a good deal of time lingering over the sensibilities aroused during the courtship, capitalizing upon his opportunity with the usual long monologues. Finally, after some courtly fencing, the two declare their mutual passions and Dorastus spirits his shepherdess away to Bohemia, where his ship is blown by a storm. They try to disguise themselves by taking false names, but Pandosto does not believe their stories and imprisons Dorastus. Then he attempts the chastity of Fawnia, whom, of course, he does not recognize. Egistus, discovering the whereabouts of his son and his son's paramour, requests Pandosto to execute them. At the last moment, however, Fawnia's foster father appears and reveals her true identity. The shock is so great for Pandosto that he commits suicide. Dorastus and Fawnia are left occupying the stage, prototypes of pastoral romantic lovers. The goal of the book is the happiness of Dorastus and Fawnia, and it is achieved through a stereotyped fidelity.

Shakespeare makes many changes, but the most significant one is the departure from the usual handling of the fidelity theme. Instead of making the inviolable love between Florizel and Perdita the center of the action, he uses it for the examination of a larger problem—the nature of truth. The fact that Hermione remains alive and steals the last scene from her daughter throws the dramatic weight upon the story of herself and Leontes. Greene exploits the conventional courtly romance between Dorastus and Fawnia, playing upon their falling in love, and the obstacles to consummating that love, for the sake of sentimental chills. Shakespeare is not interested in that. By shifting the focus, he anatomizes an infected king whose disease is an inability to see the truth. Leontes' disease is developed through contrast with other examples of the apprehension of truth and reality. Shakespeare, in submitting to certain superficial aspects of the pastoral tradition, transforms them into devices for commenting seriously upon the theme of reality and experience and its importance to the conduct of a king.

The serious commentary begins with Leontes' misapprehension of actuality. Suddenly, without warning, he is seized by an unreasoning, unfounded certainty of his wife's infidelity. His infected mind "[does] make possible things not so held" (I. ii. 139). He deludes himself into believing the raging fancies of his own
dreams, fancies derived from the most tenuous appearances. Camillo shows that nothing is going on between Hermione and Leontes' childhood friend Polixenes by having to ask whom Leontes suspects Hermione of being unfaithful with (I. ii. 307). Both chastity and fidelity are issues here, as the conventions demand, but they are not the main issues. The main one is the awfulness of Leontes' burning mind, fabricating at will: “Is whispering nothing? Is leaning cheek to cheek? Is meeting noses? Kissing with inside lip?” (I. ii. 284-286). To this Camillo replies, “Good my lord, be cur’d.” Camillo cannot verify Leontes' suspicions because there is nothing to be verified. Fearing for his own life and unable any longer to support Leontes' imaginings, Camillo defects to Polixenes with the information about Leontes' plot upon the life of the Bohemian king. Hard upon this, Leontes' Sicilian courtiers, for whom we have no reason to feel anything other than respect and trust, deny Leontes' accusations against Hermione and Polixenes. Finally, divinely pointing up the phantoms of Leontes' mind, the oracle clears Hermione in every eye but Leontes'.

This jealousy, this humour, brings Leontes near to madness—“Dost think I am so muddy, so unsettled, / To appoint myself in this vexation …” (I. ii. 325-326). Paulina declares that she is “no less honest than you are mad” (II. iii. 70-71), and “These dangerous unsafe lunes I' th' King, beshrew them” (II. ii. 30). In this humour Leontes betrays the obligations of a good king. He becomes cruel and peremptory. He refuses the counsel of his nobles. He commits himself, without moderation, to his own passion. The results of this are serious. He loses a friend, a son, a daughter, and a wife. But the consequences are not confined to the personal sphere. A ruler who treats the truth as something of his own making must eventually unhinge his state. The repercussions of his irresponsible suspicions, so firm in his mind that they create a world which he actually sees and feels (II. i. 152), are potentially cataclysmic. An apprehension of what is and what should be are principal requirements for the good ruler; Leontes attempts to shape reality to his own fantasies.

The psychological implications of Leontes' anger are a good deal deeper than those present in similar situations in other examples of the pastoral drama. In part this derives from Greene. But Pandosto's jealousy is brought about gradually; he at least makes a feint at examining what might be only appearances. Shakespeare treats the situation with more daring. Because he provides no real motives for Leontes' jealousy, the irrationality of his fancies is dramatically emphasized. In The Maydes Metamorphosis the Duke banishes Eurymine because his son loves her. He does not, however, merely imagine that that love exists; he has it from his son's own testimony. He is legitimately angered because he does not and cannot know Eurymine's birth, and so attempts to save his son from an inferior match. Radagon, in The Thracian Wonder, disguises himself to woo Ariadne, the daughter of the Thracian king. She submits and when she becomes pregnant, unmistakably by Radagon, her father sends the two lovers and the child to sea in little boats. The actions of these two rulers might not have been “right”, but the men knew what they saw. The only disguises in these plays were physical disguises which really did mask the identity of those involved. But the disguise in the first three acts of The Winter's Tale is of Leontes' own making and is intimately connected with psychological truth and observable reality. Some ten years after the production of The Winter's Tale Bacon, speaking in another context, will state a generality which embraces Leontes' problem: “… everyone … has a cave or den of his own, which refracts and discoursours the light of nature. …”

Shakespeare cures Leontes' infected mind through the pastoral, and, as we have seen, that episode contains almost all of the conventions of the genre. The devices of disguise and mistaken identity are again put to the task of exploring the reality and appearance theme. But more than that, Shakespeare uses them to point up Leontes' shortcomings. In contrast to his distortion of reality according to his own “den”, the characters in Act IV are confronted with tangible costume disguises and mistaken identities which make their inability to see the truth quite justifiable. Polixenes, in other words, like the Duke in The Maydes Metamorphosis, cannot be blamed too severely for not wanting his royal son to marry what appears to be a mere shepherd girl. The reprehensibility of Leontes' unjustifiable delusions, however, is most effectively emphasized by Florizel and Autolycus.
Florizel is the fairy prince who does not concern himself with the mere appearance of outward trappings. Through infallible intuition and the highest integrity he pierces externals to discover the emotional truth of Perdita's real quality. The clarity of his vision, which sees through the physical disguise, throws into relief the blindness of Leontes, who had no such impediment to overcome. Indeed, the truth was clear to all but him. In Act IV the truth is clear only to the faithful Florizel. Shakespeare heightens the effectiveness of this contrast by ennobling the relationship between Florizel and Perdita, another example of his transformation of hackneyed conventions into living situations. In former pastorals, love was a matter of sex and it was expressed through chastity. Shakespeare does not avoid or reject the virtue; he simply does not use it as the foundation of real love. Perdita is too charming for chastity even to be an issue. Without the priggishness of her pastoral forebears, she declares her heart with disarming candor. She is like her mother and Florizel discerns her worth under her apparent identity. This innocent love, in other pastorals valuable only in itself, becomes the means of restoring a civic body to health.

The other main contrast to Leontes' behavior comes in Autolycus. He suffers from no delusions. He may be a thief, a cozener, a sharp salesman, but he is thoroughly truthful with himself, and he has taken full measure of the reality about him. The most interesting comments on the nature of truth and appearance and reality are made through Autolycus. First of all, his constant changing of costumes reflects truth—it is first one thing and then another. Secondly, the word truth is bandied about during the ballad-selling, and Autolycus, knowing the truth, is several jumps ahead of his coney's. Mopsa, in her country innocence, says, “I love a ballad in print o' life, for then we are sure they are true” (IV.iv.263). How slenderly people go about learning the truth, as though print could create it. The silly shepherds, mouths hanging open in awe, take the pedlar's word for truth that a usurer's wife actually bore “twenty money-bags at a burden”, and that a fish high above the water sang a “ballad against the sad hearts of maids”. The truth is disguised under many robes, but Mopsa's gullibility is no more grotesque and certainly less consequential than Leontes', who believed something worse upon less provocation.

Later, when Autolycus switches clothes with Florizel, his shrewd eye detects “a piece of iniquity” in the prince's actions. But instead of performing his duty to his sovereign like a good subject, he decides to conceal his knowledge about Florizel's actions because such concealment is the “more knavery”. Under different circumstances such a commitment to knavery would seem sinister, as it does with Richard III. But Shakespeare's use of irony saves Autolycus for comedy and strengthens his effectiveness as a foil to Leontes. It is ironical that Autolycus should use such a clear grasp of reality to achieve knavery, while a king, lacking that grasp, threatened a whole realm. But, to enrich the irony, dramatically it is not knavery at all for it works a better end, since it allows Florizel's escape and sets up the happy conclusion. The escape of the lovers is served by a knave, when two kings almost destroyed the youngsters through varying degrees of blindness.

The final comment upon Leontes' inability to distinguish between reality and appearance comes in Act V. The Clown and the Old Shepherd, now known to be the foster relatives of Perdita, confront Autolycus with their new-made fineries. The Clown forces from him the acknowledgment that the two shepherds are “gentlemen born”. It is characteristic of Autolycus' astute acceptance of circumstances that he meekly, without the old loquacity, surrenders: “I know you are now, sir, a gentleman born” (V.ii.146). The Clown will never know the difference between the truth and mere appearances. Autolycus has always known, and has laughed. The Clown is a generous fellow and when Autolycus declares that he is going to mend his ways, the Clown insists that he “will swear to the Prince thou art as honest a true fellow as any in Bohemia” (168). This swearing disturbs the Old Shepherd, who asks, “How if it be false, son?” The Clown replies, “If it be ne'er so false, a true gentleman may swear it in the behalf of his friend” (176). A gentleman, in short, may swear the truth into existence; just as a ballad in print, for Mopsa, might declare absurdities true; and just as Leontes' fancies might “make possible things not so held”. These distortions of truth are all of the same class. Leontes' delusions, serious as they are, are made ridiculous when they are paralleled with those of Mopsa and the Clown.
The Clown gets in the last word with Autolycus, and as though to emphasize the pertinence of his remarks to the Leontes episode, he opens the curtains for the final scene when he announces the entrance of the royal entourage on its way to see the “Queen's picture”. And so the action shifts and we are shown the final prodigy. Hermione, appearing to be a statue, returns to life. Appearances are swept away and reality is restored. Theodore Spencer has said that in the last plays appearance is evil and reality is good.\(^\text{19}\) In *The Winter's Tale*, the evil lies not in appearance itself but in the royal mind which insists that appearance is reality. To explore this premise, Shakespeare converts the stereotyped conventions of the pastoral drama into highly original instruments which combine to form one of the best of his last plays.

**Notes**

6. For an extensive list of plot conventions see Edwin Greenlaw, “Shakespeare's Pastorals”, *SP* [Scholarly Publishing], XII (1916), 123.
8. All references to the Idyls are from *Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus*, ed. A. Lang (London, 1918).

**Criticism: Overviews And General Studies: Joan Hartwig (essay date March 1970)**


*In the following essay, Hartwig proposes that in The Winter's Tale Shakespeare used a miraculous resolution to create a sense of dislocation and wonder in his audience, using Leontes's penitence and eventual recovery of Hermione as a way to stress the benevolence of the power that controls universe.*

In *The Winter's Tale*, Leontes, confronted with the breathing statue which is Hermione, pleads to keep this moment which is penultimate to actual discovery. Paulina, aware of the intensity with which Leontes has responded to the apparent statue of Hermione, offers to draw the curtain.
PAUL.

I'll draw the curtain:

My lord's almost so far transported that
He'll think anon it lives.

LEON.

O sweet Paulina,

Make me to think so twenty years together!

No settled senses of the world can match

The pleasure of that madness. Let 't alone.

(V.iii.68-73)¹

Joy occurs before the factual affirmation that the world of hope and dreams coincides with the world of real experience: it occurs when the character perceives, with all his logic and rationality suspended, a tragicomic vision in which the limits of human possibility have exploded—effects no longer depend upon human causes alone.

Before Leontes can enjoy “the pleasure of that madness” which the tragicomic recognition creates, he must undergo the painful process of emotional growth; but he has to be given time to grow. Unlike those other Shakespearean heroes, Othello and Posthumus, whom jealousy also reduces to tyrannical madness, Leontes has no qualifier of his guilt. Iago goads Othello and Iachimo pushes Posthumus to ignoble wrath, but Leontes' jealousy is completely self-inflicted. By omitting an outside prompter to absorb censure, Shakespeare created a different dramatic problem: How can Leontes be protected from immediate condemnation by the audience?

One of the ways in which Shakespeare meets this problem is through Paulina as she and Leontes characterize each other throughout the play. Paulina plays the “shrew” to Leontes' “tyrant” in the first half of the play; in the last half, she plays “confessor” to Leontes' humble “penitent.” There are other roles through which they engage each other's natures in defining actions, but these two are primary and they control the other subsidiary roles.

Paulina's assumption of the shrewish role begins with her first appearance, which follows Leontes' public accusation of Hermione as an adulteress. Paulina's first lines to the Gaoler, under whose surveillance Hermione is imprisoned, are courtly enough; but when the Gaoler refuses to admit her to Hermione, Paulina reveals the shortness of her patience and the power of her lashing tongue (II.ii.9-12). Paulina's descent from “gentle lady” to a tough-tongued woman who calls herself “gentle” is an appropriate change for the circumstances of Leontes' court where gentle forms have been cast aside already as a meaningful measure of gentility: Hermione's charm and graceful actions as hostess to Polixenes have been seen as deceitful displays of vulgarity and lust by the king. Although Leontes' vision is distorted by his heated imagination, he remains the source for whatever values “form” may have in his kingdom. Paulina's biting question, “Is't lawful, pray you, / To see her women? any of them? Emilia?”, begins with the recognition that “law” has become a slippery term, and, in its questioning descent from “women,” to “any of them,” to “Emilia,” it reflects how much and how swiftly the “laws” of courtesy have vanished in Leontes' court. Paulina, therefore, immediately casts herself into the role of “shrew,” the “scolding tongue”² of moral conscience in this case rather than of self-indulgent discontent. She clothes herself in the role, verbally, when Emilia informs her of the premature
birth of Hermione's baby girl.

These dangerous, unsafe lunes i' th' king, beshrew them!
He must be told on't, and he shall: the office
Becomes a woman best. I'll take 't upon me:
If I prove honey-mouth'd, let my tongue blister,
And never to my red-look'd anger be
The trumpet any more.

(I.ii.29-35)

Paulina's conscious assumption of her role balances Leontes' awareness of his own role-playing in his semicomic, ominous announcement:

Go, play, boy, play: thy mother plays, and I
Play too; but so disgrace'd a part, whose issue
Will hiss me to my grave: contempt and clamour
Will be my knell. Go, play, boy, play. There have been,
(Or I am much deceiv'd) cuckolds ere now,
And many a man there is (even at this present,
Now, while I speak this) holds his wife by th' arm,
That little thinks she has been sluic'd in 's absence
And his pond fish'd by his next neighbour, by
Sir Smile, his neighbour: nay, there's comfort in't,
While other men have gates, and those gates open'd,
As mine, against their will. Should all despair
That have revolted wives, the tenth of mankind
Would hang themselves.

(I.ii.187-200)

In both of these announcements of their roles, there is a comic element as well as a serious threat. Leontes' speech follows the departure of Hermione and Polixenes and climaxes his growing sense of the reality of his position as cuckold. At such a moment when he sees his suspicions harden into action—the touching of hands between Hermione and Polixenes—when his suspicions seem most credible, he speaks of reality as a staged world in which the actors are playing conscious roles. One psychological comfort he gains from such an effort is the sense that something larger than human choice controls each man's ability to achieve his own identity. The staged "play," playing "parts," implies an external controller, and being a cuckold depends more on being cast to play the part than upon a deficiency in the individual's will or personality. The responsibility of action and of consequences to action, therefore, Leontes relegates outside himself. Such distance provides the possibility of lessening actual pain because it removes the situation from the world of humanly controlled action and consequence and becomes an unavoidable set of circumstances. Thus, at the point where Leontes' pain in recognizing what he considers to be reality becomes greater than he can bear, he shifts his vision of it to a stage artifice which protects him from the intensity of total involvement. He attempts to achieve for himself the same double sense of commitment to real experience and of safety from real threat which every theater audience knows. At the same moment that he achieves such distance for himself, he taunts the audience with the duplicity of its position.
Leontes moves from a character in the play, involved in the reality of his own situation, to a perspective like the audience's, from which he surveys his role in the play, to a point beyond the audience, from which he can show them what they themselves are doing. This is an immense leap in points of view, and the dramatic effects it produces are complex. As the man in the audience turns to look at the woman he holds by the arm, he realizes simultaneously that the situation is improbable but that it is altogether possible in human terms. In recognizing how possible Leontes' position as cuckold is, the audience forgets for the moment that his position as cuckold is the result of his infected fancy. There is just enough truth in his generalization for the audience to see that underneath his variously harsh and tyrannical attitudes, there exists (at least at given moments) a cool and rational perception of everyday realities. The surprise of the switch to the audience's personal knowledge of his situation causes laughter—the laughter of recognition that indeed this stage play is not so far-fetched as it might have seemed, or perhaps that life is not so far removed from art as it might seem. And the laughter dispels some of the horror the audience must feel at the extremities of Leontes' assumptions and the cruelties of his actions. When he says "there's comfort in't" to know that other men have experienced what he sees his own situation to be, we agree. Human frailty and the sense of humor which alone seems capable of assimilating the results of human frailty are things we know about and respect. Leontes' speech thus wins by its comic recognitions what it loses by its harsh, potentially tragic, threats: the audience's sympathy. Emotional response is thereby held in a contradictory balance which forces a suspension of judgment despite Leontes' condemnable actions.

Like Leontes', Paulina's announcement of her role as "shrew" has comic effects as well as serious implications. When she swears to use her trumpet-tongue to tell Leontes of the danger of his delusions, she implies that she is at home in such a role: If I speak sweetly, she says, then let my tongue fail to serve me "any more." The announcement of role-playing has its heroic as well as its comic heritage, but Paulina's dependence on her tongue to control situations insists on the audience's recognition of her as a "shrew" figure. In assuring Emilia that she will do her utmost to bring about a successful outcome of her interview with Leontes, she says:

I'll use that tongue I have.

In her interview with Leontes (II.iii), Paulina is continually characterized by his comments as a "shrew," and the comic effects of this scene rely on the oldest formulas of farce. While Paulina berates him, Leontes narrows her characterization by pointing up the comic role she is enacting. The scene of the scolding shrew berating (unjustly in the formula) a poor, exhausted man is so stock that the alteration of values in this scene cannot altogether alter the evocation of sympathy for Leontes. Paulina, in defense of Hermione's goodness and the child's innocence, speaks on the side of moral right and justice, while Leontes, defending his investment in the delusion he has constructed as reality, insists on moral wrong and injustice. Yet the roles which they play as stock characters—the shrew and her weary victim—modify the force of the moral values they are enacting.

Leontes greets Paulina's entrance with both immediate anger and ironic patience:

Away with that audacious lady! Antigonus,
I charg'd thee that she should not come about me.
I knew she would.

In her interview with Leontes (II.iii), Paulina is continually characterized by his comments as a “shrew,” and the comic effects of this scene rely on the oldest formulas of farce. While Paulina berates him, Leontes narrows her characterization by pointing up the comic role she is enacting. The scene of the scolding shrew berating (unjustly in the formula) a poor, exhausted man is so stock that the alteration of values in this scene cannot altogether alter the evocation of sympathy for Leontes. Paulina, in defense of Hermione's goodness and the child's innocence, speaks on the side of moral right and justice, while Leontes, defending his investment in the delusion he has constructed as reality, insists on moral wrong and injustice. Yet the roles which they play as stock characters—the shrew and her weary victim—modify the force of the moral values they are enacting.

Leontes greets Paulina's entrance with both immediate anger and ironic patience:

Away with that audacious lady! Antigonus,
I charg'd thee that she should not come about me.
I knew she would.

(I.ii.190-194)
This formulaic response to a stock situation creates an amusing and ironic distance between Leontes and the trial he is undergoing. The scene begins by establishing itself as a comic routine and it continues to follow the pattern. Antigonus protests that he tried to stop her with threats of Leontes' displeasure and his own, but obviously with no effect. Leontes' sarcastic response insures Paulina's shrewish characterization: “What! canst not rule her?” In her response, she agrees to the role: “… in this—… trust it, / He shall not rule me” (47, 49-50). Throughout the scene Leontes counters Paulina's accusations with accusations about her role as shrew, each time, however, becoming less and less a forgiveable figure, displacing his formulaically sympathetic position in the comic routine.

Thou dotard! thou art woman-tir'd, unroosted
By thy dame Partlet here.

(II.iii.74-75)

He dreads his wife.

(79)

Of boundless tongue, who late hath beat her husband,
And now baits me!(6)

(90-92)

And, lozel, thou art worthy to be hang'd,
That wilt not stay her tongue.

(107-109)

Leontes' chief means of projecting Paulina's image is, of course, through reference to her husband, Antigonus. Leontes works upon Antigonus' sense of pride and manly dignity in order to force him to banish Paulina, but Antigonus reacts with equanimity. He answers the accusation that he cannot stay his wife's tongue with a comic appeal to the universality of his situation.

That cannot do that feat, you'll leave yourself
Hardly one subject.

(II.iii.109-111)

Antigonus' joke echoes Leontes' earlier remark that a tenth of mankind might hang themselves for cuckolds (I.ii.200), and it has the same effect of comic displacement in a tragically threatening situation.7

The stock situation diametrically opposes the narrative situation, and the complexity of emotional responses produced by the opposition is significant in several ways. It is necessary to achieve some sympathy for Leontes in order to prepare him a place in the comic resolution of the play; his guilty action must be capable of redemption. He is a self-crossed figure and the soliloquy which precedes Paulina's entrance reveals him pathetically caught in the consequences of his own erroneous action. His torment, although it causes him to contemplate the further horror of murdering Hermione to ease his pain, does for a brief moment evoke pity. Paulina's entrance at such a moment, when Leontes is most distracted by news of his son's illness and by paranoiac thoughts of having become a joke to Camillo and Polixenes, increases the possibility of compassion for Leontes. Verbal flagellation at such a time could hardly be accepted by anyone. But the comic distance
achieved through establishing the characters in their stock positions—Paulina as shrew, Antigonus as her hen-pecked and ineffectual husband, and Leontes as the long-suffering victim of her tongue—works in two directions. In one, it removes Paulina from a wholly commendable position; yet in another, it dispels the pathos of Leontes' grappling with his sorrow.

Without the qualification of the stock characterization, the audience would naturally respond favorably toward the moral justice of Paulina's position and it would as unreservedly admire her honesty and psychological insights into Leontes' self-delusions. Consistently, the audience would readily condemn Leontes for his jealousy and violence toward the gentle Hermione. Yet Shakespeare has offset these natural propensities by his use of stock comic characterization. The conflict between moral evaluation and emotional sympathy requires a hesitation of commitment on the part of the audience, and the conflict delays judgment until the revelation of Apollo's oracle, which is the climax of emotional tension in the first part of the play. The audience is allowed to relax into judgment only when their vision coincides with the divine oracle. The elevation of the audience's perception to a position which exceeds merely human vision affirms the goal of tragicomic action to expand the human view. Man's powers of perception are capable of growth, and the audience is forced to this awareness when it is required to wait for the tragicomic resolution.

After the climactic revelation of Apollo's oracle and Hermione's apparent death, Leontes' reliance upon Paulina is in one sense a replacement or compensation for the loyalty he had owed Hermione and which he had held from her. Immediately after the announcement of Mamillius' death, Hermione faints, and Paulina collects the overcharged and scattered emotional atmosphere into a single awesome focus:

This news is mortal to the queen: look down
And see what death is doing.

(III.ii.148-149)

Her directive becomes the “still center” of the scene and, in a larger view, of the entire action of the play. The final resurrection of Hermione depends upon the conviction that Paulina's interpretation of Hermione's swoon carries. Leontes tries to modify the fatality of Paulina's reading—“Her heart is but o'ercharged: she will recover” (150)—but Paulina's calm and direct evaluation cannot be so easily resisted. In her two powerful lines, Paulina has changed her position from subject of Leontes to ruler. But even as she moves into her new role in relationship to Leontes, her harshness absorbs the censurable effects of his guilty action. While she is gone to attend Hermione, Leontes admits his sin and begins to plan how he will amend it (155-156). Paulina rushes back and for twenty-five lines torments him with tongue-lashing accusations, delaying the revelation that the queen is dead. Then she invites Leontes to “despair” rather than to repent and repair his soul (207-210), and Leontes brokenly submits to the justness of even this.

Thou canst not speak too much; I have deserv'd
All tongues to talk their bitt'rest.

(III.ii.214-216)

In submitting to the shrew, Leontes makes partial amends for his previous tyranny. Paulina's fury does not abate easily, however, and she extends her verbal punishment of Leontes beyond humane limits (218-232). Her intense and bitter accusations produce another important effect aside from absorbing part of the hostility that Leontes' actions have generated: they convince the audience that Hermione is, in fact, dead.

The scene ends with Leontes asking Paulina to lead him to his sorrows. When the play's action again returns to Sicilia (V.i), it is immediately evident that Leontes has allowed Paulina emotional dictatorship over him, and that for sixteen years she has been his priestess and confessor. Cleomenes attempts to soothe Leontes'
guilt and sorrow, but Paulina still needles him to confess his sin.

CLEO.

Sir, you have done enough, and have perform'd
A saint-like sorrow: ...
Do as the heavens have done, forget your evil;
With them, forgive yourself.

LEON.

Whilst I remember
Her, and her virtues, I cannot forget
My blemishes in them. ...

PAUL.

True, too true, my lord:
If, one by one, you wedded all the world,
Or from the all that are took something good,
To make a perfect woman, she you kill'd
Would be unparallel'd.

LEON.

I think so. Kill'd!
She I kill'd! I did so: but thou strik'st me
Sorely, to say I did: it is as bitter
Upon thy tongue as in my thought. Now, good now,
Say so but seldom.

CLEO.

Not at all, good lady:
You might have spoken a thousand things that would
Have done the time more benefit and grac'd
Your kindness better.

(V.i.1-23)
Despite the essential change in their relationship, Paulina still enjoys the power of her shrewish tongue. The concern is now whether Leontes should marry again. Most of his subjects want an heir and would encourage his remarriage, but Paulina exacts Leontes' promise “Never to marry, but by my free leave. … Unless another, / As like Hermione as is her picture, / Affront his eye” (V.i.70, 73-75). When Cleomenes tries to stop her bargaining with the king, she says, true to the prolixity of her stock characterization,

Yet, if my lord will marry,—if you will, sir;
No remedy but you will,—give me the office
To choose you a queen: she shall not be so young
As was your former, but she shall be such
As, walk'd your first queen's ghost, it should take joy
To see her in your arms.(8)

(V.i.75-80)

She has forced Leontes to allow her yet another role with which to rule him—now she is his procuress. When Perdita and Florizel petition Leontes to be their advocate before Polixenes, and Leontes seems to admire Perdita's beauty a little too much, Paulina quickly reminds him of their contract.

Your eye hath too much youth in 't; not a month
'Fore your queen died, she was more worth such gazes
Than what you look on now.

(V.i.223-226)

Leontes assures her that he was thinking of Hermione in admiring Perdita, but at this point only the audience knows how justified he is to do so.9

The comic pattern of Paulina's and Leontes' relationship continues into the final scene where the living Hermione is revealed. Paulina forces Leontes into an intensely emotional state of anticipation and then threatens to draw the curtain upon the statue. Through her threats to close off the revelation, however, she builds the kind of imaginative excitement that the tragicomic recognition requires. By threats of frustration, she dispels rational skepticism that would “hoot” at the revelation of the living Hermione “like an old tale.” She achieves, with the confident skill of a good stage director, or a good playwright, the fusion of illusion and reality into joyful truth.

The discovery of that joyful truth is so exhilarating that no one worries about the trickery involved in creating it. The experience of “wonder” justifies the artifices used to make that experience possible. The “voice of moral justice” has deceived not only Leontes, but the audience as well. We experience, as he does, “the pleasure of that madness” which “no settled senses of the world can match.” And the experience is so delightful that we can forgive a little skillful trickery along the way. If, upon leaving the theater, we are at ease to ponder over the significance of that trickery, we confront once again that profound dislocation of fixed perceptions which Shakespeare's tragicomedy produces. There are more realities than meet the eye in these final plays. Or, to put it more precisely, the eye is trained to look through the artifice into a world of wonder.

The tragicomic resolution can be as powerful as it is in The Winter's Tale because of other balances which also operate throughout the play. The structural division in time has often led critics mistakenly to assume that Acts IV and V are the comic performance of the tragic action of the first three acts. Each part has a dominant impulse, it is true, but that impulse is consistently balanced throughout. The tragicomic blend created in the first half, in large part by the pairing of Leontes and Paulina, is sustained in the last half by similar means: that is, by balancing Autolycus against the pastoral figures, the Shepherd and the Clown. In Leontes' court
complexities and hyperboles build to a dramatic inflation, which Apollo's direct and terse oracle punctures. In the less sophisticated world of Bohemia, however, there is an inverse need for complexity and duplicity. Autolycus, as a kind of “fallen” Apollo, a peddler of ballads, provides a decadent complexity to balance the pastoral simplicity of the last acts of the play.

Autolycus' complexity manifests itself most directly in his disguises. He is a Protean figure who seems to be undergoing a continuous metamorphosis, at least in his relationships with the other characters in the play. On his first appearance he announces his identity and his past connection with Prince Florizel in between snatches of song (IV.iii.13-14, 23-30). His self-conscious announcement of his role is a parodic reminder of Paulina's and Leontes' previous announcements as well as a preparation for Perdita's and Florizel's descriptions of their own disguised roles (IV.iv.1-35). Autolycus’ first disguise is involved with the parodic enactment of the Good Samaritan story. The parody itself calls attention to the artifice of disguise—Autolycus is hardly the victim of the scene. But even more emphatic of the artifice is the fact that Autolycus is disguised as his own victim. The double humor which results from his self-description is similar to that which Falstaff creates in his speech when, playing the role of Prince Hal, he praises “valiant Jack Falstaff” (I Henry IV, II.iv.512-527). Autolycus says of his oppressor,

A fellow, sir, that I have known to go about with troll-my-dames: I knew him once a servant of the prince: I cannot tell, good sir, for which of his virtues it was, but he was certainly whipped out of the court.

(IV.iii.84-87)

The Clown's literal sensibility causes him to quibble over Autolycus' choice of words—“His vices, you would say; there's no virtue whipped out of the court” (IV.iii.88). The Clown ignores the other meanings of “virtue” (power, and the skill of manipulation), and the point makes clear the vast difference between pastoral simplicity and Autolycus' sophisticated multiplicity. The pun and the metaphor (like disguise) are his tools and with them Autolycus transforms life into an artifice which he sells back to the Clown on a literal level.

When Autolycus appears again, for example, he is once more disguised: under a false beard, he peddles his ballads. The servant announces him with great enthusiasm—Autolycus' repertoire is endless—and his entrance enhances the festive mood of the scene. Like Shrove Tuesday, Autolycus brings release from mundane realities. And, in the same way that Carnival acts as an exorciser of evil spirits, the sheep-shearing celebration purges the play of its melancholy. There is a self-conscious pointing to the nature of art and its relationship to life in both farcical action and serious debate in this scene. Mopsa and Dorcas enact on a farcical level the audience's desire for artistic illusions. Their reiterated questions about the “truth” of the ballads corresponds to the audience's demands for realism in art. Autolycus' responses, like the expert artificer he imitates, are equivocal:

MOP.

Is it true, think you?

AUT.

Very true, and but a month old.

.....

Why should I carry lies abroad?

(IV.iv.267-272)
As is so often the case in comedy, the rhetorical question does not contain its own answer. The reason for carrying lies abroad, at the level of Autolycus' thieving instincts, is to gain a “prize” from those who are gullible enough to accept his lies as truth. At the analogous level of audience and playwright, the motive is much the same. There is a demand, a need, in the life of man to experience poetic lies, and the playwright satisfies this need. Drama is not so different from the confidence-man's art that Autolycus practices. Success in both requires a remarkable understanding of and sympathy with human needs. That is one of the reasons that Autolycus, like Falstaff, is such a well-loved rogue. He understands human weaknesses and he does not condemn them.

Everyone at the sheep-shearing festival is disguised except for the Shepherd and the Clown, and the abundance of disguise in this simple pastoral setting calls attention to the dislocation of identities in the idyllic world. Polixenes soon explodes the artifice by demanding that Florizel return to his proper role as Prince and give over his illusions about being a rustic lover (IV.iv.418-442); but disguise remains the means to discovery. Camillo advises Florizel to exchange garments with Autolycus and to flee to Sicilia. At this point, both Autolycus and Florizel wear their former disguises: Autolycus is the bearded peddler and Florizel is like “Golden Apollo, a poor humble swain” (IV.iv.30). When Autolycus exchanges clothes with Florizel, he is assuming Florizel's pastoral disguise which he then flaunts to the Shepherd and Clown as a courtier's garments. This excessive complexity in which one disguise cancels another insists on the artificiality of the convention and points out its logical absurdities. At the same time it reiterates the Autolycus-Apollo parodic analogy and reminds us that Autolycus is a corrupt version of the dramatic force that Apollo manifests in the first half of the play. Autolycus' riddles are not oracles but ballads; yet both affirm their audience's need for assurance that truth may be found within the poetic lie.

The tragicomic balance of contradictory impulses manifests itself in aspects other than characterization. For example, the opening scene establishes the pattern of oppositions by creating an atmosphere of excess, which is dotted throughout with ironies. Archidamus' first remark is weighted with dramatic irony, as are most of the evaluations in this scene. He says that Sicilia's hospitality will be difficult to match—Bohemia is apparently a less magnificent land (I.i.1-4, 11-16). Unwittingly, Archidamus has labeled the problem: Leontes' and Polixenes' worlds differ. The rarity of Sicilian magnificence has intoxicated even the language of common conversation. Both Archidamus and Camillo speak with courtly exaggeration which contrasts sharply with the simpler expressions of Bohemia's Shepherd (III.iii.59 ff.). But Camillo's caution, that Archidamus' praise of Sicilia and fear of Bohemia's insufficiency is too great, is couched in a vocabulary that becomes symbolically significant in the following action—not only Archidamus pays “a great deal too dear” for Sicilia's “free gifts,” but so do Polixenes, Hermione, and even Camillo. The vocabulary of trade, introduced so early in an innocent way, builds gradually to an ominous significance in the barter of souls Leontes conducts in the trial scene. Hermione recognizes Leontes' superior power as tradesman, but she verbally steps beyond the marketplace.

Sir,
You speak a language that I understand not:
My life stands in the level of your dreams,
Which I'll lay down. ...  
Sir, spare your threats:
The bug which you would fright me with, I seek.
To me can life be no commodity.

(III.ii.79-82, 91-93)

At this moment of withdrawal, Hermione recognizes the impossibility of existing in a world where the metaphor and its literal correlative have been severed. No longer is she the graciously insistent hostess (“Will you go yet? / Force me to keep you as a prisoner, / Not like a guest: so you shall pay your fees / When you depart, and save your thanks?” [I.ii.51-54]), nor the secure wife who expects to hear compliments from her husband (“Our praises are our wages” [I.ii.94]). Hermione understands only that Leontes has imagined an
illicit bargain between her and Polixenes. Unable to combat a vision which she cannot see, she places her life at Leontes’ disposal since the terms which made it valuable no longer exist. The way in which she detaches herself from her life, by viewing it as a “commodity,” creates the possibility and the meaning of her sixteen-year retreat. Until the values which make her life a true commodity can be had, she moves beyond the realm of Leontes’ marketplace where life exists only in metaphor.

The vocabulary of trade is a rhetorical figure, a terrible metaphor, in the world of Leontes’ mad vision, but in Bohemia it becomes a literal reality (IV.iii.36 ff.). The transition from metaphor to literality signifies the general movement of the play. Autolycus’ “hot brain” (IV.iv.684) parodies Leontes' heated imagination, but with a significant difference: Autolycus’ imagination does not labor over moral constructs, but only over practical matters like robbing a purse.14 The literal application of the terms of trade to the actual marketplace, whether it be the rogue's road or the produce stalls, is an appropriate use of language. But the application of such terms to human life and acts of faith signifies a breach in decorum that reaches metaphysical proportions. The rest of the play's action attempts to bring the metaphor back into an appropriate relationship with actuality.

Similarly, Camillo's speech about the common boyhood of the two kings (I.i.21-32) suggests a metaphorical perfection which life's actions cannot match. The garden of innocence inevitably gives way to knowledge, but no one in Sicilia seems to comprehend the pattern.15 The wisdom comes in understanding how to relate the adult world of knowledge to the child's world of innocence. Leontes seems to have leapt from one to the other without any mediation. He therefore tries to match the extreme of the one—absolute innocence—with the extreme of the other—absorption in the knowledge of evil. His directive to Mamillius to “go play” and his supposition that Hermione “plays” voice these extremes (I.i.187).16 The expectations of Archidamus and Camillo in the opening scene express the same kind of unrealistic naiveté about the human spirit. When Camillo asks that “the heavens continue their loves,” Archidamus responds, “I think there is not in the world either malice or matter to alter it” (I.i.31-34). Maintaining the absolute in human love is an expectation based upon tenuous ideals. That the expectation is not attached to actuality is immediately proved by Leontes’ jealousy, and the enlightening process which all the characters undergo for the rest of the play aims toward reuniting the metaphor and the actual world which it represents.

One of the most important scenes in the first part of the play, which functions as a standard of true values against which the whole of Leontes' mad world is ironically placed, involves the return of Cleomenes and Dion from Delphos (III.i). Cleomenes opens the scene describing the “delicate climate” and “sweet air” of Apollo's isle. The degree to which he has been impressed suggests an implicit contrast to what he has been accustomed to in Sicilia: Leontes' accusations burden the air of his isle. Dion praises the ceremony of sacrifice they have witnessed at Delphos. Again the contrast is implicit. The audience has just witnessed the sacrifice of Hermione's daughter to banishment and probable death (II.iii.172-182). But Leontes' sacrifice of the babe was conducted feverishly, abruptly, and without ceremony in contrast to Dion's description: “O, the sacrifice! / How ceremonious, solemn and unearthly / It was i' th' offering!” (III.i.6-8). The implicit contrast points up the fact that Leontes has assumed the position of a god, to whom sacrifices must be made in truncated and hubristic ceremonies. Not only has Leontes sacrificed Perdita to the elements in the scene preceding this one; in the scene which follows he sacrifices Hermione as well. In so doing, he denies Apollo's superior power—“There is no truth at all i' th' Oracle” (III.i.140)—and earns the punishment of his son's death. Leontes, like Cleomenes, is reduced to “nothing” by the “voice o' th' Oracle.” In the scene of Cleomenes and Dion's report, hyperbole is appropriately used to describe the god. This example of proper use exposes the dangerous excess of hyperbole in Leontes' world. Man is an inappropriate object for absolute praise, and through ironic contrast, this scene prepares for the deflation of Leontes’ “dream” which the oracle effects. In this scene, hyperbole becomes the simple equivalent of truth, a paradox which serves as a fulcrum for the unbalanced judgments in the scenes on either side of it.
The return from Delphos also provides a bridge that compresses the time between Leontes' accusation of Hermione and her trial. A spatial, or geographical, bridge occurs in the scene which shows Antigonus depositing Perdita on the coast of Bohemia. In addition to this function, the scene achieves one of the clearest balances of contradictory impulses in the play. Many critics seem unwilling to accept the blend of tragic and comic effects of Antigonus' famous “exit,” however, and they insist that the action be read as either one or the other. The stage direction itself is simple and straightforward after slight preparation in Antigonus' lines.

Well may I get aboard! This is the chase:
I am gone for ever!                     Exit, pursued by a bear.

(III.iii.56-58)

Antigonus obviously hears the bear roar—either off stage or immediately after the bear enters—and in the space of half a line he himself is running off the stage, probably flinging his last line over his shoulder as he runs. Speed is part of the tragicomic effect. The surprise of the bear's appearance and the quick shift in Antigonus' prospects from life to death are the points which cause laughter, and prolonging the action between Antigonus and the bear, which some critics would do, violates the effect. If the scene is exploited in either direction, the audience will have too much time to reflect on the meaning of the action. If the scene is played quickly, the immediate appearances of the Shepherd, who finds Perdita, and of the Clown, who describes in such a comic way the shipwreck and the sounds of the bear's dining on Antigonus, dictate the response the audience must make to the event. Shakespeare leaves little to chance, carefully directing audience response into the appropriate channel.

Perdita's safety is assured, and that releases anxiety about her fate. The Shepherd's speculation that “this has been some stair-work, some trunk-work, some behind-door-work” (III.iii.73-75) places Leontes' jealous suspicions into their proper proportions. Whereas the suspicion of infidelity is a tragic problem to Leontes and to Antigonus (II.i.140-150; III.iii.41-53), it becomes a comic commonplace in the speech of the Shepherd. The extremes balance each other and delay the need to have the matter settled. The Shepherd's comment creates an emotional balance which allows the action to continue in its tragicomic way. The Clown's narrative of the storm at sea, which swallows the ship, and of the bear's swallowing Antigonus on land competes with the Shepherd's attempt to tell how he found Perdita. Each has a miraculous adventure to tell, and each is comically eager to impress the other with his experience. The Clown wins first chance, and his conscientious attempt to balance each of his “two sights” suggests his pride in his narrative skill. The exactitude of the parallel diminishes the seriousness of both events—they seem to exist in order to point up the artifice of analogous structure. The Shepherd's response to his son's story is as artificial as the story itself.

SHEP.

Would I had been by, to have helped the old man!

CLO.

I would you had been by the ship side, to have helped her: there your charity would have lacked for (III.iii.106-110)

The Clown is well aware of the difference between good intentions and good actions. The Shepherd, however, wins the story-telling contest by his felicitous use of symbolism. There is a self-consciousness in his voicing of it—“Now bless thyself: thou met'st with things dying, I with things new-born”—that reinforces the sense of contest in narrative skill. But the Clown's response when they discover the gold is a comic deflation of any
symbolic pretenses the Shepherd may have had: “You're a made old man: if the sins of your youth are forgiven you, you're well to live. Gold! all gold!” (119-120). The Shepherd's cupidinous instinct is as keen as his son's, and he is in a hurry to hide the gold in hopes that it will multiply.

This is fairy gold, boy, and 'twill prove so; up with 't, keep it close: home, home, the next way. We are lucky, boy; and to be so still requires nothing but secrecy. Let my sheep go: come, good boy, the next way home.

(III.iii.121-125)

His urgency to get home and hide his treasure overrides his former concern for his strayd sheep and the line, “Let my sheep go,” insists on the parodic effect of the entire episode. This Shepherd is no saint; given a choice between duty and gold, he knows which to follow. The Clown, too, expresses more curiosity than compassion for Antigonus: “I'll go see if the bear be gone from the gentlemen, and how much he hath eaten” (127-128).

These rustics have a healthy manner of accepting the ways of the world that contrasts sharply with the overidealizations which characterized Sicilia. They are not pastoral examples of virtue, nor do we want them to be. The battle between virtue and vice in Leontes’ court has been strenuous. Through the eyes of the Clown we see Antigonus as a stranger, and the distance that the Clown's impersonal perspective gains releases the audience from their sympathetic investment in Antigonus. Antigonus' death, thus, becomes impersonalized both through the artifice of the bear and through the Clown's narrative manner. In the same way, through the Shepherd's response to Perdita, the world of Leontes' infected imagination becomes remote. The new world momentarily seems closer to us than Sicilia, but lest we become too familiar with its people, Time steps out upon the stage to remind us to keep our distance: the stage is the stage, the play is the play, and we are the audience.23

Moving in and out of the illusion is an important part of the tragicomic progress toward an ultimate recognition which requires ambivalent vision. We enter the action at the same time we retain a safe distance from its consequences. Yet, every time we “lose” ourselves in the play, Shakespeare calls our attention to what we have done. He forces us to look at our yearning for imaginative experience and to evaluate that yearning.

The last two scenes of The Winter's Tale even define the effect which Shakespeare's tragicomic mode aims toward, as if Shakespeare wanted to insure the audience's awareness of what they are experiencing as they experience it. Autolycus has missed the meeting of the two kings and he asks a gentleman for the story.

FIRST Gent.

I make a broken delivery of the business; but the changes I perceived in the king and Camillo were very notes of ... no more but seeing, could not say if th' importance were joy or sorrow; but in the extremity of the one it must needs be.

(V.ii.9-19)

This definition of “wonder” seems as critically self-conscious as the famous “debate” between Perdita and Polixenes on “nature” and “art” in the sheep-shearing scene (IV.iv.86-103). As Harold S. Wilson points out, the use of horticultural illustrations were familiar in discussions of “nature” and “art” in the Renaissance and earlier, and the subject itself had long been a critical commonplace.24 Critical concern with the definition and use of “wonder” or admiratio was likewise commonplace.25 The unusual things about both of these passages are not their content, but their self-consciousness and dramatic appropriateness. The first quality is part of Shakespeare's attempt to weave the illusory and the actual into an ambivalent consciousness in the audience. The second, dramatic appropriateness, is also a conscious pleasure, based on the intellectual perception of
In the sheep-shearing festival many ironies add to the pleasure of our perception of the scene as a whole. Two major ones are the fact that almost everyone at the party is disguised, and the fact that part of the scene's structure resembles the masque, a sophisticated court entertainment. The pastoral world seems to have at least as much sophistication in form as the court, despite the simpler, more basic experiences it celebrates. The debate on nature and art comes appropriately into the focus of a scene which observes natural seasons in artificial forms. The irony which Polixenes himself enacts is more obvious, however. In his speech, he defends the marriage of

A gentler scion to the wildest stock,
And make conceive a bark of baser kind
By bud of nobler race. This is an art
Which does mend nature—change it rather—but
The art itself is nature.

(IV.iv.93-97)

Not long after, he condemns this very practice where his own son is concerned (IV.iv.418-442). The discrepancy between what he says and what he does—the difference between theory and action—is comic and relieves the tension that his threats to the young lovers create. Further irony exists, of course, in Perdita's actual heritage and her pastoral identity. Her insistence on keeping the stock pure is the theory which Polixenes' action supports and which the final revelation of the play defends. The liberality of Polixenes' speech, despite its ironic placement of his own actions, opens an avenue of critical awareness that qualifies somewhat the formulaically decorous matching of persons in the conclusion.

The qualification of the final scene takes place beforehand, however, so that its power is greater. All possible reservations are displaced before the reunion of Leontes and Hermione so that the pure wonder of their joy may be experienced without reservation. It is in this way that the scene of the gentlemen's report of the kings' meeting functions. Each gentleman has caught only a part of the meeting, and each gives a stylistically distinct narration: the first and second gentlemen relate with as little embellishment as possible the wonder of each event they saw, and the third gentleman elaborates, with grand hyberboles, the rest of the action (V.ii.9-91). The tripartite narrative recalls the part-song of Autolycus, Mopsa, and Dorcas (IV.iv.298-307), and the second gentleman, Rogero, emphasizes that the ballad-makers could not express the wonder of the moment, a point underlined by Autolycus' silent presence throughout this scene. The gentlemen's narrative provides an artificial modulation between the pastoral world where ballads celebrate an event and the actualized dream of the tragicomic world where wonder is enacted on stage. The narrative marks out a step in the transition from an art form which farcically abstracts events from life (Autolycus' ballads, IV.iv.270-282) to the statue scene which infuses art into life. Autolycus even admits that the wonder of events surpasses his abilities to sell their credibility (V.ii.121-123). The skepticism expressed in this narrative scene exercises the doubt the audience is likely to feel when the ultimate miracle of Hermione's resurrection is staged. Yet, the comic gentlemen accept the miracles they have seen and their eagerness to witness more miracles readies the audience's sense of wonder. After the gentlemen leave to augment the rejoicing at Paulina's chapel, Autolycus' admission that he could not have made credible Perdita's revelation is another preparation for the immense wonders of the final scene. Autolycus, the con-man, has been subdued by a greater power than his own for creating “amazement.” His change from a vocal, energetic rogue to a docile and taciturn inferior of the Clown brings the play's most skeptical voice to a hushed expectation of miracle.

When Paulina draws the curtain on the statue of Hermione, she notes the decorousness of the change. Whereas the three gentlemen babbled their tale of wonder, the royal party watches the consummate revelation in silence.
To see the life as lively mock'd as ever
Still sleep mock'd death: behold, and say 'tis well.
[Paulina draws a curtain, and discovers Hermione standing like a statue]
I like your silence, it the more shows off
Your wonder: but yet speak; first you, my liege.
Comes it not something near?

(V.iii.18-23)

Leontes' response, when pressed to speak, is admiring, but a human touch qualifies his awe: “But yet, Paulina, / Hermione was not so much wrinkled, nothing / So aged as this seems” (27-29). He looks upon the statue as an objet d'art and evaluates it as a thing. The audience, however, is a step ahead of Leontes; the possibility that the statue might actually be Hermione has been suggested in the third gentleman's report (V.ii.93-107). The anachronism of the work's having been “perfected” by a Renaissance artist, Julio Romano, is a signal for the audience to be alert for the revelation, and the second gentleman's comments about Paulina's activities in connection with the statue reinforce the clue: “she hath privately twice or thrice a day, ever since the death of Hermione, visited that removed house.” Calling attention to the artifice is by this point in the play a familiar sign that appearance and reality may be due for some dislocations. When the curtains reveal Hermione “standing like a statue” we experience the overwhelming surprise of having our still undefined expectations fulfilled. From this point, each perception of Leontes draws him nearer to the recognition that we have already experienced, and the slight distance we gain on his perception allows us the opportunity to evaluate our response by his. In other words, we are caught in that magically double position of being involved in the action and removed from it simultaneously.

The intense beauty of the gradual resurrection of Hermione as she breathes, moves, and finally speaks is heightened by Leontes' intense joy at his growing understanding that the world of settled senses is not the final control of life's events. But the intensity of extreme joy is met with the comic inclusion of Paulina into the play's plane of action. Throughout the play, she has known and controlled the central miracle that informs the entire action. As the stage director, she has remained outside the emotional renewal of the others, carefully controlling the art of the revelation. Now that her task is successfully completed, she offers to leave the joyful party to their hard-won exultation.

PAUL.

Go together,
You precious winners all; your exultation
Partake to every one. I, an old turtle,
Will wing me to some wither'd bough, and there
My mate (that's never to be found again)
Lament, till I am lost.

LEON.

O, peace, Paulina!
Thou shouldst a husband take by my consent,
As I by thine a wife: this is a match,
And made between 's by vows. Thou hast found mine;
But how, is to be question'd; for I saw her,
As I thought, dead; and have in vain said many
A prayer upon her grave. I'll not seek far—
For him, I partly know his mind—to find thee
An honourable husband. Come, Camillo,
And take her by the hand; whose worth and honesty
Is richly noted; and here justified
By us, a pair of kings. Let's from this place.

(V.iii.130-146)

The final note of reconciliation is appropriately the resumption of Leontes' control over his most unruly subject, Paulina. She procured a wife for him and Leontes procures a husband for her—to replace the one he had sent to his death. Camillo's acquiescence may be as much of a surprise to him as to Paulina, despite Leontes' remark “I partly know his mind.” But since Antigonus had earlier been a surrogate victim for Camillo, absorbing the blame and the duty that Leontes would have cast upon Camillo, it is now the best of all comic conclusions to allow Camillo the opportunity to replace Antigonus. Paulina's tongue has a new victim and Leontes is free at last.

This comic reiteration of the stock relationship between Paulina and Leontes gives a sense of symmetrical completion which the play does not, in fact, supply. The audience does not know any more than Leontes about Hermione's sixteen-year disappearance; but we cannot follow when he says,

Good Paulina,
Lead us from hence, where we may leisurely
Each one demand, and answer to his part
Perform'd in this wide gap of time, since first
We were dissever'd: hastily lead away.

(V.iii.151-155)

The promised explanation of the miracle which the audience never hears is common to each of the tragicomedies, and the omission of an explanation increases our sense of wonder. Logic is frustrated, and, in order to affirm our joyful response to the experience of the play, we are forced to suspend our rational demands for an explanation of cause and effect. Consider, in contrast, the earlier handling of a similar problem in Much Ado About Nothing. Hero is slandered, and the Friar suggests that she pretend to be dead (IV.i.212-245). Like Hermione, Hero returns to life, unexpectedly for Claudio who believed her dead. But the wonder of Hero's return is reserved for the characters of the play, since the audience is well aware of the logic behind the subterfuge when the Friar plans it. In other words, the earlier play takes great care to explain the practical cause of what would otherwise seem to be miraculous effects, but The Winter's Tale does not. Practical explanations are available for its miraculous events, but the dramatic wonder of these events is exploited for the audience to the point that causality no longer seems relevant. The Winter's Tale is the only one of Shakespeare's tragicomedies that withholds from the audience the key to the marvelous resolution of the play. This concealment intensifies our immediate experience of dislocation, and it encourages us to alter
our perspective in a significant way. We realize, along with the play's characters, that man's actions do not produce irrecoverable effects. The play makes it very clear that a benevolent power has designed and is controlling events to surpass even the hopes and dreams that the man of "settled senses" occasionally entertains. The tragicomic perspective that Shakespeare creates in *The Winter's Tale* forces us to suspend rational judgment so that for a special moment we may glimpse the "wonder" in the world of human action.

**Notes**

2. Cf. *The Taming of the Shrew*, I.ii:

   Renown'd in Padua for her scolding tongue. ... 100  
   I know she is an irksome brawling scold. ... 188  
   And do you tell me of a woman's tongue? ... 208  
   The one as famous for a scolding tongue. ... 254.

4. Cf. Posthumus' emotional speech which opens Act V of *Cymbeline*, in which he also addresses the audience directly:

   If each of you should take this course, how many  
   Must murder wives much better than themselves  
   For wrying but a little?  

   (V.i.2-5)

5. Even Paulina's tongue plays a role, as Pafford points out in his note to this passage, Arden edition, p. 42, n. 34-5: “The ‘trumpet’ was the man who preceded the herald who was usually dressed in red and often bore an angry message.”


7. Antigonus' presence in this scene acts as yet another buffer for Leontes, absorbing some of Paulina's harshness. Caught between the vitriolic accusations of both Paulina and Leontes, Antigonus' comic dilemma both mitigates and protects the seriousness of his wife and his king.

8. There is a submerged insistence in this speech and in others which Paulina makes in this scene that Hermione remains, even in death, a vital figure. This is one of the subtle ways by which the audience is prepared, against its “factual” knowledge, for the ultimate revelation that Hermione lives.

9. Besides in *The Winter's Tale*, in *Pericles* and in *Cymbeline* the father finds the “unknown” features of his daughter not only familiar, but love-inspiring. Finding one's own image renewed in youth and innocence regenerates the father in each case, although he is at a loss to explain the cause. Despite the similarities of these scenes in each play, each father-daughter recognition receives different dramatic handling. In *Pericles*, it is the climactic moment in the play. In *Cymbeline*, Imogen is disguised as a boy when her familiar features move her father to love. Leontes' admiration of Perdita ironically complies with Paulina's prescription that a new wife should closely resemble Hermione. Paulina, of course, quickly emphasizes her other stricture, “she shall not be so young / As was your former” (V.i.78-79), when she reminds Leontes that his “eye hath too much youth in 't.”

10. Autolycus' classical lineage to which he refers (IV.iii.24-26) is found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, XI.298-317 (and in Homer's *Odyssey*, XIX). As he says, Autolycus was “littered under Mercury,” but Apollo was also involved. According to Ovid, both Apollo and Mercury wanted Chione, Autolycus' mother, but Apollo waited to approach her until evening, according to his sense of decorum, while Mercury seduced her in the afternoon. Chione's offspring, fraternal twins, were Philammon by Apollo
and Autolycus by Mercury. Shakespeare's Autolycus seems to embody characteristics of both twins, in his singing and in his thieving.

11. This parody has been noted by several critics; but see G. Wilson Knight, *The Crown of Life* (London, 1965), p. 101.


13. In contrast, Perdita displays a stern resistance to artificiality in her famous debate with Polixenes on the relationship of art and nature (IV.iv.79-103).

14. Pafford, Arden edition, p. lxxx, says that Autolycus “serves as a faint rhythmic parallel to the evil of Leontes in the first part of the play.” Autolycus is also a parodic figure who links the Leontes of the first half of the play to the Leontes of the last act. Autolycus has changed garments with Florizel, and he tells the Shepherd and the Clown of the punishment in store for them at the hands of Polixenes. They hire him to be their advocate to the king (IV.iv.808-809). In the very next scene, Florizel asks Leontes to be his advocate to Polixenes (V.i.220).

15. The pastoral innocence of Bohemia likewise succumbs to knowledge when Polixenes demands that his son divorce himself from his illusions.


17. Shakespeare's use of a “coast” for Bohemia which is inland is a long-standing topic for critical debate. I would question Pafford's assertion, Arden edition, p. 66, n. 2, that “the explanation surely is that Shakespeare was simply following *Pandosto* which mentions the coast of Bohemia.” In a play where other anomalies and anachronisms figure so clearly in the methods of self-conscious artistry, surely this error has a similar effect of drawing the audience's attention to a “fact” which is “fiction.”


19. Coghill, “Six Points of Stage-Craft,” p. 34, suggests that a “well-timed knock-about routine” is “needed” between Antigonus and the bear. Biggins, “A Problem in *The Winter's Tale*,” pp. 12-13, err in the opposite direction by trying to give a graceful dignity to one of the clumsiest of creatures: the child “could naturally be supposed to lie motionless, thus lending plausibility at once to the ‘child’ and to the ‘bear's’ actions in treating it with respect, the animal perhaps sniffing gently at it before pursuing Antigonus off the stage.”

20. I am not suggesting that the symbolic force of the bear as an emblem of wrath does not operate in this scene. But the audience is not given time to “ponder” intricate symbolic relationships; the response is automatic rather than contemplative. For the tradition of the bear as an emblem of wrath, see Lawrence J. Ross, “Shakespeare's ‘Dull Clown’ and Symbolic Music,” *SQ*, XVII (1966), 126.

21. It is possible that Shakespeare was creating a conscious parody here of the traditional singing matches between shepherds in the pastoral eclogues.

22. Bethell, *The Winter's Tale*, pp. 66, 89, perhaps overstresses the religious symbolism in these lines. Although he is generally cognizant of the mixture of tragic and comic impulses, he does not notice the comic effect of self-consciousness in these lines.

23. Cf. Bethell's discussion, pp. 52-55, of the deliberate emphasis on the duality of the play world and the real world.


27. C. L. Barber, *Shakespeare's Festive Comedies* (Princeton, 1959), p. 232, makes this point about Touchstone in *As You Like It*: “The result of including in Touchstone a representative of what in love is unromantic is not, however, to undercut the play's romance: on the contrary, the fool's cynicism, or one-sided realism, forestalls the cynicism with which the audience might greet a play where his sort of realism has been ignored. … The net effect of the fool's part is thus to consolidate the hold of the serious themes by exorcising opposition.”


30. As Evans (*Shakespeare's Comedies*, pp. 314-315) points out, however, the audience is prepared in advance of the characters to know that Hermione still lives.

**Criticism: Character Studies: Roger J. Trienens (essay date July 1953)**


[In the following essay, Trienens focuses on the inception of Leontes' jealousy and contends that the character is beset with feelings of distrust from the very beginning of the play.]

Much of the criticism of *The Winter's Tale* hinges upon the characterization of Leontes and upon his startling outburst of jealousy in Act I, scene ii. Most critics have assumed that Leontes is in a normal state of mind when this scene begins but that he suddenly becomes jealous when Hermione persuades Polixenes, the visiting king, to remain longer in Sicily. Yet this has seemed a very inadequate cause for suspicion, because Hermione, however graciously, merely obeys her husband's command. Therefore these critics have generally tried to account for his sudden jealousy in one of two ways. Either they have explained it as manifesting a weakness inherent in Leontes' nature, a weakness which makes him respond to a most trifling cause for suspicion, or else they have simply called it an improbability and hence a flaw in the dramatic construction.¹

Each of these views has certain drawbacks which I should like to point out before citing what I consider to be a true interpretation. Harold C. Goddard, in *The Meaning of Shakespeare*, illustrates the view that Leontes' jealousy is an inherent characteristic; for he attributes it to “emotional instability.” He believes that Leontes becomes instantaneously the victim of an insane jealousy for no other reason than the trifle that his friend from boyhood … agrees to stay at the solicitation of Leontes' wife. Within a matter of minutes, we might almost say of seconds, he is so beside himself that he is actually questioning the paternity of his own boy and his mind has become a chaos of incoherence and sensuality. Unmotivated, his reaction has been pronounced by critic after critic, and so it is, if by motive we mean a definite rational incitement to action. But there are irrational as well as rational incitements to action, and what we have here is a sudden inundation of the conscious by the unconscious, of which the agreement of Polixeness to prolong his visit is the occasion rather than the cause.²
The psychology of the unconscious here seems to mitigate the moral indictment which early critics like Coleridge frequently level against Leontes. In comparing Othello with The Winter's Tale, Coleridge describes Othello as a noble person who is not easily jealous, whereas he describes Leontes as an ignoble person who suffers from such faults as “grossness of conception” and “selfish vindictiveness” and who is therefore easily given to jealousy.\(^3\) Lady Martin expresses the same view when she writes, “Shakespeare has therefore dealt with Leontes as a man in whom the passion of jealousy is inherent; and shows it breaking out suddenly with a force that is deaf to reason, and which stimulated by an imagination tainted to the core, finds evidences in actions the most innocent. How different is such a nature’s from Othello’s! …”\(^4\)

For Leontes to be considered naturally jealous, as these critics imagine, certain obstacles would appear insurmountable. Leontes has been married for several years before manifesting jealousy and he has been tolerating the company of Polixenes for nine months. Surely if he were naturally jealous he would have betrayed his weakness in some manner before. Yet the opening scene, the discussion between Archidamus and Camillo, is clearly designed to put the audience in the same frame of mind as the characters in the play, who are astonished when such a man as Leontes turned out to be jealous. Shakespeare treats Leontes sympathetically, as in the talk with Mamillius, and he treats him as a noble rather than as a base character. It is true that Leontes succumbs to jealousy without the assistance of an Iago or an Iachimo; but at the close of the play, having suffered a purgatory of grief, he appears worthy of the reconciliation with Hermione.

Thus the alternate view that Leontes' sudden jealousy is simply an improbability would seem preferable. Hudson expresses this view, saying, “In the delineation of Leontes there is an abruptness of change which strikes us, at first view, as not a little a-clash with nature; we cannot well see how one state of mind grows out of another; his jealousy shoots comet-like, as something unprovided for in the general ordering of his character.”\(^5\) In his introduction to the New Cambridge Shakespeare edition Quiller-Couch further emphasizes the artistic ineptitude: “In Pandosto (we shall use Shakespeare's names) Leontes' jealousy is made slow and by increase plausible. Shakespeare weakens the plausibility of it as well by ennobling Hermione—after his way with good women—as by huddling up jealousy in its motion so densely that it merely strikes us as frantic and—which is worse in drama—a piece of impossible improbability. This has always and rightly offended the critics. …”\(^6\)

This interpretation is reasonable, at least, since it does not contradict the most obvious facts of Leontes’ characterization; yet one would naturally wish to discredit it, since it is damaging to the artistry of the play. It may seem the better of the two customary views. But fortunately both of these views may be shown to be incorrect because they are both based on a mistaken assumption; on the assumption, namely, that Leontes’ jealousy rises almost instantaneously. One critic, John Dover Wilson, has contradicted this assumption in a brief note to the New Cambridge Shakespeare edition:

… The problem of this scene is to determine at what point Leontes first becomes jealous. My own belief is that the actor who plays him should display signs of jealousy from the very onset and make it clear, as he easily may, that the business of asking Polixenes to stay longer is merely the device of jealousy seeking proof.\(^7\)

It is my hope in the present article to support Wilson's belief with arguments that will convince the reader of its validity.

The other critics would have us believe that Leontes is not beset with jealousy when scene ii begins and that his passion must therefore rise in the brief period between line 1 and line 108 when he expresses his feelings in an aside. Moreover some critics shorten the period still further. According to Coleridge, for example, the words “At my request he would not” (line 87) reveal the commencement of Leontes' jealous fit. Coleridge believes that even in lines 43-45,
Hermione sets Leontes' allegedly inherent jealousy “in nascent action.” These lines, says Coleridge, should be accompanied, “as a good actress ought to represent it, by an expression and recoil of apprehension that she had gone too far.” But only Wilson has forthrightly asserted that Leontes is already experiencing jealousy at the very beginning of the scene. Now in the source of The Winter's Tale, Greene's Pandosto, the jealousy of the king is quite plausible. For in the narrative form of the story it seems natural that over a period of time he should become increasingly suspicious while he observes his queen and the visiting king enjoying each other's company. Quiller-Couch, in the passage we have read, states that in the process of dramatizing it Shakespeare rendered the story improbable. Yet it is also possible to assume that at the beginning of scene ii the action of the play is identical with that of the novel. If we can impose the novel on the play—that is, if we can read the opening of the scene as if Leontes were already jealous—then we should be able to relieve our minds of the charge that the plot is at this point faulty.

As a matter of fact, a textual analysis of the scene will confirm such a reading. Let us assume that Leontes has watched with increasing anxiety the familiarity that has grown up between Hermione and Polixenes during the latter's long visit. Why then would Leontes wish to detain Polixenes? Probably not in order to exact revenge, because his suspicion has not yet developed into a conviction. It seems more plausible that like Othello he simply cannot bear to doubt and that he is intent upon ascertaining the truth, which he could not easily do if Polixenes were to depart. In view of this situation it would be natural if in his attempt to detain Polixenes with a show of courtesy, Leontes failed to communicate himself with appropriate warmth. And indeed, his words seem remarkably terse and laconic in relation to the situation as it seems on the surface. In their total effect they give more the impression of blunt refusal than of courteous persuasion. Having managed to say little himself, Leontes addresses these curt words to Hermione: “Tongue-tied our Queen? Speak you.” She has noticed the inappropriateness of his speech which is apparent even in the printed text and which should be quite obvious in the stage delivery. Yet she does not suspect the anxiety which affects his speech any more than, up to this point, does the audience. Nor can she suspect how her success in persuading Polixenes will unsettle his mind; but that it immediately does produce such an effect is made clear by Leontes' pointed comment, “At my request he would not.” If his mind were not already given to jealousy this swift reaction would be incredible. Therefore why should we not assume that he was already jealous? If we weigh the probabilities I think we ought to conclude that Shakespeare, although not overtly revealing his jealousy before the aside, has written this scene on the premise that Leontes is jealous at its very beginning and even for some time antecedent to it.

When Leontes expresses jealousy in his aside, he does not betray the astonishment of one who has just been surprised into a passion; but instead he speaks with a careful eye for detail as he observes the behavior of Hermione and Polixenes. He has taken the event which has just passed as evidence of guilt, and he has already turned his attention towards other evidence. In fact it is a measure of the advanced stage of his suspicion that he can think in such unemotional terms about what he sees. Instead of exclaiming, “What does this mean?” or “Can it be true?” he speaks only as if he were confirmed in his suspicion: “My heart dances, but not for joy, not joy.”

After the aside, Leontes succeeds for a while in concealing his jealousy from the other characters as before; but the audience gets a better measure of his passion from the conversation with his boy, Mamillius. What distinguishes scene ii, as it progresses, from any of Leontes' previous experiences is that the seeming confirmation of his doubts rapidly unbalances his mind. Further indication that his suspicions are not entirely new comes when Leontes finally discloses his jealousy to Camillo. For then he implies that it is based not only upon Hermione's success in persuading Polixenes, but upon that in conjunction with many previous observations:
Is whispering nothing? Is leaning cheek to cheek?
Kissing with inside lip? stopping the career
Of laughter with a sigh?—a note infallible
Of breaking honesty;—horsing foot on foot?
Skulking in corners? wishing clocks more swift?
Hours, minutes? noon, midnight? ...

(284-290)

He is accustomed to observing such appearances. Insofar as they are real (we need not accuse Hermione of serious impropriety), they certainly have not all impressed his mind within the last few minutes or even hours. And still later in the scene, when Polixenes asks Camillo how Leontes came to be jealous, Camillo does not mention the incident which merely intensified the passion. He replies,

I know not; but I am sure 'tis safer to
Avoid what's grown than question how 'tis born.

(432-433)

Wilson's theory, which he set forth in 1931, has not gained the support or even the attention that it deserves and critics like M. R. Ridley, E. M. W. Tillyard, G. B. Harrison, and Hardin Craig have continued to discuss Leontes' characterization along the lines of earlier criticism. On the other hand, Mark Van Doren seems to follow Wilson in his discussion of the play, especially when he states that Leontes “opens his whole mind to us” in the aside. But if he accepts Wilson's interpretation he does not assert the fact, much less give reasons for doing so. Thomas Marc Parrott is one critic who has struck out on a fresh path:

It may repay us to follow the action of the play and to observe Shakespeare's use of the tragi-comic technique of surprise and spectacle. It opens gaily with the portrayal of the old friendship of the two kings and with Hermione's playful pressure on Polixenes to defer his departure, but the first surprise comes swiftly with the revelation of her husband's jealousy. No auditor, unless aware that Shakespeare was dramatizing Greene's novel, could have expected this. The sudden unmotivated passion of Leontes has often been denounced by critics, but Shakespeare had no desire to write Othello over again. The jealousy of Leontes, unlike that of the Moor, is causeless, self-centered, and recognized by all others in the action as morbid self-delusion.

Parrott differs from critics like Quiller-Couch because in comparing the play with its source he emphasizes the surprise element instead of the supposed improbability. However, he too regards Leontes' jealousy as a “sudden unmotivated passion.”

S. L. Bethell, in his book The Winter's Tale, A Study, has noticed Wilson's theory and attempted to refute it. His argument appears in an appendix entitled “Leontes' jealousy and his 'secret vices,,'” where he also attempts to refute Wilson's other theory that Leontes himself had sinned before the opening of the play. I will not enter into this second dispute except to say that I do not believe that Leontes had led a sinful life either. But surely these two ideas are not interdependent; for as I have already argued, Shakespeare treats Leontes as a worthy character and Leontes becomes jealous because of the morbid condition of mind in which his situation has placed him. Bethell's argument is principally based on Leontes' comment after Hermione and Polixenes go into the garden:

Though you perceive me not how I give line.

670
He believes that if Shakespeare gives this conventional indication of Leontes' state of mind here, it is improbable that he should have used the "relatively naturalistic technique" at the beginning of the scene. But if we accept Parrott's idea that Shakespeare used a surprise technique, this argument loses its force because the same surprise cannot happen twice. Moreover, the striking presentation of Leontes' jealousy is characteristic of Shakespeare's genius—his plays are remarkable for their dramatic openings—and by developing the contrast between the general opinion of Leontes' happiness and his true state of mind Shakespeare reiterates one of his favorite themes, that appearances are deceiving.

The Winter's Tale is complementary with Othello in that it takes jealousy as its premise and traces its consequences for a man who avoids death, whereas the earlier play traces the inception and growth of jealousy leading up to a tragic incident. In The Winter's Tale Shakespeare is thus satisfied only to hint at the question of "how 'tis born." After scrutinizing the text we can picture to ourselves how Leontes first became jealous. However, we should realize that Shakespeare omits this matter in order to turn our attention to the estrangement which inevitably follows; for The Winter's Tale is essentially a study of estrangement and reconciliation. If jealousy is the premise of this play it does not have to rise instantaneously. Yet if Shakespeare were to have described its development dramatically he would have had to introduce matter irrelevant to his theme—as Parrott says, he would have had to write Othello over again. And if he had immediately disclosed the secret of Leontes' jealousy to the audience he could hardly have begun the play in so surprising and effective a manner.

Notes

1. Although many critics vaguely combine these different views, we may keep them separate for the purpose of discussion. There is a convenient selection of criticisms in the New Variorum edition of The Winter's Tale, ed. Furness (Philadelphia, 1898). Several more recent criticisms will be cited below; but, with one important exception, they do not add very much to those presented in the Variorum.
5. Variorum, p. 367
10. The starting point of Wilson's note is a reference to II. 9-10: "Though very gracious on the surface, this remark, Leontes' first, is ominous." Wilson gives no other justification for his theory.
Criticism: Character Studies: Richard H. Abrams (essay date 1986)


[In the following essay, Abrams examines the source of Leontes's jealousy, noting that “[u]nder the spell of jealousy, Leontes is changed. His good angel, reason, abandons him, and the tempter, imagination, does his thinking for him.”]

Just before their duel, Hamlet apologizes to Laertes for his wild behavior at Ophelia's grave by placing the blame on an “enemy” that took over when Hamlet “from himself [was] ta'en away” (V.ii.234).¹ This “enemy” in Hamlet's expansion of the figure becomes virtually a possessing demon, like the “unclean spirits” (cacodaemones) said to afflict the mentally ill in a tradition holding from Biblical times to the Middle Ages. In the Renaissance, this view of mental illness was in retreat as evidenced by Shakespeare's broadly satiric portrait of the quack exorcist in Comedy of Errors, and we need not suppose that Hamlet seriously tries to escape responsibility for his actions by disowning the thing of darkness in himself. For though he speaks of reason and its adversary, madness, vying for control of his being, the very facetiousness with which he pursues this figure suggests the presence of a tertium quid—his assumed “antic disposition”—mediating these extremes. His apology to Laertes, which Harry Levin terms “disingenuous,” may have some corrective function in a play whose chief spokesman for absolute identity (“to thine own self be true” I.iii.78) and a “psychodynamic” approach to madness (“this effect defective comes by cause” II.ii.103) is Polonius, but it is scarcely the key, though proffered by Hamlet himself, which can unlock his heart of mystery.²

Hamlet is not the only Shakespearean tragedy in which a superstitious definition of madness is embedded with a generally realistic character portrayal, providing false perspective on Shakespeare's method. In Othello Emilia's evocation of jealousy as “a monster / Begot upon itself, born on itself” (III.iv.161-62) may have ultimate bearing on the fact that Othello is essentially self-persuaded, as critics have argued, but in the immediate sense it is naive; Shakespeare provides at least the illusion of cause in the tempter Iago, who whispers Othello's jealousy to life. In The Winter's Tale, however, the pretense of telling “an old tale still” frees Shakespeare to explore a primitive mode of psychological explanation which, in the tragedies, he is obliged to maintain at the level of poetic figure. With his causeless, self-begetting jealousy, Leontes often has been described as his own Iago, and he exhibits a splitting of reason from madness as radical as that proposed by Hamlet in his apology to Laertes. Where Hamlet's playful invocation of his madness as “enemy” leaves off, Leontes's paranoia begins. With terrible literalness, Leontes persecutes his faithful wife, Hermione, as though she were the otherness in himself, his concretized “enemy.”

Twenty-five years ago M. M. Mahood speculated, “The Elizabethans might have put Leontes' outburst down to demonic possession,” but this formula resists serious elaboration. In its favor is the incredible rapidity of Leontes's change. In the space of a single line, “Too hot, too hot!” (I, ii, 108), five minutes into his opening scene, he is visited by a full-blown revelation of his wife's seeming infidelity, and this seizure radically alters his manner of speaking. With their lightning free-associations, Leontes's mad speeches suggest glossolalia, “language that I understand not” (III.ii.80), as Hermione confesses, speaking for most of the audience. Then, as suddenly as it appeared, his madness vanishes with his son's death, leaving Leontes to answer for deeds performed by his “enemy” when, in Hamlet's phrase he was “from himself … ta'en away”: when, in his own phrase, he was “transported by my jealousies” (III.ii.158).

672
Strictly speaking, the possession motif gives out at this point. Shakespeare “psychologizes” evil influence, barring literal “sprites and goblins” from his winter’s tale at least until Antigonus's haunting in Act III. But though we cannot speak of Leontes's possession by a particular demon (an Asmodeus, a Belial, or whatever), there survives in the Renaissance, and indeed well into the eighteenth century, an alternate tradition of “possession” by an indwelling enemy or ruling passion, for which the motif of demonic possession becomes a familiar allegory. When in a late morality play Christ casts forth from Mary Magdalene the Vice “Infidelitie” together with the “.vii. diuels which have hir possessed,” the devils, identified with the seven deadly sins, are not quite invading demons but the soul's own leanings to vice, its hypostatized temptations exercised each by its contrary virtue. When in Book III of the Faerie Queene jealousy causes Spenser's Malbecco to gape in lewd fascination as his wife disports with a troop of satyrs till “he has quight / Forgot he was a man, and Gealosie is hight” (III.x.60), the event, loosely speaking, is one of possession (hence the rebaptism), though not by an anthropomorphic agent; rather by Malbecco's invidia—a sick predisposition to voyeuristic pleasures, to dwell in the shadow of a virile competitor—which, seizing on the mere occasion of his wife's nymphomania, tyrannizes from within. Shakespeare himself deals in this allegory of demonic possession as early as Love's Labor's Lost when Berowne complains that he is possessed by a “love … as mad as Ajax” (IV.ii.6) and Don Armado rages, “Love is a familiar; Love is a devil. There is no evil angel but Love” (I.ii.172-74). Here, as in Hamlet's apology, the metaphor of possession belongs to a rhetoric of shame that would disown its own emotions by representing them as besieging the soul rather than arising internally. Like the four humors (and “the humor of affection” is what Armado elsewhere calls his desire) linking man's emotional makeup to the material universe, desire can be conceived as having extension both within and beyond the subject, so that as the latter notion is stressed it becomes common to speak of the soul beset, hounded, possessed, by what it feels.

Now, desires healthy and otherwise are normally viewed as attendant on or generated by particular love-objects: a man sees a beautiful woman and falls in love; his wife commits adultery and he becomes jealous or angry. Sometimes, however, as in the case of Malbecco with his prior disposition to voyeurism, desire exists relatively independent of particular objects; it lives a life of its own within the subject, is “self-begot.” In The Winter's Tale jealousy's “life of its own” within Leontes is attested by his notorious apostrophe to Affection as a hypostatized enemy besieging his soul. He has just been interrogating his son, Mamillius, about Hermione's supposed infidelity (“Can thy dam?—may't be?”) and, meeting with incomprehension, he turns inward to interrogate his emotions directly:

Affection, thy intention stabs the center!  
Thou dost make possible things not so held,  
Communicat'st with dreams—how can this be?  
With what's unreal thou coactive art,  
And fellow'st nothing. Then 'tis very credent  
Thou may'st co-join with something; and thou dost,  
And that beyond commission, and I find it,  
And that to the infection of my brains  
And hard'ning of my brows.

(I.ii.138-46)

A jealous imagination, Leontes recognizes, may deal in mere conjecture. Thus, damping down his suspicions, he tells himself that his imagination “fellow[s] nothing.” But then, a moment later, a fresh suspicion is engendered. In what J.H.P. Pafford considers an argument a fortiori, Leontes notes that if imagination can work on “nothing,” it can likewise join with “something,” and that with regard to Hermione's supposed infidelity, it does. Whereas moments before he had rejected his suspicions, now he settles into the conviction that he has indeed been made a cuckold.

How, we ask ourselves, does Leontes get from “nothing” to “something” in a single step? How is his new
suspicion engendered ex nihilo? The question is not merely of philological interest, for it restates in little the problem of where Leontes's unfounded jealousy came from in the first place. Instead of trying to answer it, however, we may reflect that the question arises only if, denying Affection's status as a thinking subject, we hold Leontes himself (i.e., Leontes's reason) wholly responsible for the flow of ideas in the soliloquy. If, on the other hand, we accept Leontes's attribution of a “Thou,” an originitive intelligence, to this faculty, then the entire second half of his speech has the status of an interpolation. First, in other words, Leontes's reason tries to distance itself from imagination by defining it as a mind-clouding enemy (“Affection, thy intention stabs the center!”). However, in the midst of this activity, reason loses initiative. Affection takes over and, as though it “really had the power of thought,” imposes an idea of its own. At exactly the midpoint of the soliloquy (the caesura in the fifth of nine lines), Leontes's suspicion is reborn, which is to say that Affection almost literally “stabs the center.” Conjoining with the word “nothing,” or the actual nothing of the caesura, the demon Affection begets a fresh suspicion of adultery in Leontes's mind.

Under the spell of jealousy, Leontes is changed. His good angel, reason, abandons him, and the tempter, imagination, does his thinking for him. Eliminate the pneumatological machinery hinted by Leontes’s “serious personification” and this much is truism. What is remarkable, though, as underscored by the mathematic symmetry of the Affection soliloquy, is the degree to which Affection possesses originitive power, figuring as a malin genie with which (or whom) Leontes shares his being. Because this other-in-himself possesses such solidity, Leontes tries to project it, lending it substance by associating it with Hermione, the most intimate “other” in his external environment. As “internal dramatist,” he translates the war in his own psyche into confrontation with a pseudo-objective enemy.

The Freudian model of projection is, of course, anachronistic in this regard, though the Renaissance had ready substitutes, one of which is highly pertinent to Leontes's madness. No convention of love poetry (or modern love-chat, for that matter) is more familiar than the metonymy in which the lover refers to his inamorata, his loved one, as “my love,” calling by the name of his own passion the woman who excites it in him and without whom the passion would not exist. By similar logic of elision Leontes identifies his jealous agony with Hermione, whom he projects as its “cause” (II.iii.3). Women and their lusts are pronounced “a bawdy planet, that will strike / Where 'tis predominant” (I.ii.201-02). Leontes's metaphor of celestial influence touches incidentally on the etymology of the word “affection,” which comes from affectare, to yield or lean toward, in turn deriving from afficere, to strike or influence. Instead of Affection piercing Leontes's center, this office of intimate penetration is assigned to his wife—“one / Of us too much beloved” (III.ii.4)—whose being Leontes imagines impinging on his own. “Your actions are my dreams” (III.ii.82), he accuses Hermione; she is somehow inside him, her sexual dance providing orchestration for his nightmare, so that only when she is “gone, / Given to the fire” (II.iii.7-8), only when her evil influence is exorcised, can Leontes imagine himself whole again, restored to “The purity and whiteness of my sheets—/ Which to preserve is sleep” (I.ii.327-28).

Leontes's projection of enmity onto Hermione is merely paradigmatic. The mad king is well described by Camillo as one “Who in rebellion with himself will have / All that are his so too” (I.iii.355-56). Thus, not only his wife and best friend but his faithful retainers and newborn daughter, whom Leontes imagines joining the mockers when she comes of age and innocently calls him “father” (II.iii.155-56), “All that are his” are thrust into adversary roles, as though in dramatization of Leontes's quarrel with the other in himself. Of these instances, the last mentioned, that of the scapegoat Perdita, is the most important, for it leads to the fantasy-sequel of the tragedy in which we trace the afterlife of Leontes's “other” in certain ambiguous out-of-body activities of Hermione's ghost. Though Leontes's charges against his wife are groundless in the form in which he makes them, Shakespeare in a sense justifies his paranoia retrospectively by developing a darker side of Hermione's nature after Leontes himself is content to believe he “but dreamed it” (III.ii.84).

This movement toward the actualization of fantasy begins with Perdita, produced to testify as silent witness to Hermione's innocence. Leontes's refusal in Act II to “own” his own child, his insistence, three times reiterated, that Antigonus carry it off as a bastard, brings Hermione's ghost into the drama as her infant
daughter's protectress. “Jove send [the child] / A better guiding spirit” (II.iii.126-27), says Perdita's godmother, Paulina; and Antigonus, carrying it into exile, echoes her: “Come on, poor babe / Some powerful spirit instruct the kites and ravens / To be thy nurses” (II.iii.185-87). The angelic advocate or tutelary genius whom these words conjure is Hermione, who, appearing to Antigonus in a dream, names her daughter in Leontes's default and safely guides it to Bohemian shores, whereupon, amid the shepherds' talk of fairies hovering, she vanishes, never to be heard from again, as the audience supposes.

Throughout the pastoral scene of Act IV, we see the wind in the reeds. Though Hermione is never mentioned, she seems to oversee Perdita's growth and fortune, teaching the lost one to find herself, to “queen it” in her mother's fashion and to find her way back to Sicilia. The theme of dii minores, of tutelary gods hidden in things, is maintained from the first words of the sheepshearing scene in anticipation of Hermione's revival; and in Act V, Hermione's spirit slouches toward the scene of her resurrection, sensed only by Leontes, who, in apprehension of “the ghost that walk[s]” (V.i.63), seems once more to teeter on the brink of madness. Earlier it was Affection—imagination infected by morbid eroticism—that conjured, in its own image, the figure of Hermione the temptress. Now imagination subserving a guilty conscience conjures an antithetical image, yet one which curiously produces an analogous effect. Haunted by memories of his dead wife, Leontes is drained of desire for other women, as though Hermione, “sainted spirit” that she may have been when alive, now works upon his husband succubus-fashion. If ever he were to remarry, Leontes fantasizes, Hermione's spirit would newly “possess her corpse” (V.i.58) and return to the world shrieking for explanations; the ghost, possessing him, would “incense” him “To murder her I married” (V.i.61-62). This new phase of madness then—Leontes's jealousy on the dead Hermione's behalf—inverts his earlier jealousy of Hermione. However, there is the important difference that, whereas the adultress-Hermione was merely a projection, in the present case Leontes's imagination joins with “something” after all. He is haunted by a possibility that corresponds to “what's real”; and as the statue comes to life, the audience asks itself what Leontes's imagination mates with: “How can this be?”

“[I]t appears she lives” (V.iii.117), says Paulina, and if some critics stress the verisimilitude of that appearance—the wrinkles, which contradict Leontes's idealized expectations—others stress the precariousness. This is and is not Hermione, as Troilus said of Cressida. Or as Oberon in A Midsummer Night's Dream, restraining Puck from mischief, reminds him, “we are spirits of another sort” (III.ii.388), so Hermione's resurrection is wholesome, but just barely. Can we tolerate or even believe in this piece of virtue's having collaborated with Paulina in a cruel deception? And if not, how to escape the morbid conclusion that Hermione has “stol'n from the dead” (V.iii.115), that as she embraces Leontes, hanging about his neck like a succubus, he is in mortal danger? “It is required / You do awake your faith” (V.iii.94-95), says Paulina, mentioning “wicked powers”; and it is a kind of faith, surely, which not only revives the statue but also insulates generations of listeners and readers from noting the dark other meaning of Paulina's later admonition: “Do not shun her [Hermione] / Until you see her die again, for then / You kill her double” (V.iii.105-06), which results from taking the word “double” as a noun meaning dopplegänger rather than as an adverb meaning “twice.” Is it possible? Is this Hermione's double, not Hermione herself, whom Leontes will now install in his heart of hearts, sharing with her his being? We refuse to entertain the notion and cleave in the end to an explanation that explains nothing, in proportion to our need to believe in the saving power of love, whose two-in-one reverses the mystery of the divided self. But Leontes has entertained it—“If this be magic, let it be an art / Lawful as eating” (V.iii.110-11)—and, having recognized himself as his own worst enemy, would rather risk the terror of demonic possession than the drawn-out torment of solitary life. “I cannot be / Mine own, nor anything to any, if / I be not thine” (IV.iv.43-45), said Florizel to Perdita. So, too, Leontes must give himself away in the most radical sense—must obliterate the boundary between self and other—in order to become truly his own.

Notes


3. The idea of lust intensifying as it passes through a filter of envy to become jealousy is a Renaissance commonplace. Thus, in the formal pageant of vices in Spenser's Faerie Queene, we find “lustfull Lechery” riding a goat whose green eyes are “the signe of gelosy” (I.iv.24-26), a detail that recurs in Othello (III.iii.180). Similarly, as in the case of Malbecco, jealousy's fulfillment lies in gazing, whence the connection with invidia, intense looking. Spenser stresses that Malbecco, with his one good eye, can never see enough; and Shakespeare has Othello seek satisfaction in ocular proof. For an interesting modern treatment of the relation of jealousy to envy, see René Girard, Deceit, Desire, and the Novel, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965), 12 ff.


5. C. L. Barber argues the “priority of desire to attraction” in connection with Touchstone's “as pigeons bill, so wedlock would be nibbling” (As You Like It, III.iii.66-67) in Shakespeare's Festive Comedies (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), pp. 231-32. The chicken-or-egg question of whether desire came first or was generated in the adolescent Leontes and Polixenes by the sight of their attractive wives as temptation is under debate by Hermione and Polixenes when Leontes interrupts, moments before his jealous seizure (The Winter's Tale, I.ii).

6. In reading “Affection” as Leontes's own imagination rather than Hermione's supposed lust, I do not mean to limit the word's ambiguities. Complexities arise throughout the speech since metaphors used to define the act of imagination are reflected from Leontes's obscene vision of Hermione's sexual penetration (hence Leontes's later “projection” of violations onto Hermione as external enemy). Carol Thomas Neely convincingly argues a shift in the meaning of “Affection” (which moves from Leontes's imagination to Hermione's lust) in “The Winter's Tale: The Triumph of Speech,” Studies in English Literature 1500-1900 15 (1975), 321-38, especially 324-27.

7. Thus Joseph Priestly discusses the trope of “serious personification” as a figure which “obtrudes itself upon [the speaker]” so strongly affecting his passions that “while the illusion continues … [it is] as if the object of them really had the power of thought” (A Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism, 1777).

8. The poetic strategy of the Affection soliloquy, with Affection supervening midway in the speech to change the course of Leontes's meditation, is repeated at the midpoint of the action when Time, the Chorus, pressing into the “wide gap” separating Acts III and IV, changes the dramatic mode from tragedy to comedy. For imagery establishing the Chorus's speech as geometric center of the play, see William Blissset, “‘This Wide Gap of Time’: The Winter's Tale,” English Literary Renaissance 1 (1971), 52-70. In addition, it may be noted that the Chorus, like the Affection soliloquy, is shaped around a geometric center. The speech is thirty-two lines long—the first part dominated by the word “I” and dealing in violent, tragic emotions, the third part dominated by Time's third-person references to himself and dealing in gentler, comic experience. The second part is transitional and introduces the second-person pronoun. It occupies lines 15-17, or precisely the central portion of the speech, with the pivotal phrase, “I turn my glass,” occurring in the first half of line 16.

10. For a discussion of the two Hermiones created by the play's improbable ending, see James Edward Siemon, “‘But It Appears She Lives’: Iteration in The Winter’s Tale,” PMLA 89 (1974), 10-16.
12. The word “again” in Paulina's speech is similarly unsettling.

Works Cited


Criticism: Character Studies: Wilbur Sanders (essay date 1987)


[In the following essay, Sanders contends that Hermione rescues The Winter’s Tale from a descent into utter failure, noting that it is her presence that lends grace to the play despite Shakespeare's dramatic lapses.]

There is a long-running critical dispute concerning the first half of The Winter's Tale, in which, before I'm through, I shall probably become disgruntledly embroiled: is it ‘tragic’? or is it not? At the moment, though, I'd prefer to stave it off with a provisional remark or two. Such as: whatever tragic potential the action contains, the Leontes we have been watching is hardly the stuff tragic heroes are made of. Neither is Polixenes. If there's any tragedy about, it would seem to attach to Hermione—beset as she is by touchy, vacillating, insufficient or wrong-headed men. Even the trusty Camillo, who

would not be a stander-by to hear
My sovereign mistress clouded so, without
My present vengeance taken,

(I.ii. 279)
—even Camillo, when the opportunity presents itself, offers no ‘vengeance’ and fails even to ‘stand by’. For all his solicitude, he leaves his sovereign mistress to her fate. The only man amongst them all, it would seem, is Mamillius.

And indeed, as Paulina pitches into Leontes (and as her husband stands modestly back, letting her ‘take the rein’), there’s a strong suggestion that it is only amongst the women that any steadfastness, fidelity or courage is to be found. ‘Emilia,’ (the Queen’s faithful attendant) is a name that had occurred to Shakespeare before in this context; and the glancing identifications of Paulina with Dame Partlet the hen and Lady Margery Midwife strengthen the impression of female solidarity in a weak-male-dominated world. Men who are so easily ‘unroosted’ as these, one rather feels, deserve to be ‘woman-tir’d’—or hen-pecked, as we would say (II.iii. 74-5).

The tone of all this is curious. Though dreadful things are happening in Act 2 (primarily to Hermione) and though we are even presented with a full-frontal view of attempted infanticide, there is an insidious and pervasive comedy of the sexes in the handling of it all. The treatment of Leontes, in particular, brings him dangerously close to buffoonery.

Polixenes is perhaps an exception: he is allowed a partial rehabilitation before his flight. In the hasty confabulation with Camillo that ends Act 1, his sense of the enormity of the disaster does him credit, even if his timidity before its consequences doesn’t:

This jealousy
Is for a precious creature; as she's rare,
Must it be great; and as his person's mighty,
Must it be violent; and as he does conceive
He is dishonour'd by a man who ever
Profess'd to him, why, his revenges must
In that be made more bitter.

(I.ii. 451)

But the thing I find striking about this résumé, with all its concatenated ‘musts’, is its tendency to exonerate Leontes. Far from finding something monstrous in the King's suspicion, Polixenes thinks it all too intelligible. He, too, is a male. And it's as if, in meeting the reddened eye of that jealousy, he is being forced to acknowledge kinship; as if he races over the sequence of escalating violences with the swift comprehension of an accomplice. Because this is the way his mind works, he presents it as the way any man's mind must work. As he says, ‘Fear o'ershades me’. But it is less a fear of Leontes' rage against himself, fear of the ‘bespic’d cup’ and the ‘lasting wink’, than a fear of himself, the self he recognises in Leontes, that sends him packing in such indecent haste. We may be glad for even that degree of self-knowledge; but under the overshading wings of the fear, Hermione gets consigned to a troubled parenthesis:

Good expedition be my friend, and comfort
The gracious Queen, part of his theme, but nothing
Of his ill-ta'en suspicion! Come, Camillo …

(I.ii. 458)

Camillo regularly receives critical commendations as ‘the Good Counsellor’. But how he and Polixenes can fail to see that their flight will give to the ‘ill-ta'en suspicion’ a weight amounting almost to proof, is really quite stupefying. The only explanation is that, in their anxiety for their own skins, they have effectively forgotten the plight of ‘the gracious Queen’. “'Tis safer to / Avoid what's grown than question how 'tis born.’ And so, from that fine and ancient male mess created by first deifying women as ‘precious’ / ‘gracious’ / ‘sacred’, and then treating them as property, the males flee in confusion. Which is easy for them to do
because, of course, they ‘command / The keys of all the posterns’. They leave Hermione, as it were, holding the baby. Or—if we count Leontes—the babies.

All of which may sound like post-feminist anachronism. But the Shakespeare of Sonnet 143 was able to picture himself as a loudly crying infant, trailing after his mother-mistress, begging her to ‘play the mother's part, kiss me, be kind’. He was perfectly capable, surely, of noticing such behaviour in another man.

To Hermione as mother-mistress, at all events, the husband proves much more of a burden than the daughter in her womb, or the son at her skirts. Mamillius emerges with much credit: he really is ‘a gallant child’. When, with the fretfulness of advanced pregnancy, his mother pushes him away, he goes obediently and plays with the court ladies, waiting until she's ‘for him again’. Then he returns and tries (gallantly) to entertain her with one of his ‘powerful’ tales—though one notices the amusing difficulty he has in standing still while he tells it: ‘Nay, come, sit down: then on’ (like most small boys, Mamillius tends to narrate on the hoof).

All the intuitive sympathy for Hermione that's lacking in Leontes, overflows in Mamillius' small heart. The boy is so innocent of accusation that his father can even misconstrue his childish misery as chiming with his own:

To see his nobleness,
Conceiving the dishonour of his mother.
He straight declin'd, droop'd, took it deeply,
Fasten'd, and fix'd the shame on't in himself:
Threw off his spirit, his appetite, his sleep,
And downright languish'd.

(II.iii. 12, Folio punctuation)

For all the father's obtuseness about its cause, this behaviour is poignantly recognisable: a mute anguish of bewilderment, which will fasten and fix all the shame in itself rather than accuse those it loves. The irony is appalling. Mamillius' silent ‘languishing’ is sparing his father, amongst other things, the knowledge that he is conceiving the dishonour of his father, not his mother. Not that the child undertakes to judge between them: all he knows is that his father wants to kill his mother—from whom he has been violently snatched, like some pawn in an incomprehensible game. He fears he will never see her again. And the ‘mere [i.e. unconditional, absolute] conceit and fear’ this inspires is enough to destroy him.

Anyone who thinks the death of Mamillius is another of Shakespeare's 'plot-postulates' has something to learn about the grief of children over the rupture of family life. And the small pathos of his passing is made weightier by the insensitivity of the ‘gross and foolish sire’ with which it is contrasted.

The weight of the indictment that is accumulating against Leontes is, by now, so crushing that we may wonder how he can survive at all as an object of serious dramatic interest. He staggers and stammers under the onslaught of Paulina's scorn, bandies insults with his courtiers, is reduced to tweaking their noses and pulling their beards, he fumes and rages like a cardboard Herod, until it seems that the only action of which he can be the dynamic centre is one that will raise the participants (as Antigonus remarks)

To laughter, as I take it,

(II.i. 198)

Who can seriously care for such a man? The tragic matter has been dissipated, by indignity, into shallow farce.
Or would have been, if it weren't for two factors. The first concerns a primal role which is discernible through all Leontes' personal follies. A man's predicament can matter where the man himself does not. Drama, I've been arguing, naturally deals in the local and the specific of the knowable human psyche. But it need not stop there. It may also reveal 'the translucence of the General in the Especial'—as Coleridge puts it, in a classic definition of the symbolic. And even the Especial of farcical stupidity can have this translucence. It has it, after all, in the opening scene of *King Lear*. There, the transcendent folly of Lear's action is backlit by another glow: it is not just folly we are witnessing, but the folly of the Father—of all fathers. And while the old fool's personality and proceedings command scant respect, the great primal force of the parental bond that burns and scorches through him is so vast as to require a theatre almost cosmic for its accommodation.

In a similar way, the acts of the contemptible, self-deluded, wilful Leontes are giving us the folly of The Husband—a perennial, possibly incurable folly from which none of us who are male can claim exemption (perhaps not even those of us who are female, since it takes two to tango to the jealousy tune). We dare not, consequently, treat it with the contempt that it very possibly deserved. Fear o'ershades us. Touched at that level of panic and emptiness, would we make out any better?

The second factor which rescues the action from contempt is, of course, the presence (and she is quite astonishingly 'present') of Hermione. Harrowed but calm, displaying a kind of serenity in her very anguish, she manages, somehow, to continue caring for Leontes—thus rescuing him narrowly from contempt. She is the good Queen. Paulina is right to insist on the word:

*Good Queen, my lord, good Queen—I say good Queen;  
And would by combat make her good, so were I  
A man, the worst about you.*

If anyone deserves to be called 'good' (using the word properly—not abusing it like the knuckle-headed males who imagine a woman can be made good by the bawling of challenges and the swashing of buckles), it is Hermione. A good Queen. One of the things Leontes is going to have to learn is the meaning of these simple words: 'good'; 'love'; 'warm'. So Paulina drums the lesson into him: 'I say good Queen'.

Hermione's palpable goodness has proved something of a snare to criticism. Commentators have tended to exclaim raptly, 'Tis Grace indeed!' and then to subside into mindless adoration of a notably theological tinge. The apotheosis of femininity swiftly follows. As we've seen, Hermione suffers this misappropriation quite enough at the hands of other people in the play, without the critics joining in. And incidentally, editors have no business compounding the offence by giving *grace* a capital 'G'. It's true that the Folio compositor tends to capitalise every second noun in his text, and 'grace' is one of them; but that's no reason for removing all the other capitals, leaving *grace* enjoying a specious prominence—wearing a halo, as it were. With a Hermione around, there is no need to signal transcendence so crudely. We can put 'grace' back into lower-case, and keep the question of its divine origins properly fluid.

Not that I want in the least to deny Hermione grace. We have seen her in Act 1, percipient, tactful, troubled, warm, making her way carefully through the tangled thickets of Leontes' misprision and self-doubt towards the honourable 'love' which can include both him and his friend, yet betray none of her integrity either—

*such a kind of love as might become  
A lady like me.*

(III.ii. 62)

That is grace. That is 'rare'—to use another of the play's favourite value-words. To know that there is a whole gamut of feelings properly called 'love', which are not rivals and competitors, but kin to each other, is rare.
Equally rare, in the face of a stunning calumny from one who should ‘best know’ otherwise, is this:

Should a villain say so,
The most replenish'd villain in the world,
He were as much more villain; you, my lord,
Do but mistake.

(II.i. 78)

Integrity usually lies close to obstinacy: you honour your own truth, like Coriolanus, but at some cost to the truth of those around you. Not so Hermione. Her integrity has none of that stiffness. It is wounded, but it does not shrivel into self-righteousness. Its ear is quick, its eye observant, and its *amour-propre* too secure to be suddenly stung into vituperation. But it is not all charitable self-effacement either. It has its own exactly measured intransigence, an austerity of emotion which knows what does and does not ‘become’ it, and which finds its restraints within itself. This intransigence, Hermione is perfectly aware, will be open to misconstruction. But it is a part of her self and she is not ashamed of it:

Good my lords,
I am not prone to weeping, as our sex
Commonly are—the want of which vain dew
Perchance shall dry your pities—but I have
That honourable grief lodg'd here which burns
Worse than tears drown. …
The King's will be perform'd.

(II.i. 107)

If you're in any doubt about the fine poise of this sincerity, you need only compare the prickly defensiveness of Hamlet, when *his* sincerity of grief is questioned and he claims to 'have that within which passes show':

Seems, madam! Nay, it is; I know not seems.

To find a voice simultaneously, for the ‘honourable grief’, for the outrage she's submitted to, for her personal dignity, *and* for the impersonal concern that survives all these … this would seem an impossible task. But Hermione, miraculously, finds it:

Adieu, my lord.
I never wish'd to see you sorry; now
I trust I shall.

(II.i. 122)

That grave measured speech, saddened yet dry-eyed, reproachful without sanctimony, angered without egotism, gives us the whole woman she is—a woman strong enough to *wish* upon her husband the misery to which his deeds have entitled him:

now
I trust I shall.

The word ‘trust’ is very exactly chosen: it is her trust in his better nature which reveals to her the necessity of his sorrow. And with all the impersonal austerity of love, she ‘trusts’ he will undergo it.

That is ‘grace’. And it is far too rich and human a quality to be abandoned to the theologians, indeed, the theologians wouldn't be interested in the word if it didn't have that richness.
You may be wondering how I can feel so secure against ‘theologians’ when this incarnation of womanly grace is to return as a holy statue and be ‘resurrected’ by awakened ‘faith’. Objection noted. But this is a play which rewards being read forwards, and I propose to defer reading it backwards until the simpler method breaks down. I remain impenitently interested in what ‘happens’. After all, it was good enough for Shakespeare's first audience; why shouldn't it be good enough for us?

Meanwhile, in prison, Hermione gives birth to a 'poor prisoner'—a clear case, it would seem, of the 'imposition … Hereditary ours' being entailed upon the infant. But the guilt turns out here to be conditional, not absolute:

A daughter, and a goodly babe,
Lusty, and like to live. The Queen receives
Much comfort in't; says 'My poor prisoner,
I am as innocent as you.'

(II.ii. 27)

James Smith, no doubt, would find this heterodox; and I'm sure it is. Hermione doesn't make the orthodox comparison between two sinful inheritors of Adam's guilt—which would give ‘You are as innocent as I.’ She looks at the child—‘The innocent milk in it most innocent mouth’—and, with her characteristic neglect of the categories of guilt, claims parity: ‘I am as innocent as you.’ The essential depravity of infants has always been a difficult doctrine to impose on the human imagination and Hermione's thought is clearly running in another direction when she takes the baby in her arms and ‘receives / Much comfort in't’. She is looking at a creature which, with its very first ‘wawl and cry’, has answered heaven boldly, ‘Not guilty’. It is a sight that fortifies her in her own innocence—which is all very natural … but not very Christian.

No more Christian is Paulina's interpretation of the omen:

This child was prisoner to the womb, and is
By law and process of great Nature thence
Freed and enfranchis'd.

(II.ii. 59)

She's talking, of course, about the child's juridical right to leave a literal prison. But it's one of those utterances that reverberates through the whole play, enunciating a general truth about the phenomenon of birth. The baby is not just released from restraint ('freed'), but given a positive place, as of right, in the human community (enfranchisement: 'the incorporating of a man to be free of a Company or Body Politique’, as Coke has it [OED, 2a]). A new citizen is set unconditionally on the earth. The slate is wiped clean. Whatever the sins of the fathers, now we begin afresh.

Shakespeare knows all about Original Sin, certainly; he may personally have believed in it, we shall never know; but its writ, it seems, is not to run here. There is a higher court of appeal, that of great nature (or 'Nature', if you prefer—but then we'd better follow Folio consistently and capitalise 'Child' and 'Law' as well—it's the same problem of modernisation as with 'grace').

I don't want to labour the point about Shakespeare's 'naturalism'; but I don't want, either, to ignore the extraordinary resonance of Paulina's pronouncement. Long before the arrival of the cheery amoralist, Autolycus, Shakespeare is preparing the soil in which those daffodils of his begin to peer. Long before the arrival of the cheery amoralist, Autolycus, Shakespeare is preparing the soil in which those daffodils of his begin to peer. He has already made out the red blood reigning (or 'raigning'—the Folio spelling keeps open a happy word-play) in the winter's pale. The tight moralism of sin/fault/guilt is slackening its grip as humanity is enfranchised in that ordinary recurrent miracle—spring, birth, great nature. The entailment and bondage melts away as the merely
mental thing it was. Other forces in fact govern the world. Leontes is no more than a jealous tyrant usurping his power. He has no jurisdiction over new life.

He does however have power, alarming power, over this particular instance of new life. And the rest of the First Movement goes on to show the havoc he can still wreak with this limited power. Shakespeare may be vindicating the sovereignty of ‘great creating nature’, but it’s no part of his project to minimise the capacity of human nature to thwart and destroy. That would make the demonstration a very shallow affair indeed. Both Hermione and Paulina underestimate that destructive capacity—with results that are nearly fatal to Perdita, that ‘Poor thing, condemn’d to loss’.

A lot of people besides Leontes, actually, seem to be involved in doing the condemning. Antigonus, for instance, may not be as pusillanimous as the other lords (or as his wife believes him), but he does nevertheless make rather a fetish of his feudal obligations, faithfully performing a vow that is morally repugnant to him. And though he eases his passage with rationalisations drawn from his dreams, this hardly raises him in our estimation, since we know his conclusion to be mistaken. And Paulina—I don’t know how it strikes other readers?—is surely taking a gigantic risk, which it’s not hers to take, when she trusts to a ‘better nature’ of which there has been not one sign, and leaves the baby to Leontes’ tender mercies. In Hermione the project was forgivable: she hadn’t seen the implacable obscene fury of the man who had been her husband against his own offspring. But Paulina has, and still she lays down the little bundle, consigning it, for all she knows, to the furnace its father wants it instantly consumed in. Her action does have the effect of dramatising the unthinkableableness of the thing Leontes now does, but it seems pretty foolhardy none the less.

Perhaps such speculations are marginal—mistaking the ‘mode’. Certainly, as Antigonus takes up the bundle (and it would have been, of course, no more than that on Shakespeare’s stage) we are not too much afeard. Something in the air is changing. A web of mythopoeic magic is being woven and cast over the savagery of the act. A fresh breeze blows from a new quarter. And there is invisible music, borne over the waves, perhaps, from ‘Delphos’ (Shakespeare’s imaginary amalgam of mountain Delphi and island Delos, a place of delicate climate and sweet air, fertile, ceremonious, solemn and unearthly):

Come on, poor babe.
Some powerful spirit instruct the kites and ravens
To be thy nurses! Wolves and bears, they say,
Casting their savageness aside, have done
Like offices of pity. Sir, be prosperous
In more than this deed does require! And blessing
Against this cruelty fight on thy side,
Poor thing, condemn’d to loss.

(II.iii. 184)

Music it unmistakably is—a mere possibility of feeling substantiated into harmonious sound. For its validation it depends upon ‘some powerful spirit’, for no one can pretend that nature is necessarily benign to this tune; yet the powerful spirit is already present in the music of its own utterance.

Antigonus has scarcely departed before the messengers from Delphos are announced, their mouths full of prosperity, and their hearts brimming with the hope of ‘something rare’ that is about to ‘rush to knowledge’. The pace quickens with delectable haste:

Go; fresh horses.

(III.i. 21)
‘Issue’, Molly Mahood has pointed out, is a rich word here. The ‘issue’, as Paulina has described it—from its frown, its ‘pretty dimples’, right down to its ‘mould and frame of hand, nail, finger’—is indeed gracious. But we have just seen it nevertheless ‘hal’d out to murder’. The whole action is poised between a kind of holy hope—which is, in the end, to make the issue more gracious than we could ever have imagined—and a kind of despairing disgust at Leontes’ obscene persistence in his ‘weak-hing’d fancy’. The trial must settle it all. We refer ourselves to the oracle.

If tragedy involves our feeling, upon the very pulses of life, the possibility that life is not worth the having, then, in the Trial Scene, we touch upon tragedy—Hermione's tragedy:

For life, I prize it
As I weigh grief, which I would spare.

(III.i. 40)

More than any statement could do, the numbing cadence gives us the flatness of her misery. Life is not an unconditional good, to be clutched at any cost. For those who think it is, she feels only a pitying scorn:

Sir, spare your threats.
The bug which you would fright me with, I seek.

And she goes on to show how easily, with the removal of a few simple ‘comforts’, life may become utterly barren:

To me can life be no commodity.
The crown and comfort of my life, your favour,
I do give lost, for I do feel it gone,
But know not how it went; my second joy
And first fruits of my body, from his presence
I am barr'd, like one infectious; my third comfort,
Starr'd most unluckily, is from my breast—
The innocent milk in it most innocent mouth—
Hal'd out to murder; myself on every post
Proclaim'd a strumpet; with immodest hatred
The child-bed privilege denied, which 'longs
To women of all fashion; lastly, hurried
Here to this place, i'th'open air, before
I have got strength of limit. Now, my liege,
Tell me what blessings I have here alive
That I should fear to die.

(III.i. 89)

Shakespeare can always write wonderfully for the female voice. Boy-actors notwithstanding, you never mistake his women for men. But I think he never so wonderfully caught the **power** of a woman's voice as here—its capacity to be all feeling and flexibility, yet at the same time implacable as steel. She faces the devastation, in full possession of her faculties, and in full knowledge of her loss, yet without blenching. That is how it is. Life can always be stripped of these things. You feel them gone, yet know not how they went. What can a mere death matter, after that?

And yet, in the authentically tragic way, her contempt of death is giving us, *in extremis*, the value of the life that still persists to scorn it. All the sanctities—the crown and comfort of married love, the physical presence of children, the intimacy of the breast, even the fundamental decencies of social respect—have all been violated; but Hermione's high courage survives to despise the despoiled life they have left her to. It's because
she knows what life can be worth, that she scorns to prolong it on these terms. ‘The value of what was destroyed’, as D. W. Harding put it, speaking of Rosenberg’s war poetry, has been ‘brought into sight only by the destruction’ (*Experience into Words*, 1963, p.96).

At this point in the action it is, I believe, unthinkable that there can be any return to an equable domesticity. Hermione has been driven too far out into that comfortless asocial wilderness where the tragic individual makes up his accounts with the life ‘which [he] would spare’. Her solitude is final. So is her estrangement. Leontes, suddenly catapulted back into the real world a few minutes later, may talk breathlessly of reconciliation, of ‘new-wooing’ his Queen. With the weight of obsession lifted from his own heart, facile hope floods over him:

> Her heart is but o’ercharg’d; she will recover.

(III.i. 147)

‘But o’ercharg’d’!—it shows a terrible ignorance of the human heart in general, and of Hermione's in particular! Mamillius' heart, too, was ‘but o'ercharg'd.’ But we in the audience can hardly countenance his programme of reparation. His situation is like the one that Clytemnestra holds out for Agamemnon's contemplation, as he resolves upon the sacrifice of his daughter Iphigenia:

> When you return at last
To Argos, after the war, will you embrace
And kiss your daughters and your son? God forbid!
It would be sacrilege. For do you suppose
Any child of yours, when you have sent
A sister to her death, would ever look
Upon your face again, or in your eyes?


Or any wife? we might add. No. God forbid! It would be sacrilege.

The point is worth making strongly, so that the magnitude of the task Shakespeare has set himself will be manifest. For, although the audience is being given no inkling of it here, he is planning a ‘return’ for his Agamemnon—and not to the butchering and avenging axe of the outraged mother. The temerity of it is staggering. The scheme would seem doomed to disaster—an outrage upon both probability and justice.

Stripped of the continuities of her life—her marriage and her children—Hermione does, however, keep her hold on one or two impersonal continuities which may survive the wreck. As always, her vision extends beyond the vortex into which she is being personally sucked.

She is concerned, firstly, for her honour—not out of vanity, but because

> 'Tis a derivative from me to mine,
And only that I stand for.

(III.i. 42)

She knows that the life she prizes ‘not a straw’ for herself, will nevertheless go on for others. And they must not suffer needlessly. Leontes must be obliged, therefore, to produce better proofs than his jealousies, and to observe law, not rigour. ‘Apollo be my judge.’
Nor does she allow her personal catastrophe to draw her into recriminations against the universe at large, as a meaner spirit might have been drawn:

But thus—if pow'rs divine
Behold our human actions, as they do,
I doubt not then but innocence shall make
False accusation blush.

(III.ii. 26)

Not to doubt at such a moment shows a brave magnanimity, especially since she holds out to herself no hope of their intervention, only of their beholding. But she has her priorities lucidly clear, and accusing the gods of indifference is not one of them.

And there is one other task she has in hand. It is, if you like, a task of instruction for her obstinate husband, in the matter of Polixenes. He shall not again, if she can help it, confound every important distinction by dividing the integrity of ‘love’ into two halves, one innocent, the other guilty. Leontes wants to make over her love for his friend, into a ‘vice’:

LEON.

I ne'er heard yet
That any of these bolder vices wanted
Less impudence to gainsay what they did
Than to perform it first.

HERM.

Though ’tis a saying, sir, not due to me.

LEON.

You will not own it.

HERM.

More than mistress
Which comes to me in name of fault, I must

not

At all acknowledge.

II.ii. 52)

If boldness signals vice then, yes, she will be vicious in refusing the mere ‘name’ of vice. But that is not the issue. That is not what she ‘stands for’. She stands out here for the proper use of the word ‘love’, which she knows he wants to deny her. And as (to his mounting fury) she goes on repeating the word in the most vexing
of contexts, one can see what her bold intransigence is bent on preserving. It is an essential verity, an emotional truth without which she does not care to have even his love:

For Polixenes,
With whom I am accus'd, I do confess
I lov'd him …

(and her voice rises to bear down the expected objection: ‘No, Leontes, you will not stop me using the word!’)

... lov'd him as in honour he requir'd;

(‘I refuse, you see, to set love and honour at odds, as you are doing.’)

With such a kind of love as might become
A lady like me; with a love even such,
So and no other, as yourself commanded;
Which not to have done, I think had been in me
Both disobedience and ingratitude
To you and toward your friend; whose love …

(‘Yes, it is the same word, because it is the same thing’)

... whose love had spoke,
Even since it could speak, from an infant, freely,
That it was yours.

(III.ii. 59)

I find it almost irresistible that the woman who speaks these lines is discovering that it had been no kindness to cosset Leontes in his jealous possessiveness, with continual assurances of love. If they are to have any future relations, it cannot be on that basis. He must understand that there are many levels of affection in her nature, all properly called ‘love’, and, in the name of human dignity, he cannot expect to monopolise them all. If he knew his own good, he wouldn't want to. He would value her ‘liberty’, her ‘bounty’, her ‘fertile bosom’ for the generosities of nature they are. He would see that they well become the agent—a lady like her. And he would be glad that she was such a lady.

In Act 1 Leontes had glimpsed how these qualities might become her; but, finding them perhaps too hard to live up to, he took the easier, more squalid course of believing them to be merely ‘a free face put on’. Possibly—for their marriage—the instruction now comes too late; but Hermione has decided that, not even for him, will she be any other lady. That is why she puts the stakes so high, why she sets his magnanimity such a searching test: she wants reconciliation at no lower rate.

Leontes seems not to hear her offer. Indeed, he only hears the words of Apollo sufficiently to note that they will not serve his obsession, and then to dismiss them with a casual wave of the hand:

There is no truth at all i'th' oracle.
The sessions shall proceed. This is mere falsehood.

(III.ii. 127)

The stunned, incredulous silence into which this falls is broken by the running Servant, and Leontes begins to pay the price of his ‘great profaneness’.

687
Except that it isn’t he who does the paying. It is Mamillius; and Hermione; and (far away, over on the stormy, bear-encrusted shores of Bohemia) Antigonus. Which is no kind of justice, poetic or otherwise. By its own natural unfolding, the play has generated this new, and very vexing ‘problem’. You may say that, for the purposes of the fable, Mamillius and Antigonus no longer ‘count’. But they did once; and you can’t claim to have solved an equation when you have simply altered the values of some of its terms. Nor can you solve it by wantonly introducing new terms (Autolycus, Perdita, the Shepherds) to which you then assign any value you choose. And the central term, Hermione, lives on, at least in Leontes’ memory (if not in Paulina’s chapel), with a value quite undiminished, which denies the very possibility of a solution.

In short, there is every sign—and many readers have taken the signs to be conclusive—that Shakespeare has checkmated himself. He can only gather up the shreds of his tattered fable by beginning all over again, on brand-new premisses: another generation, another country, and, by the way, the wench was not dead. And then, really to set the tone, he calls in that old Joker, Time, to warm up the studio-audience, in case they don’t laugh in the right places.

That’s no way to write a play! Has the old master’s hand finally lost its cunning?

_Bibliography_


G. Bradshaw, _Shakespeare's Scepticism_, Brighton 1987, pp. 80-94.


E. Dowden, _Shakspere: his Mind and Art_, London 1882.


W. Hazlitt, _Characters of Shakespeare's Plays_, London 1817.

S. Johnson, _Johnson on Shakespeare_, Oxford 1908.


A. Sewell, Character and Society in Shakespeare, Oxford 1951, ch.7.


**Criticism: Production Reviews: Charles Isherwood (review date 3 February-9 February 2003)**


[In the following review, Isherwood acknowledges the difficulty faced by Barry Edelstein in directing a modern-day production of The Winter's Tale, but notes that the performance suffered not from the efforts to reconcile the two worlds, but from the lackluster acting of the cast.]

With their preposterous, often gruesome plots and occasional dablings in the supernatural, Shakespeare's late romances do not take easily to modern-dress productions. In Barry Edelstein's sober but sapless production of The Winter's Tale at the Classic Stage Co., for example, the oracle of Delphi makes its pronouncement via a reel-to-reel tape recorder wheeled onstage—a deflatingly mundane image, even if the voice, amusingly, is that of the aptly august Walter Cronkite.

The kind of topsy-turvy worlds these plays evoke is not easy to reconcile with business suits and modern technology, although Edelstein's production finds reasonably intelligent ways to draw parallels between Shakespeare's ancient Sicilia and Bohemia and contemporary America. The kings of those countries, Leontes (David Strathairn) and Polixenes (Michael Gill), appear here like CEOs of allied business concerns. (Recent
developments in the business world would suggest highflying CEOs may well be susceptible to the kind of irrational behavior that besets Leontes in the opening moments of the play and sets its fantastic plot in motion.) The play's pastoral scenes, meanwhile, might be taking place in Tompkins Square Park, with the shepherds and shepherdesses attired in the latest downtown togs, chunky boots and all.

The damage here comes not from Edelstein's often handsome stage images, which are underscored with elegance by Michael Torke's superb jazz-tinged piano score and the subtle lighting of Jane Cox, but from the drab delivery of some of Shakespeare's most challenging verse, which drains too much of the color from this exceedingly colorful play. Too many of the performers seem to attire the play's rich language itself in a business suit. The verse is interpreted with adequate skill and sense, but in a bland manner that robs it of its dramatic power and has a flattening effect on the production as a whole.

Strathairn's Leontes, who is gripped by a paroxysm of sexual jealousy to supersede Othello's in the play's opening scene, is something of a dry stick. This character's belief in his wife's corruption is so patently irrational that it needs to be expressed with a commensurately powerful depth of feeling. Strathairn's Leontes never seems to be in the grip of overpowering emotion; irritation and irony course through his mutterings, not deluded rage and erotic humiliation.

Barbara Garrick, who plays his wronged wife, Hermione, does not possess a particularly handsome stage voice; there's a touch of stridency in it that, combined with her uninflected delivery, robs the character of the piteous grandeur that makes her plight so moving.

The play's sudden shift from the gruesome to the frolicsome is always both a surprise and a relief. The outrageous excesses of Leontes' behavior and their terrible consequence:—Hermione's imprisonment and (apparent) death, the banishment of the babe, the death of the young prince—are so overwhelming that the play seems to reach an emotional dead end, which makes the reunification of the king's family (most of it anyway) in the final scene likewise overwhelming in its power.

Here, unfortunately, the comic antics that serve as an interlude before that astonishing scene of renewal wear out their welcome fairly quickly. Costume designer Mattie Ullrich has seriously miscalculated with Perdita's costume, a getup that might give even the sartorially wayward Bjork pause. The raggedy tutu and work boots are dreadful enough, but the butterfly wings are unforgivable. It cannot be easy for Elizabeth Reaser to communicate Perdita's artless goodness in this artificially whimsical costume. Gene Farber, as the prince who has fallen under Perdita's spell, is more appealing in his exuberant affection. Teagle F. Bougere plays the rogue Autolycus as a smooth, street-savvy operator with the usual goods on offer, but it seems perverse to cast so manifestly unmusical a performer in a role that requires quite a bit of singing.

Perhaps the only performer who really sings the verse itself as it should be sung is Mary Lou Rosato, who is a vocally and dramatically forceful presence in the pivotal role of Paulina. Rosato is obviously an actress with long experience in the classics. Because the language comes easily to her, she has freer access to the emotion that underlie it. The scenes in which she rages against Leontes' cruel and causeless behavior are the liveliest, by some measure, of the evening, the rare occasions when a spark of powerful feeling meets the tinder of Shakespeare's language, and a real conflagration results.

**Criticism: Production Reviews: Charles McNulty (review date 5 February-11 February 2003)**

In the following excerpted review, McNulty reviews the Classic Stage Company's 2003 production of The Winter's Tale, claiming that while Barry Edelstein's modernistic staging of the play was elegant and unhurried, the acting failed to display authentic emotion, leaving the audience unable to connect to the far-fetched story.

Shakespeare may be remembered for his great lines, but it's the characters that make us want to revisit his plays. If the matter were simply quotations, a Bartlett's would satisfy in place of an evening out. Maybe this is why Harold Bloom's Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human, and not Frank Kermode's Shakespeare's Language, has become the most widely cited Bard reference among active theater critics. Bloom, for all his dogmatic asides and crankiness, certainly clarified the “peculiar gift of inwardness” bestowed on Shakespeare's protagonists. What draws us—and by extension actors—to the plays is the chance to encounter consciousness in dawning recognition of itself, grasping for answers where only questions reside, and testing the capacity to rethink what has previously been held as certainty.

Shakespeare in performance lives or dies by the quality of its acting. If two recent modern-dress productions—Theatre for a New Audience's Julius Caesar and Classic Stage Company's The Winter's Tale—achieve only mixed results, it's largely because their casts seem more intent on keeping pace with directorial maneuvers than following the hairpin turns of their characters' interior logic. When will it be understood that Shakespeare is only distant or boring when the human nuance of his work is eclipsed by lively shenanigans desperate to entertain us? …

Barry Edelstein's direction of The Winter's Tale allows the overstuffed drama to unfold at an unhurried tempo. Often elegant in its spare, imagistic 21st-century design, the production as a whole demonstrates an impressive understanding of Shakespeare's parable of reckless loss and partial redemption. Yet, for all the resonantly artful tableaux, there's a strange absence of authentic emotion preventing the far-fetched story from igniting into felt life.

One of the trickiest challenges posed by this late romance lies in the unaccounted phenomenon of Leontes's sexual jealousy. Why does he turn so quickly and rabidly against his wife Hermione (Barbara Garrick) and childhood friend King Polixenes (Michael Gill)? Bloom offers the memorable sound bite that Leontes is his own Iago, though an actor needs to delve deeper to find clues into the pathology of vision that keeps the King of Sicilia perpetually confusing true and false. This is precisely what David Strathairn does not do, offering instead a generic portrait that growls and foams without psychological insight—he acts like a character trapped in a dark fable rather than a man haunted by the “spider” of his own fetid imagination.

More damaging still, the marital connection between Strathairn's Leontes and Garrick's Hermione has an impersonal air, which gravely lowers the stakes for all that ensues. As Paulina, the irreplaceable moral watchdog of the court, Mary Lou Rosato evokes genuine sympathy, though like everyone else around her, she's forced to press a bit hard. This is especially the case when the action moves to a color-burst version of Bohemia, where Teagle F. Bougere's Autolycus strains to sell the comic effect of his con games and the young attractive lovers, Perdita (Elizabeth Reaser) and Florizel (Gene Farber), prance around as though in a surreal Gap ad.

Still, there's something unfailingly moving about the final reconciliation scene, where Shakespeare resurrects the supposedly dead Hermione and lends Leontes another chance to appreciate what he almost entirely destroyed. The magic, of course, is the author's most reliable enchantment: character truth.

Criticism: Themes: S. Viswanathan (essay date 1987)
In the following essay, Viswanathan theorizes that in his later plays, particularly The Winter's Tale, Shakespeare was extremely experimental with his theatrical techniques, mixing “self-conscious theatricality” with “convincing verisimilitude.”

A significant feature of the dramaturgy of the later Shakespeare which has come in for a good deal of fruitful attention in recent years is the quality of deliberate dramatic self-consciousness or ‘self-conscious theatricality’ that marks the late tragedies and the last plays, if not some of the problem comedies also. It may be described as a new flowering and pronounced manifestation of, and a further refinement on, the quality of ‘multi-consciousness’ inherent in the English dramatic tradition and this is in ample evidence in the earlier Shakespeare; this trend perhaps first arose in the boy companies at the turn of the century and came to be adopted in the public playhouses also, sooner or later. This quality of dramatic self-consciousness may be regarded as the basis for certain other characteristics which seem distinctive of the Jacobean dramatic mode. These characteristics may be listed thus—a self-reflexive and parodic use of dramatic conventions and devices, or sometimes rhetorical topoi; the use of certain ‘modes of detachment’ by which an ‘aesthetic distancing’ of characters and action is often enough effected; the presentation of characters, especially the protagonists, in a less inward and more societal or general perspective, with ‘give-away’ aside mostly replacing the older soliloquies; the framework of commentary serving as a means of the dramatist’s manipulation of response; scenic impact or a scene-for-the-scene opportunism taking precedence over the sequential or cumulative impression; the other trompe l’oeil habit of collapsing illusion and reality together; the sudden contrasts or baroque clashes of mood and tone, if not sudden changes of scene, and, lastly, the strong element of playacting and roleplaying. These general characteristics of dramatic conception and technique are in evidence in the later plays of Shakespeare in varying degrees of magnitude and importance from play to play; but they are to a greater or less extent shared by the later Shakespeare and his colleagues in the theatre of the times, both public and private, such as Marston, Jonson, Chapman, Beaumont, Tourneur, Middleton and Webster. This latter fact only confirms that Shakespeare as a Jacobean playwright, for all his being like a star, did not dwell apart from his fellow-playwrights, and was, in the ultimate sense, engaged in a collaboration, a common pursuit of true dramatic endeavour, with them.

We will do well thus to recognize the abundant experimental vigour of the later as well as the earlier Shakespeare and his remarkable response to, as well as full participation in his theatrical milieu (neither was he bored with things nor was there a decline in his powers). But perhaps it is equally if not more important for us to note the qualitative differences between Shakespeare's use of the modes of self-conscious theatre and of disengagement, and the use of the same modes by Marston (in Antonio's Revenge and The Malcontent) or by Beaumont (in The Knight of the Burning Pestle or The Maid's Tragedy) or by the trio of Marston, Chapman and Jonson (in Eastward Ho!) or Tourneur (or Middleton) (in The Revenger's Tragedy or A Chaste Maid in Cheapside). The difference, baldly stated, is simply that Shakespeare in his later plays often achieves a simultaneous effect of self-conscious theatricality and convincing verisimilitude or life-likeness, to both of which the spectator can fully respond at the same time. The self-reflexive use of dramatic conceptions and devices in the other playwrights can often detract from the essential mimesis of drama. But in Shakespeare's late plays the virtuoso-like prestidigitation of the 'dyer's hand' of the playwright, with all the sophistication of a certain theatrical tour de force and the juxtaposition or fusion of the naive and the 'marvellous'—or of the realistic and the idealistic—has a way of evoking at once an attention to (and admiration for) the art of the playwright and a feeling for the human reality of the drama. I shall now go on to illustrate this co-presence of theatrical virtuosity and truth-to-life with an analysis of a recurring example from The Winter's Tale.

Shakespeare's stylized conception and rendering of the crucial second scene of the play, the scene of the sudden onset of Leontes' jealousy, have been noted by critics though not the distancing effect of the
conventionalization. The part it plays in the dramatist's manipulation of our response to Leontes' jealousy has perhaps not been given its due in commentary. But a curious phenomenon of this scene, and as a matter of fact of *The Winter's Tale* as a whole, is the figuring in the scene and in the play of an all too commonplace stage gesture, the gesture of handclasping. More curious perhaps than the extensive and highly effective use of this gesture in the play is the critics' neglect of this visual gesture, which occurs prominently in this scene and at several other key points in the play, serving as a powerful visual punctuation or rhythm. The double impression of a self-reflexive and a mimetic use of a dramatic convention is well instanced in Shakespeare's deployment of the gesture of the handclasp in the play, and in this scene.

The note of graceful idealism and of the Arcadian idyllic sounded in the opening scene, and carried on into the second scene up to a point, registers its sudden and apparently disastrous change the moment Hermione 'gives her hand to Polixenes' (I.ii.107), signalling the pact of his acceptance of her plea to him to extend his visit. The dramatically self-conscious technique of the whole scene is such that the rise of the jealous fit on Leontes' part as set out in his utterances (I.ii.108-18; 125-6) has for its visual correlative in the stage picture the figures of Hermione and Polixenes holding each other's hands, the two as it were remaining arrested in that posture, albeit in interesting inset, silent (their mimed words if any are not to be heard), for the space of the long outburst of Leontes. It is in many ways a stage underlining of an obvious gesture. Much like the emphasizing and repetition of the Biblical word, 'verily,' first spoken in the opening scene by Archidamus (I.i.11) and in the second scene by Hermione (I.ii.46-55), the bizarre verbal motif of Camillo's 'though absent, [the two kings] shook hands, as over a vast, and embrac'd as it were from the ends of oppos'd winds' is picked up in Leontes' congratulation of Hermione on her successful persuasion of Polixenes to stay on:

> that was when
> Three crabbed months had sour'd themselves to death,
> Ere I could make thee open thy white hand,
> (And) clap thyself my love …
>
> (I.ii.101-4)

However, we need not assume that at this point the action of Leontes now putting his hand into Hermione ought to suit the words. Incidentally, the rhythms of the alternating spells of silence and speech on the part of Hermione, Leontes, Polixenes and Mamilius contribute to the dynamics of the scene through an alternation of stage presence and utterance. Added to this is the stage reality of the visibly pregnant condition of Hermione. It is the sight of Hermione and Polixenes sitting hand in hand that whips up Leontes' feelings. The deliberate calling of attention to the onstage tableau

> ... to be paddling palms and pinching fingers,
> As now they are,
>
> (I.ii.115-16)

and

> Still virginaling
>
> (I.ii.125-6)

(this latter for the moment breaking off his by-play with Mamilius) in the context of the cumulation of references to handshaking does serve to theatricalize Leontes' jealousy. So do the rhetorical excesses of his speeches and their overplus of dislocated energy, as well as the extravagant concern he shows with the all too down-to-earth details of Mamilius' personal hygiene, which contrasts with the 'fury' in the words and the
situation. Out of the ‘nothing’ of a single detail of the handclasp Leontes’ mind could soon call up a chain of hallucinatory evidence for his jealousy in his indictment of Hermione addressed to Camillo

Is leaning cheek to cheek? is meeting noses?
Kissing with inside lip? stopping the career
Of laughter with a sigh (a note infallible
Of breaking honesty?) horsing foot on foot?
Skulking in corners? Wishing clocks more swift?

(I.ii.284-290)

... he, that wears her like her medal hanging
About his neck, Bohemia ... 

(I.ii.307-8)

In terms of theatrical impact the situation does get aesthetically distanced among other factors through the use of the handclasp. We see Leontes as in a condition or a fit of disease. Yet as its victim he does undergo real throes and pangs. For all their ultimate tragicomic happy resolution the events that are the outcome of this jealousy involve the sad death of the prince (as sad as that of Prince Henry in the view of some scholars), the loss—though perhaps not so sad—of the boldly commonsensical Antigonus with his fitting ripostes, and the privations of the Queen. The ‘unreality’ of Leontes’ jealousy and its real, existential force are simultaneously brought home to us. The visual rhythm of the handclasp punctuates the close of the long scene when Polixenes takes Camillo's advice that he should flee from Sicily taking him by the hand.

Give me thy hand,
Be pilot to me, and thy places shall
Still neighbour mine ... 

(I.ii.447-9)

This in turn is to be the beginning or anticipation of Camillo's role in the play of ‘piloting’ and of joining hands.

When Leontes, now far gone in his state of jealousy—which to him is confirmed by Camillo's flight—banishes the Queen from his company, Antigonus speaks up and speaks out most vocally among the lords on behalf of the Queen. In answer Leontes employs a gesture to convince Antigonus of the materiality of his ‘cause’ in a manner not dissimilar to the Johnsonian, anti-Berkelean stamp. Saying,

I do see't, and feel't,

he grasps his arm (s.d.).

The use of the handclasp gesture in the second, Bohemian half of the play matches its counterpart in the Sicilian, first half in its tellingness, particularly in its double effect of reality and theatricality, and the motif is easily one of the most outstanding of the many correspondences between the two parts of the diptych that the play is.
In the scene of the sheep-shearing feast, masque-like structure and details are employed to bring us a sense of the paradoxical interweave of ‘performance’ and genuineness, of art and nature, and nature and grace, the popular and the courtly. The artifice of the dramatic action of the taking of hands, simple as it is, forms an important part of the natural beauty of the art and life of the scene. To start with, the festival dance entails a joining of hands between Florizel and Perdita, the dance which is referred to first by the Shepherd in terms of no more than a domestic, true-hostess-like efficiency and nimbleness (*hic et ubique*) (IV.iv.58-60), and later by Florizel in terms of an ideal cosmic dance (like the dance of Siva) apprehended as a warm, felt, living reality in Perdita

When you do dance, I wish you

A wave o’ th’ sea, that you might ever do
Nothing but that; move still, still so,
And own no other function.

(IV.i.140-3)

Florizel takes Perdita’s hand, and as they ‘dance featly’ a dance of shepherds and shepherdesses it turns out to be a sort of masque-dance in a sort of courtly-pastoral masque, to be followed later by the antimasque of the dance of the Twelve Saltyrs or Saltiers. The multifacetedness of the illusion-reality intercommunication in the dance and the situation as a whole are something which resemble the unified-field awareness and simultaneity of pattern-recognition characteristic of ‘electronic circuitry’ indeed.

But Florizel's handfasting with Perdita, interrupted as it is by Polixenes, is the centrepiece of the action of the scene. Here again there is a theatrical underscoring of the holding of hands, as in the second scene of the play, as well as a sudden manifestation of anger on Polixenes' part, involving a sudden, masque-like change of tone and mood in the scene, answering to the sudden outbreak of Leontes' jealousy. Florizel makes, rightly, a ceremony of it.

I take thy hand, this hand,

As soft as dove's down and as white as it,
Or Ethiopian tooth, or the fann'd snow that's bolted
By th' northern blasts twice o'er.

(IV.i.361-4)

The mutual clasping of hands is, again, called attention to in the not unadmiring words of the soon-to-be angry Polixenes

How prettily th' young swain seems to wash
The hand was fair before! ... 

(IV.i.366-7)

But when the Shepherd is about to solemnize the ‘handfast’, with

Come, your hand,

And, daughter, yours

(IV.i.390-1)

Polixenes makes an interruption, first raising the question of the father's consent to the son's choice and subsequently by all but parting their hands, “discovering himself” with his ‘mark your divorce’ in answer to Florizel's ‘mark our contract’. Yet in spite of its turning out to be a broken ceremony (and the sheep-shearing
feast a broken feast also, as most Shakespearean feasts are) the two are united till ‘... death do [them] part’, though ‘the heavens will not have their contract celebrated’, as Perdita puts it later (V.i.202-3).

It is in the ‘marvellous’ final scene of the play that the stage device of handclasping is employed by Shakespeare to the finest, most characteristically subtle double effect of a *coup de théâtre* and a moving communication of reality in the play. The paradoxical interfusion of art and nature and of nature and grace suggested throughout the play crystallizes itself into an impressive stage-reality in the scene, with the ‘figures-in-words’ so far materializing themselves into the ‘figures-in-action’. But in the preceding mood-setting scene of reporting (V.ii), a number of gestures are enthusiastically reported by the three Gentlemen who vie with one another in their effort to communicate the vividness of their impressions of the events witnessed. Yet the handclasping gesture is referred to and indulged in by the Clown in his stocktaking of the recently passed incredible developments with his father the Shepherd. His ‘preposterous’ declaration to his father is

> But I was a gentleman born before my father; for the King's son took me by the hand, and call'd me brother; and then the two kings call'd my father brother …

(IV.ii.139-42)

In what one may call in this context an antimasque-like or, better still, an antemasque-like use of giving somebody one's hand, the Clown on getting an ‘ay’ in reply to his question to Autolycus if he would amend his life gives him, in his new-fangled gentlemanliness, his hand and agrees to commend Autolycus to the Prince. In this comic use of the gesture it is its overt staginess which is to the fore, yet it should be noted that all this immediately precedes the great final scene, and the Clown announces at the end of his scene that they all like ‘the king and the princes, our kindred’ should go to see ‘the Queen's picture’.

As with Hermione's ‘wrinkles-and-all’ statue, the art of ‘taking one by the hand’, as it is in evidence in the finale of the play, is ‘an art which does mend Nature but the art itself is Nature’. Perdita's response to the statue of the Queen is to kneel (another gesture used meaningfully at various points in the play, incidentally) and ‘to implore her blessing’. Shakespeare does prepare his audience, though, through half-hints and faint-enough suggestions for the final surprise (which he exceptionally holds for them in this play), but it is a preparation which takes the form of Paulina-the-stage-manager's provision of hints of possibilities of the Queen's coming back from the dead to Leontes and the others (as early as the opening of Act V). An important stage in the course of this process in the final scene occurs when Perdita, taken in by the ‘life’ of the statue in one sense, but rightly grasping it in another more important sense, is about to take the statuesque Queen by the hand.

Dear queen, that ended when I began,  
Give me that hand of yours to kiss

(V.iii.44-6)

and Paulina in effect warns her of ‘wet paint’. A still more important stage in the movement of the scene is reached when Paulina promises the onlookers the magic of art, rather art as magic, the *trompe l'oeil* phenomenon by which

I'll make the statue move indeed, descend  
And take you by the hand …

(V.iii.88-9)
(Paulina's or rather Shakespeare's trompe l'oeil here far outdoes whatever the artist Julian Romano was capable of.) Leontes is 'content' to submit himself and to consider it legitimate magic. As in The Tempest, at this point in The Winter's Tale music does it as much as magic, and it is to music as well as to Paulina's command that Hermione awakes and starts moving. As Paulina exhorts the spellbound Leontes, 'Nay, present your hand' (V.iii.107), he readily takes Hermione by the hand, a second hand-fasting echoing the echo in I.ii of the pre-dramatic first; the handfasting now makes the reunion a true re-marriage. The quiet but deeply felt energies of drama, released in the moment of the handclasp—as Leontes says

> O, she's warm!

(V.iii.109-11)

—are limitless. As Camillo's running commentary indicates, 'she hangs about his neck', a transformed stage-realization of the gesture attributed to Hermione and Polixenes by Leontes in his jealous fit—

> he, that wears her like her medal hanging

About his neck, Bohemia

(Lii.307-8)

And Hermione finding her tongue for the first time takes by her hand the kneeling Perdita after pronouncing the best blessings on her head.

The mellowest of the instances of the handclasp is reserved to the very end. For Paulina who has rediscovered and restored his Queen to him Leontes finds a husband in Camillo by way of fitting repayment. There is the further 'fit' of the two stage-managers who have in the play been ‘fitting’ others (in Elizabethan theatre terminology) taking each other's hand in marriage, as King Leontes with his newly-gained masterfulness over the situation commands

> Come, Camillo

And take her by the hand ... 

(V.iii.143-4)

The repetition and underscoring of the gesture do make for the gesture showing itself up in all its obviousness; yet the old turtle (as she calls herself) and the old dove join hands in marriage, which is a marriage of true minds. Coming in the wake of the reunion, as good as a new or second marriage, of Leontes and Hermione, the idea (and the fact) of the wedding of Paulina and Camillo evokes the same kind of response as the golden wedding of a happily married elderly couple would evoke. There is a reunion of Hermione and Polixenes, ‘my brother’ too. Florizel, as the King reminds Hermione (and us), is, ‘heavens directing troth-plight to your daughter’. The reader or spectator with a good memory will not forget at this point the three daughters of himself and Paulina that Antigonus mentions earlier—the eldest at the end of the play is twenty-seven years old. But Shakespeare can afford to forget them.

Metadramatic as Shakespeare's complex manipulation of the simple dramatic gesture of handclasping may be, it is in his hands one of the means of representing reality. Similarly, Shakespeare seems to use in this play the scenic form of the Mystery-cycle plays of the Slaughter of the Innocents (with Herod at the centre) in ironic or palimpsest form in the scene (II.iii) in which Leontes rages like Herod as Paulina brings his new-born infant, reprimands him and, at the end of a slanging match, leaves the child, only to be ordered by Leontes that it be killed or abandoned. But while the scenic reminiscence of Mystery drama, and the implicit supersession of the
mode suggested in its ironic use, make for a disengagement or disorientation of the spectator, the analogy lends the scene, at the same time, an extra-dimensionality and an impact which strangely combine disturbance and reassurance. The suggestions of the Mystery-cycle play on Herod's Massacre of the Innocents in the configuration of the scene are confirmed by the verbal echo in the scene (II.iii.110) of the Middle-English term of abuse ‘lozel’, which occurs in the Mystery plays but whose sole occurrence in Shakespeare is to be found in this scene. Similar to Shakespeare's use of the tableau of the handclasp in this play is his use of the kneeling tableaux in it. Also, as he exploits the scenic form of a Mystery-cycle play in II.iii, and also perhaps in the scene of Hermione's trial (echoing the trial scenes of the Mystery plays, especially those of Christ's trial), so he employs the masque structure and masque elements in the scenic configuration of the scene of the sheep-shearing feast as well as the final scene to double effect. These latter instances of scenic motifs and dramatic devices in the play, of course, will have to be considered separately. Our brief study of the dramatic functions of the device of ‘taking one by the hand’ in The Winter's Tale should serve to reassure us that Shakespeare's later plays, as his middle and early ones, more than most of the plays of his Jacobean colleagues, are for all their self-reflexive qualities no ‘self-consuming artifacts’. They are not solipsistic contrivances, nor entirely or mainly plays about playmaking and playmaking devices; there is ‘an appeal always open (in them) from art to nature’, and, again in Johnson's words, ‘they are just representations of general nature’.

Criticism: Themes: Peter G. Platt (essay date 1997)


[In the following essay, Platt examines the philosophical opposition of rationality and wonder in The Winter's Tale.]

The Winter's Tale provides us with the purest example of a Shakespearean “dramatics” of wonder, for in it Shakespeare confronts the potential epistemological tyranny of the rational and posits the marvelous as a means of overcoming this powerful force. At the same time that he examines these philosophical issues through his dramatic art, Shakespeare raises aesthetic questions by unmasking this art as the play unfolds. Thus, while Howard Felperin is certainly correct to point out that nowhere else in Shakespeare is the power of art—which is closely linked to wonder in this play—“seen as wholly positive,”¹ Shakespeare also interrogates the role that this power plays in challenging epistemological certainty and dramatic expectation.

Structurally, the play breaks down neatly into two sections, the first more epistemological, the second more aesthetic and theatrical, in focus. Leontes' rage for knowledge, which leads him deep into the heart of a hermeneutical abyss, is the dominant concern of the first three acts; this section we could call “Part One: The Rational.” In acts 4 and 5, where Shakespeare requires readers and audiences to take non-naturalistic, nonrational leaps of space and time, we enter “Part Two: The Wondrous.”² Felperin's more recent essay on The Winter's Tale focuses solely on the poetic, linguistic, and rational elements of the play, largely neglecting “the Wondrous” and thus putting its author in danger of repeating Leontes' mistake.³ In his deconstructive reevaluation of the play (and of his earlier reading of it), then, Felperin cannot fully grapple with the wonders of the nonverbal, spatial, and spectacular elements of the second part and especially the ending. As a result he gets stuck with the “ballad-makers” who “cannot be able to express” the great “deal of wonder” (5.2.23-25) that we encounter in part 2.

The first three acts are consumed with the search for reason, logic, and univocal interpretation. Indeed, the early dialogue between Archidamus and Camillo (1.1.33-46) reveals the limitations of the search and demonstrates that speech can as easily lead to absurdity as to meaning. Archidamus admits, “I know not what to say” (13), and soon afterward Archidamus and Camillo both begin hyperbolically praising the prince, but
that mode of discourse quickly disintegrates; in fact, the more they talk, the more we see the failure of language to be meaningful. Camillo suggests that the old and crippled desire to live on only to see Mamillius grow up. When Archidamus asks if this is the only reason they wish to stay alive, Camillo replies, in essence, “Yes, unless there were another reason to stay alive”; immediately, his original statement is invalidated. Archidamus furthers this point, undercutting his original praise: “If the king had no son, they would desire to live on crutches until he had one” (45-46). In other words, the old and crippled would want to live whether Mamillius existed or not; he has nothing to do with their will to endure. This extremely amusing opening anticipates Samuel Beckett in its subtle meditation on human meaning through the portrayal of human speech. Yet it is on this shifting, illogical ground that Leontes builds his fortress of reason, and the results are far from humorous.

The epitome of Terence Cave’s “male epistemophilia,” Leontes seeks logically to master his world:

In my just censure! in my true opinion!
Alack, for lesser knowledge! how accurs'd
In being so blest!

(2.1.36-39)

But even if Leontes were a good reader—and we will soon see that he is not—the discourse of the world of The Winter's Tale presents its characters with illegibility at nearly every turn, as Camillo and Archidamus reveal in the first scene; epistemological mastery can never fully be achieved in this play. Further, Hermione does present a difficult text: both Felperin and, more persuasively, William H. Matchett before him argue that the audience, too, should initially be in doubt about Hermione's innocence and that she should be obviously pregnant on stage. For, almost as if to focus on a cause of Leontes' jealousy, Hermione's pregnancy is alluded to in no uncertain terms in act 2, scene 1: the First Lady notes, “The queen your mother rounds apace” (16), the Second Lady concurs, “She is spread of late / Into a goodly bulk” (19-20), Leontes snarls, “let her sport herself / With that she's big with; for 'tis Polixenes / Has made her swell thus” (60-62), and Hermione claims she needs her women around her because “My plight requires it” (118). Thus, although the audience can never regain the innocence to doubt Hermione's innocence—they come into the play knowing her fidelity—the production can help them to understand Leontes' confusion if not his later actions.

Further uncertainty arises in performance when the audience hears a king—which king?—say the following words:

Nine changes of the wat'ry star hath been
The shepherd's note since we have left our throne
Without a burthen. Time as long again
Would be fill'd up, my brother, with our thanks,
And yet we should, for perpetuity,
Go hence in debt. And therefore, like a cipher
(Yet standing in rich place), I multiply
With one "We thank you" many thousands moe
That go before it.

(1.2.1-9)

It should not take us long to figure out that this is Polixenes, the king of Bohemia, Leontes' best friend. But the realization is disconcerting, for the speech contains language that suggests conception and fertility. Given the ambiguity of some of Hermione's language and the obviously affectionate “paddling” (115) and “virginalling” (125) of palms, it is conceivable that the audience might wonder why it takes Leontes so long to explode. This line on the play helps account for what could otherwise be an inscrutable outburst, but it also
foregrounds the difficulty of interpretation and brings us into the world of indeterminacy. We undergo the same movement from error to understanding, from dependence on rational appearances to wondrous revelations, that Leontes does.

Astute readers and viewers, though, probably realize their mistakes sooner than Leontes. Like the desperate Astrophil looking toward grammar rules for evidence “That in one speech two negatives affirm,” Leontes pounces on Camillo's use of the word “satisfy” to explain Polixenes' reason for staying in Sicilia, finding evidence for his central claim:

CAM.

To satisfy your Highness, and the entreaties
Of our most gracious mistress.

LEON.

Th'entreaties of your mistress? Satisfy?
Let that suffice.

(1.2.232-35)

At this point, though, Leontes still seems to be seeking another opinion, even if it is one he ends up refuting; by the end of the scene, however, Leontes is so certain he is correct that he orders Camillo to kill Polixenes. But before he arrives at this point, he challenges Camillo to deny knowing that Hermione is “slippery” (273) and a “hobby-horse” (276), using the language of argumentation: ”say't and justify't!” (278). Camillo defends Hermione's “clouded” (280) reputation, suggesting not only Leontes’ sullyng of her name but also the sense of the obfuscation or error that surrounds his master's interpretation. But Leontes rejects the suggestion that he is mistaken, and in the remarkable speech that follows, we see that—like Posthumus—he bases his entire system of epistemology and belief on being correct in his reading of his wife:

Is whispering nothing?
Is leaning cheek to cheek? is meeting noses?
Kissing with inside lip? stopping the career
Of laughter with a sigh (a note infallible
Of breaking honesty)? horsing foot on foot?
Skulking in corners? wishing clocks more swift?
Hours, minutes? noon, midnight? and all eyes
Blind with the pin and web, but theirs, theirs only,
That would unseen be wicked? Is this nothing?
Why then the world, and all that's in't is nothing,
The covering sky is nothing, Bohemia nothing,
My wife is nothing, nor nothing have these nothings,
If this be nothing.

(284-96)

Hermione's infidelity has become a central truth in Leontes' view of reality. Proving her false, paradoxically and ironically, becomes necessary to establish his fundamental philosophical truths; the alternative is nihilism, the “nothing's” that dominate the speech. In this process Hermione will become utterly dehumanized as Leontes makes her into part of a proof. Although Camillo promises to kill Polixenes, he realizes that Leontes
is abused by his “diseas'd opinion” (297) and at the end of the scene flees to Bohemia with Polixenes.

Leontes’ opinion is diseased, but he seems to sense, at least early in the play, that the world is hard to read, that there are forces that conspire against reason:

Affection! thy intention stabs the centre.
Thou dost make possible things not so held,
Communicat'st with dreams (how can this be?),
With what's unreal thou co-active art,
And fellow'st nothing.

(1.2.138-42)

However, like a good Aristotelian, he is confident that these “things not so held” can be understood and their wondrous nature dissipated. In order to bring reason to bear on the world, though, Leontes must make all aspects of his life conform to his philosophical image. In an important moment early in act 2, Leontes barges in on Mamillius as the latter is about to take his pregnant mother and the attendant ladies on a marvelous journey into a land of the “sad tale” with its “sprites and goblins” (2.1.25-26). Replacing his son's discourse with his own and disrupting the loving and nurturing atmosphere of the start of the scene, Leontes enters, raging over the disappearance of Polixenes and Camillo. But he brings not only univocity into a room of the complex and marvelous but also symbolic—soon to be actual—death into a setting replete with warmth, life, and imminent birth. In cutting off his son's wondrous narrative, Leontes reveals the tyrannical and eventually deadly nature of the (ir)rational.9

The complexities of supposedly rational language are foregrounded in some of Leontes's notoriously tortured speeches. We often find ourselves in the position of Polixenes, asking “What means Sicilia?” (1.2.146) because Shakespeare often has Leontes' speech and logic break down as Leontes tries to describe this very breakdown. But instead of arriving at a conclusion that posits ambiguity as a given, Leontes rushes to dispel it and to achieve a hard and fast conclusion. Again grounding his entire intellectual and epistemological system in the certainty of his wife's guilt, Leontes tells Hermione largely the same thing he has told Camillo:

No; if
In those foundations which I build upon,
The centre is not big enough to bear
A school-boy's top.

(2.1.100-103)

But Shakespeare continues to mock this linguistic and philosophical certainty, and it is in the syntactical chaos of Leontes' speeches that we are presented with a king who is tragically misguided:10

Nor night, nor day, no rest: It is but weaknesse
To beare the matter thus: meere weaknesse, if
The cause were not in being: part o' th' cause,
She th' Adultresse: for the harlot-King
Is quite beyond mine Arme, out of the blanke
And leuell of my braine: plot-proofe: but shee,
I can hooke to me: say that she were gone,
Given to the fire, a moity of my rest
Might come to me againe.

(2.3.1-9)
We are invited to experience here a troubled mind pondering acts of vengeful violence. Looking at the above speech, we cannot help noting the seven colons, and each surely indicates a break in Leontes' thought—not so abrupt as a dash, but enough to indicate a breakdown of flowing rational discourse. And after each colon, Leontes tries to reformulate what has come before, producing the effect of Nina in act 4 of Chekhov's *The Seagull*, as she repeatedly tries to formulate a narrative of her identity: “No, that's not it.”11 Speech is never really “it,” or in Felperin's words, “literature is never really 'there' or fully presented, but is always mediated action, action estranged by the linguistic medium in which it has its existence.”12 Shakespeare's text reveals an awareness of this problem in *The Winter's Tale*, though I argue that the play goes much further than Felperin in its attempt to escape the deconstructive bind.

Leontes' misprisions become dangerous when they become creative—that is to say, when his readings of Hermione shape and alter the actual matter of events. Hermione highlights for us the extent to which Leontes has become a shaper and author of sorts when she exclaims, “How will this grieve you, / When you shall come to clearer knowledge, that / You thus have publish'd me” (2.1.96-98). Paulina, too, is aware that Leontes can fashion a perverse reality out of thin air: “Here's such ado to make no stain a stain / As passes coloring” (2.2.17-18). Indeed, one of the tragedies of *The Winter's Tale*—the tragedy that is unredeemable—comes about as a result of Leontes' privileging his interpretation's text and not the newly created “text” of his child; as Paulina says, “Behold, my lords, / Although the print be little, the whole matter / And copy of the father” (2.3.98-100). But Leontes is certain that the baby is “the issue of Polixenes” (94), that his reality-altering interpretation is infallible.13

Knowing that Paulina is right and that the “root of his [Leontes'] opinion … is rotten” (2.3.90), Hermione refers herself to the Oracle, to whom Leontes has sent two men at the end of act 1, scene 2: “I do refer me to the Oracle: Apollo be my judge!” (3.2.115-16). For here Hermione hopes to find a stable referent for truth instead of the discourse, founded on airy fictions, of Leontes: “You speak a language that I understand not: / My life stands in the level of your dreams” (80-81).

Cleomines and Dion, the two who actually go to Delphos for the oracular message, seem out of place in Sicilia as they speak about their journey in the language of the marvelous. Indeed, the scene provides a foreshadowing of the play's second half and its interest in wonder and silence. For the temple, Cleomines tells us, surpasses “the common praise it bears” (3.1.3), outstripping the human capacity to represent it. Moreover, “the burst / And the ear-deaf'ning voice of th'oracle, / Kin to Jove's thunder, so surpris'd my sense, / That I was nothing” (8-11). The experience on the island transported Cleomines out of himself in Longinian fashion, deafening and humbling him with its marvelous power. He was reduced to a marvelous, selfless “nothing,” one that contrasts neatly with the nihilistic and egotistical “nothing’s” of Leontes speech in act 1. Dion, too, calls the journey “rare” (13) and senses that there is a different sort of knowledge in store for Sicilia's denizens:

(Thus by Apollo's great divine seal'd up)  
Shall the contents discover, something rare  
Even then will rush to knowledge.  

(18-21)

When the contents *are* finally discovered, we get as unambiguous an example of language as we will encounter in the play. But Felperin is right to stress that it takes a superhuman force—and an absent one at that—to establish Hermione's innocence; and even then, the words of the god are still secondhand re-presentations of Apollo's actual utterance. As Cleomines has hinted, language and reason are still deficient.14 Of course Leontes' recognition and acceptance of his error come too late: Mamillius dies, Hermione “dies,” Antigonus dies—this is the work that Leontes has wrought. And as act 3, scene 2 closes, we
have reached the dead end of epistemophilia and its grounding in slippery discourse: yet there are over two acts of the play remaining.

The obvious bridge between the two realms is scene 3 of act 3, where we move from horrible death to marvelous deliverance and from naturalistic to daring, nonrepresentational drama. The verbal pivot comes in the well-known lines of the Shepherd—who has found Perdita—addressed to the Clown—who has witnessed both the deadly shipwreck and the mauling of Antigonus: “thou met'st with things dying, I with things new-born” (3.3.113-14). Clearly, we are moving from the harsh, convoluted language of Leontes' verse—a synecdoche for his tortured grasping after reason—to the lighter, more playful prose of the Shepherd and Clown, who, even amidst tragedy, seek to “do good deeds on’t” (138-39). And this is where I break with Felperin, for his deconstructive reading inevitably remains based in language even though Shakespeare attempts to move beyond it into the realm of the non-mimetic, nonverbal: the wondrous. In fact, Felperin tips his hand early in the essay with the following remark: “The impossibility of rendering theatrically the suggestive force of the word ‘virginalling’ must stand as a perennial caveat to those who maintain the primacy of performance over text.”

By privileging the verbal, Felperin neglects the spectacular nature of the second half, where the notion of performance is thematized.

Moreover, the Shepherd's words carry us into the part of the play that has room for wonder, for “things new-born.” Yet wonder for Shakespeare, I have been arguing, takes a form that is not merely—or in this play, even primarily—verbal. Thus we have “Exit, pursued by a bear,” which takes us to the theatrical and spatial pivot. In a fascinating short article, Judie Newman has illuminated the presence of the bear as a transitional device by discussing the tradition of the Candelmas Bear. Drawing on Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie's Carnival, she notes the role of the bear, like that of the groundhog in North America, in determining how much longer winter would last: if the sky were blue when the bear emerged, there would be forty more days of cold; if the sky were cloudy, winter would soon be over. Newman points out that in act 3, scene 3, there are two references to dark and cloudy skies (3-4, 55-56): “Thus, the appearance of Shakespeare's bear, though mortal to Antigonus, signals the end of winter, and an upturn in the dramatic weather, as the dark atmosphere of the near-tragic Acts I and II yields to the regenerative world of Perdita, fresh hopes, and summer flowers.”

Whether the bear originally was a real one from the Bear Garden outside the Blackfriars Theater or a man dressed in a bear suit is not the main point: this moment, as Matchett puts it, “is not a way of increasing the realistic effect; it is a way of making the audience aware of the medium.” What follows will be wondrous, Shakespeare seems to be telling us, and the main vehicle will be theatrical. Jolting us out of our complacency by ripping apart his seamless tragedy, Shakespeare—like van Gogh or even Pollock—shows us the seams, the texture, of his work and suggests that this is where the marvelous can dwell: not in concealing but in foregrounding art. Suspended between reason and affect, we experience the Patrizian potenza ammirativa, where we are neither certain nor lost but are in wonder. Shakespeare's dramatics compel us to take note of his mechanics so that we might be transported to a higher level of awareness—of art and life. Shakespeare, then, is preparing us for the consummate example of this dramatic move at the end of the play, but we must first be soothed and repaired in the pastoral air of Bohemia.

For it is easy to dissociate the death of the sailors and of Antigonus from the pastoral world that we find in act 4, largely because of the sixteen-year gap that Time explicates for us. Non-naturalistic, Time's very existence mocks the unity of time. And Shakespeare seems to know that he is asking a great deal from his audience:

If ever you have spent time worse ere now;
If never, yet that Time himself doth say,
He wishes earnestly you never may.

(4.1.29-32)
Autolycus, as we shall see, also adds a wrinkle to the pastoral pattern of the act. Nonetheless, as Rosalie Colie says, “Perdita is allowed to grow up a part of the natural cycle, in a natural and nature-bound family”: she has “grown in grace / Equal with wondering” (4.1.24-25). Perdita is natural whereas her father was unnatural, wondrous whereas her father was hyperrational. Yet she also reflects a further Shakespearean foregrounding of artistic technique and convention, as she is both the remnant of the tragic plot and the central figure in the pastoral one. However, Perdita is the one who, in the flower debate with the disguised Polixenes, argues for purity in the breeding of flowers, even though she, supposedly the daughter of a shepherd, has fallen in love with the son of the king. To Perdita, sanctioning grafted flowers is like her persuading a lover to take her in a disguised, cosmetic form:

The dibble in earth to set one slip of them;  
No more than, were I painted I would wish  
This youth should say 'twere well, and only therefore  
Desire to breed by me.

(4.4.99-103)

Of course, there is a double irony here, and Perdita is aware of only half of it: for the festival, she is pretending to be a queen; she does not know that she is a princess living the life of a shepherdess playing the role of a queen. Adding even more irony to this part of the play, Shakespeare has the disguised Polixenes argue—in the flower debate—that the mixture of flower types is really part of the larger plan of Nature (“an art / That nature makes” [91-92]), even while the king is disapprovingly spying on his son, who he has heard is in love with the daughter of “a most homely shepherd” (4.2.38). Clearly, there is a chasm between theory and practice for both Perdita and Polixenes. Colie claims that nothing eventually comes of the issues raised in this debate, for “its insights [are] rejected as the plot turns out to have no use for them. … [Shakespeare makes] us see that, under all the conventional metaphorical prattle about nature-and-art, nature-and-nurture, what we must consider are questions of intrinsic human personality.” Perhaps, though, Shakespeare is suggesting the inescapability of “metaphorical prattle”—of art, fiction, roles. Although Perdita resists grafted flowers and cosmetics, she comes to realize by the end of the act that even she must engage in the world of the fictive and theatrical. After hearing of Florizel and Camillo's plot for the escape to Sicilia, she concedes, “I see the play so lies / That I must bear a part” (4.4.655-56). This metadramatic statement reveals Perdita's recognition of the theatricality of human experience and begins preparing us for the marvelous events of act 5.

Shakespeare readies us further for the wonder of Hermione's transformation in his presentation of Autolycus, focusing on the ballad, the poem, so that he can eventually distinguish between it and the spectacle of theater in the final scene. The emblem of fraud in this pastoral world, Autolycus attempts to sell ballads to Mopsa, the Clown, and Dorcas, and they are obsessed with whether these ballads—a fictive form—are real. Mopsa asserts, “I love a ballad in print, a-life, for then we are sure they are true” (4.4.260-61). The humor and irony are rich here, for the entire play has exposed the potential falsehood of language. That Autolycus is associated with ballads comically underscores the illusory truth of poetry.

And yet Florizel, although warned by Camillo of the danger in both the hot-tempered Polixenes and the treachery of the world, asserts his belief in the power of wonder, inspired by Perdita:

I am [advised]—and by my fancy. If my reason  
Will thereto be obedient, I have reason;  
If not, my senses, better pleas'd with madness,  
Do bid it welcome

(482-85)
Embracing the marvelous, Florizel, in Janet Adelman's words, also “embraces the female” and “founds his identity in his relation to her [Perdita]. … And in return, Perdita promises him not the static eternity of Polixenes's pastoral but an aliveness that springs out of the very conditions of his mortality.” With this connection between wonder and woman—and the concomitant life springing from death—the stage is set for the play’s final act.

Act 5 opens with the profoundly repentant Leontes, chastened by both knowledge and Paulina, as if his penitence and her scolding have been a daily ritual for sixteen years. Florizel and Perdita enter soon after, and Leontes is wonder-struck by the similarity of Florizel both to Polixenes and to Mamillius, as well as by the relationship between his lost children and the couple that stands before him. Again Leontes' speech breaks down, but this time in wonder instead of in fiendish reaching for epistemological order:

Were I but twenty-one,
Your father's image is so hit in you,
(As I did him, and speak of something wildly)
By us perform'd before. Most dearly welcome!
And your fair princess—goddess! O! alas,
I lost a couple, that 'twixt heaven and earth
Might thus have stood, begetting wonder, as
You, gracious couple, do; and then I lost
(All mine own folly) the society,
Amity too, of your brave father, whom
(Though bearing misery) I desire my life
Once more to look on him.

(5.1.126-38)

In a tragedy these new insights into life and time would be paid for brutally with the unredeemed suffering that Leontes has brought on himself and others by his earlier grasping after total knowledge. But this play has room for forgiveness and healing largely because it has room for wonder—that which lies, like Perdita and Florizel, “'twixt heaven and earth,” in the theatrical experience.

Withholding the reunion of both Leontes and Perdita and Leontes and Polixenes initially seems a rather cruel move on Shakespeare's part, especially because of the elaborate descriptions of the Gentlemen. I believe, however, that in act 5, scenes 2 and 3, Shakespeare is juxtaposing the conflict he has developed throughout the play: reason and wonder, language and dramatic spectacle. In these two scenes Shakespeare lays out for us the two aesthetic visions that Barbara Mowat calls “life as tale” and “life as drama.” The former presents experience as “mediated by the teller, distanced, fixed in past time,” while the latter presents us life that is “immediate, active, present.” This double perspective “results from the juxtaposition of narrative and dramatic modes.” In order to crown his play with the quintessential moment of “life as drama,” Shakespeare sets up the ultimate scene with a mediated penultimate one. Yet even the mediators know that the “life as tale” vision is not going to be sufficient for this play. Reprising the ideas and language of Cleomines and Dion, the Gentlemen emphasize both the wonder and the inefficacy of speech in the reunion scenes that we miss. As the First Gentleman explains, “after a little amazedness, we were all commanded out of the chamber … ; the changes I perceive'd in the King and Camillo were very notes of admiration. … A notable passion of wonder appear'd in them; but the wisest beholder, that knew no more but seeing, could not say if th'importance were joy or sorrow; but in the extremity of one, it must needs be.” “Such a deal of wonder,” the Second Gentleman continues, “is broken out this hour, that ballad-makers cannot be able to express it.” And the Third Gentleman responds: “Then have you lost a sight which was to be seen, cannot be spoken of. … I never heard of such another encounter, which lames report to follow it, and undoes description to do it” (5.2.5-58).
A deconstructive reader would have the Third Gentleman’s words be the last statement on the play, but Shakespeare offers an alternative to the description that undoes itself in the describing: Hermione’s wondrous resurrection. For it is this spectacle that can come far closer to representing the marvelous than the “old tale” that both the Second and the Third Gentlemen disparage (see 5.2.28, 62). Indeed, after attempting to convince the others of the hard evidence behind the revelations—the “unity in the proofs” (32)—the Third Gentleman joins the First Gentleman in submitting to wonder: “Every wink of an eye some new grace will be born. Our absence makes us unthrifty to our knowledge” (110-12). Here we see the Gentlemen seeking knowledge in the wondrous, not because, like Aristotle, they think they can do away with wonder, but because, like Patrizi, they sense that this is where a more significant meaning lies.

In the bridge to the ultimate scene, the Third Gentleman refers to the statue of Hermione “newly performed by the rare Italian master, Julio Romano” (96-97); it is to this statue that family and friends move for act 5, scene 3. But Shakespeare's choice of Julio Romano as his artist is worth commenting on, for if Shakespeare had firsthand exposure to the real Giulio Romano at all, he probably knew him only as a mannerist and trompe l’oeil painter, even though Romano did do some sculpture. John Greenwood suggests it was possible that Shakespeare's knowledge of mannerist art could have included the seven paintings by Romano that were among those “listed in the Charles I inventory (and therefore acquired earlier) for Hampton Court.” We cannot know whether Shakespeare actually saw Romano's work. But it is highly significant that he invokes an artist who self-consciously played with the forms of his art. Though they may ultimately have had different goals, their foregrounding—indeed, flaunting—of technique is similar and mutually illuminating.

The nonmimetic theatrical spectacle is ultimately the source of wonder for Shakespeare in this play. It is here that the miraculous can take place, that wounds can be healed, that wonder can leave us at once without speech and with recognition of the inefficacy of language. If we have had any doubts that the culmination of The Winter's Tale would present the triumph of wondrous spectacle over reasoned speech, the opening of act 5, scene 3, puts them to rest. For, as Leontes tells us, Paulina has just shown the group her “gallery” of “many singularities” (10, 12), a room that sounds very much like a wonder cabinet. And the marvelous is at the heart of Paulina's project: “I like your silence, it the more shows off / Your wonder” (21-22). Until the scene foregrounds this marveling silence, however, it is marked by an abundance of wonder-related diction that gives us a sense of Shakespeare's project: “wonder” (22), “fancy” (60), “transported” (69), “madness” (73), “amazement” (87), “faith” (95), and “marvel” (100).

Thus, although the scene is inevitably concerned with wordless wondering, Paulina must prepare the audience both in and out of the play for what they are about to witness:

You do awake your faith. Then, all stand still.
On; those that think it is unlawful business
I am about, let them depart.

(94-97)

Janet Adelman is surely right in identifying “the gendering of doubt and faith” in this play, where “faith means willingness to submit to unknown processes outside the self, processes registered as female”, in short, masculine epistemophilia has been replaced by feminine thaumaphilia. Once the wonder is revealed, Leontes embraces the statue-come-to-life that is Hermione, and we hear nothing from this former slave to reason and speech until many lines later. Matchett has noted that “Silence, then, becomes the final language, the wordless communion in which the exchange is most complete.” The other characters give simple responses, and Paulina again underscores the power of spectacle in the experience of this wonder: “That she is living, / Were it but told you, should be hooted at / Like an old tale” (115-17). Through his “statue,” Shakespeare has made certain that “it” has not
been “but told” us.

But unlike Giulio Romano's, Shakespeare's artistic goal is not to dupe us into believing that what we have witnessed is real. Leontes, still relying on ocular proof, mistakes the actual Hermione for what he thinks is a lifelike representation of her. By showing us yet another of Leontes' misinterpretations, Shakespeare warns us how not to view art. Colie takes Hermione's coming to life as a critique of illusionism, as an example of Shakespeare's taking art to its limits and bringing it back to what, Colie thinks, is the most important issue—the lives of human beings: “At this highest point of illusionism, illusion itself is abandoned, in the claim that reality is more startling, more miraculous than any contrivance of art … in the statue-episode, as in the debate of kind, the artifice of the artifice forces us back upon the human resources such artifices symbolize.”

Yet Colie's conclusion has vestiges of Aristotelian wonder-taming: we can make sense of the inscrutable spectacle if we can anchor it to human themes, can make it “real.” Shakespeare does not repudiate art or wonder here, but shows us that only an art that admits its artifice—that is, as Frye would have it, “presented to us, not explained”—is an art capable of teaching, delighting, and moving. As Nicholas Brooke writes, “Hermione's statue coming to life works by being in actuality the opposite of what it seems: the actor must hold the pose until it can be held no longer, so that inevitable lapses are transformed into miracle. … The result is a concentration on the technique of illusion that makes the miracle more natural than impossible.”

In a more completely realized fashion than that of the epilogue to As You Like It, Shakespeare provides wonder and then deconstructively shows us how it came about. The wonder, ultimately, is in the form and texture of his art: the art of theater—one in which, uniquely, the artist's creations can move and speak.

Shakespeare's theater is not, however, a cold, technical one. I now turn to one more example of his foregrounding of technique, to see that it is the sophisticated dynamic between life and art, reason and wonder that allows us to be amazed and moved—and not dazzled but alienated—by Shakespeare's work. Initially, the marriage arranged between Camillo and Paulina appears stilted. Yes, they have both been faithful advisors, but the pairing seems gratuitous unless we see a designed oversimplification to their union, one that provides a “strangely bridgeable chasm between art and life.” This strangely, wondrously bridgeable chasm is a model preferable to Colie's because it recognizes that there is a gulf and also that there is a dynamic relationship, a Patrizian marea—a “tide running back and forth from reason to emotion.” This tide between the naturalistic and marvelous does not allow one to be privileged over the other but instead requires constant exchange between the two.

This exchange can perhaps best be seen in the interplay among Paulina, Hermione, and their internal audience. Leontes suggests he is “more stone than it [the statue],” and addressing the figure of Hermione, he notes that Perdita is “standing like stone with thee” (5.3.38, 42). Astonished—astonied—with wonder, the living onlookers watch a stone come to life. Thus the mira is artistic but still not a solipsistic game, for Shakespeare—like Paulina in act 5, scene 3—has become increasingly aware of the necessity of an audience to make his spectacle work its wonders.

It would be wrong, I think, to see the end of the play as reinstating a kind of epistemological order because there is, after all, some explanation for the wondrous resurrection. At least part of the point is that—unlike the audience of other plays of the period (and even those of the early Shakespeare) where, it can be argued, the offstage resolution occurs to spare us from hearing what we already know—those who witness The Winter's Tale are ignorant of many of the play's crucial details and share the astonishment at Hermione's being alive with most of the characters. The audience, then, must attempt to fill in a great many narrative lacunae: why did Mamillius die? what made Leontes convinced that he had seen his dead wife? what did Hermione do for sixteen years? The Winter's Tale concludes both with unanswered questions and with conflicting emotions, and Shakespeare does not resolve these problems and uncertainties, for these are inquiries that are truly endless. Instead, Shakespeare allows reason and wonder both to diminish and to sustain each other, putting tremendous faith in the ability of the audience to reckon with these paradoxes in their own hearts and minds.
Notes

2. See Frye, “Recognition in *The Winter's Tale*,” in *Fables of Identity*, for his distinction between “the ‘winter’s tale’ proper” and “tragi-comedy” (107).
5. Felperin, “‘Tongue-tied Our Queen?’” 5. Matchett makes a convincing claim for Hermione’s appearing noticeably pregnant the first time we see her, and he cites Doll Tearsheet in 2 Henry IV and Thaisa in *Pericles* at the opening of act 3 as Shakespearean dramaturgical precedents (“Some Dramatic Techniques in *The Winter's Tale*,” 96 and 107n.
9. Adelman sees this healthy, feminine space ruptured by Leontes in act 2, scene 1, and restored in Paulina’s haven in Act 5, scene 3 (*Suffocating Mothers*, 233).
10. Because I am discussing the punctuation of this speech, I am using the Norton Facsimile of the *First Folio*, ed. Hinman, 302. Interestingly, there is one more colon here than in the Arden text (ed. Pafford). The Riverside text has no colons.
12. Felperin, “‘Tongue-tied Our Queen?’”
15. Felperin, “‘Tongue-tied Our Queen?’” 7.
20. But see Frye, “Recognition in *The Winter's Tale*”: his point that “the kind of art manifested by the play itself is in some respects closer to these ‘trumpery’ ballads than to the sophisticated idealism and realism of Polixenes and Romano” (114) strikes me as very plausible. In his “The Bear, the Statue,” Andrew Gurr takes a similar stance, claiming that the deception practiced by Autolycus—a “display of histronic virtuosity”—“more than the debate between the innocently-disguised Perdita and the knowingly-disguised Polixenes, characterizes the art of the second half of the play. It is art used to deceive by disguising nature” (424).
27. For a theoretical assertion of the need for spectacle to predominate over text in the theater, see Artaud in *Jacques Derrida, Writing and Difference*, trans. Bass, 232-50.
29. Matchett, “Some Dramatic Techniques,” 104. James Biester has connected silence and wonder by exploring the Neoplatonic, negative theology tradition, which “encouraged hieroglyphics in the visual arts and their written or spoken equivalent, enigma. Just as the impulse to conceal that motivates hieroglyphs reaches its vanishing point in the complete avoidance of visual images, so in speech brevity ends silence” (“Strange and Admirable,” 113).
31. Frye, “Recognition in The Winter's Tale,” 113. See also the significant distinction between “counterfeit,” “lie,” and “fiction” in Donatus’s commentary on Terence’s Eunuch 1.2.104: “To utter a counterfeit is deceptive, a fiction clever, a falsehood stupid. To utter a counterfeit is a fault, a fiction an ingenuity, a lie a folly. We are deceived by counterfeits, we are delighted by fictions, we despise lies” (cited in Herrick, *Comic Theory in the Sixteenth Century*, 65). In the Donatian scheme, then, Shakespeare’s art would be fiction, Romano’s a counterfeit.
34. Matchett, “Some Dramatic Techniques,” 106. Matchett continues: “It is … the very inappropriateness of this literary neatness to the living experience of the preceding moments which serves to bring us back to the stage. The usual device for enabling a comedy to conclude, this tidy arrangement serves here to reveal the chasm” (106).
36. It is worth noting that Arthur F. Kinney attributes the seminal achievement of this intersection between the work of art and the audience to Greene, the author of the source for *The Winter's Tale*: “The antique sense of epiphany becomes in the hands of Robert Greene, a whole new sense of art that, by inspiring the artist, inspires us” (*Humanist Poetics*, 229). Whether one agrees with this claim—and I am not sure that I do—one would have to agree that this type of epiphanic sharing would be all the greater given the interaction intrinsic to the theatrical experience.
38. For a related theoretical position, see Altman, “‘Prophetic Fury.’”

**Bibliography**


In the following essay, Van Elk views The Winter's Tale as an example of the “complicated, reciprocal relationship between gender and class” in the Jacobean period.

What happens when a woman speaks at court? Early modern representations of female courtly speech are notoriously fraught with contradiction. In Stefano Guazzo's *The Civile Conversation*, for instance, the perfect courtier Anniball Magnocavalli describes the speech of the exemplary court lady as follows: “her talke and discourses are so delightfull, that you wyll only then beginne to bee sory, when shee endeth to speake: and wishe that shee woulde bee no more weary to speake, then you are to heare. Yea, shee frameth her jestures so discretely, that in speakyng, shee seemeth to holde her peace, and in holding her peace, to speake.” While the words of the lady arouse the courtier's desire for more, her body and its gestures help to give the impression of chaste silence. The chiasmus in Anniball's description is a perfect illustration of the double injunction, to speak and remain silent at the same time, placed on the female voice in early modern representations of the Renaissance court.

Ann Rosalind Jones has examined the ambiguities that pertain to the fate of the early modern court lady in conduct books more generally.Courtesy literature of the sixteenth century, she argues, contains complex attempts at handling the discrepancies between the norms of the court and patriarchal discourse about women found in medicine, law, philosophy, and religion. Whereas the court applauded the clever conversation of the lady, other cultural constructions of femininity stressed women's natural inferiority and connected chastity with silence. Because of the pervasive association of female public speech with sexuality, court ladies had to perform their duties with a great deal of deliberation. In Baldassare Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier*, Julian de Medici points out that the lady of the palace ought to be “more circumspect and to take better heed that she give no occasion to be yll reported of, and so to beehave her selfe, that she be not onlye not spotted wyth anye fault, but not so much as with suspicion. Bicause a woman hath not so manye wayes to defende her
selfe from sclaunderous reportes, as hath a man." For that reason, the court lady is, says Jones, “advised to defend herself through a calculated rhetoric of words and gestures” (43). As in *The Civile Conversation*, this construction of the ideal court lady combines with a reluctance to represent actual female speech, and women do not join in the process of prescribing courtly behavior.  

When Shakespeare used the Sicilian court as his setting for *The Winter's Tale*, the paradoxes of courtesy theory inevitably came into play. The popularity of romance plays, or tragi-comedies, as a genre among the theatergoers in the first decades of the seventeenth century suggests a nostalgic appreciation of Greek romances and their Christianized versions in medieval courtly narratives. Leo Salingar recounts a host of medieval dramatizations of “persecuted queen” stories as a background for the later romance plays. A Jacobean representation of a Sicilian court would evoke not only these “old tales,” but also the courtly ideals of the Italian courtesy books. The most important of these, Castiglione's *Il cortegiano* (1528), Guazzo's *La civil conversatione* (1574), and Giovanni della Casa's *Il galateo* (1559), had all been translated in the second half of the sixteenth century, although they were also read in their original. While the number of editions of *Il cortegiano* and Thomas Hoby's translation suggests that these books were not as tremendously popular in England as, for instance, in France, a wealth of contemporary references shows that they were widely known, especially among the upper ranks. These influential texts on courtly behavior and conversation offer valuable insight into early modern perceptions of the mechanics of social identity and self-presentation at court.

Whether we choose to read *The Winter's Tale* as an artistic rendering of a “foreign” court or as a dramatic representation with connections to the English court, courtesy books provide us with an important cultural context for the play, known to the more privileged of the theatergoers at the Globe and especially to the play's audience at the court of King James.

King James's court, with its reputation for corruption and its large contingent of powerful Scottish courtiers, was perceived as very different from the more orderly Elizabethan court. The unprecedented number of honors and titles sold by James in an attempt to bind the political elite to the court and improve his finances, along with the career possibilities for individuals of less than aristocratic birth at court, meant that to many Jacobeans the court seemed a highly unstable arena where social degree was not so much determined by birth as by money and royal whim. At the same time, James's emphasis on the Divine Right of Kings countered this impression in the case of the king himself with an essentialist notion of royalty as ordained by God. The ostentation of the court is supposed to fulfill two contradictory functions at once, the confirmation of the king's unique position and the advancement of the individual interest of ambitious courtiers.

In *The Winter's Tale*, Shakespeare explores the contradictory constructions of gender and class that emerged from the Stuart court and the courts of early modern Europe in general. The play begins by showing the court to be a place where social identity is constructed through public, rhetorical performance. I use the term “performance” here to denote an early modern awareness of self-presentation as not necessarily directly reflective of inner identity but determined by social constraints and strategic considerations. The play explores a social, specifically courtly, identity that it presents as a product of performing, distinguished from behavior that is consistent with and reflective of one's “nature.” The importance of performance at court allows the queen to speak with a degree of freedom not normally afforded to women. But the connection between female speech and promiscuity, so prominent outside the court, becomes a catalyst for a crisis in which no one's position is secure and even royal power is opened up to question—the courtly emphasis on rhetorical display and public performance leads to a situation in which upward and downward social mobility becomes possible for everyone.

The oracle puts an end to this situation by re-stabilizing social position and assigning divinely ordained identities to the members of the royal household. Ultimately, this is not sufficient; a reformation of female courtliness is needed to restore harmony. Perdita's speeches, a product of birth rather than education, contrast with Hermione's rhetorical skills of the first act. And in the statue scene, Hermione regains her position as queen by presenting her courtly audience with a changed voice. Both women's speeches make clear that the
female courtly voice is in the end no longer characterized by playful performance, but by a denial of its own rhetorical character. Hermione's performance as a statue serves to secure social position, making royalty once again a product of birth, divine choice, and essence.

Ultimately, Shakespeare makes clear that the female courtly presence has shifted from a verbal to a visual register. Unlike words, gesture anchors social position and avoids the dangerous association between female speech and sexuality. In presenting us with this shift, The Winter's Tale uncovers a complicated, reciprocal relationship between gender and class, suggesting why the issue of female speech haunts the courtesy literature of the period: female courtliness is a measure of social mobility at court. If women are allowed to speak with too much freedom, this indicates that social position also lacks firm grounding. The problem of class in an arena that thrives on public performance is “solved” through gender, by having women relinquish their former courtly voice and accept the limitations imposed on them at court. The significance of the play's reconfiguration of female courtliness and its connection with class has not been noted in criticism of The Winter's Tale. Feminist critics have studied the female presence in the play, but not in its specific courtly context. The recent, mostly new historicist effort to establish contemporary political contexts for the romances has resulted generally in a concentration on the issue of kingship and contemporary views of James I, without making a connection with the gender issues at stake.11

Courtesy literature of the period highlights the importance of rhetoric to social position at court. Guazzo's courtiers in The Civile Conversation repeatedly compare courtly communication with monetary exchange, making verbal expression a salable commodity that can be used for self-advancement and is not inherently linked to birth. The melancholy William, brother of the author and accomplished courtier, expresses distaste for the crowds in the royal courts, at places of judgment, and on the marketplace. He likens the court, where “an infinite number of Courtiers assemble together, to talke and devise of many matters,” to the city with its “numberlesse multitude walking upp and downe in every place, keeping a continuall mercate, where there is no other talke but of buying and selling.”13 William claims that traders and courtiers engage in conversation for two purposes, “to maintain and increase their wealth, and to mend their estate” (117). In both locations, men are driven by ambition, for the accumulation of riches or for higher social standing, and words help “buy” a better position. The comparison of civil conversation with trade is made again, more positively, by his friend Anniball, whose task it is to rescue civil conversation from William's complaints. Yet, both worry about the extent to which courtly speech has been subjected to rhetorical inflation. William remarks that “Many Courtiers carie that litle peece of suger in their mouthes, and it may bee saide, that their money seemeth to bee Golde, although in the touche it is found to bee silver, or baser mettall” (126). This means that the listener can no longer take words at face value, but has to assess whether the words are themselves counterfeit, proving the upward mobility of the speaker. Paradoxically, then, the use of eloquence to distinguish the courtier from the “vulgar sorte” (123) has made words into unreliable means of assessing social identity.

Guazzo's courtiers see eloquence as an inevitable part of their self-presentation, but given the primacy of rhetorical performance at court, they are anxious about the value of speech as evidence of “true” identity and intention. This type of equivocation is typical of courtesy literature of the period. These books tend to move back and forth between descriptions of aristocratic identity as a product of birth and prescriptions for correct elite behavior, which show class to be a product of learning and performance. In Ambition and Privilege Frank Whigham writes that courtesy theory fulfilled a double function for its Elizabethan readership. For the Elizabethan elite, he argues, courtesy books helped formulate an exclusionary identity to alleviate concerns about social mobility. Their descriptions of courtliness as an inimitable ideal widened the gap between the aristocracy and the upwardly mobile. However, the general circulation of these books made them open to consumption by ambitious young men, who could use the detailed descriptions of life at court to try to emulate aristocratic behavior. At Elizabeth's court, according to Whigham, “Elite status no longer rested upon the absolute, given base of birth, the received ontology of social being; instead it had increasingly become a matter of doing, and so of showing. … The principal strategy of self-manifestation in such a frame is the ostentatious practice of symbolic behavior taken to typify aristocratic being” (32-33). In other words, as
position at court became more a question of merit and less of aristocratic birth, courtiers faced what Whigham calls “a rhetorical imperative of performance” to establish and maintain their social position (32). The complaints of Guazzo's courtiers indicate that the potential for social mobility in such an environment makes the question of hierarchy and what grounds social position a pressing one because the value of words as indicators of inner “truth” is lost.

Establishing the parallel between verbal and monetary exchange, Guazzo's courtiers show their awareness of the extent to which the importance of performance turns courtly conversation into a linguistic marketplace in which anyone with the appropriate currency may gain a powerful position. The Winter's Tale too presents the imperative of performance as problematic in its effect on the social hierarchy at court. The opening scene shows that the prolonged presence of a foreign king and his entourage has intensified the need for elaborate verbal exchange. In the context of hospitality, the courtiers utter the language of money to alleviate the sense of potential difference between the kings and therefore between themselves, using words to establish and maintain social position. Words are openly recognized as symbolic currency even when the courtiers deny that there is a need for equal exchange: Camillo thanks Archidamus for his lengthy speech with his phrase, “You pay a great deal too dear for what's given freely.” The stilted speeches in the opening scene serve to advance the position of the individual speaker, but what gives them a moral grounding is that at the same time they confirm the status and authority of the royal family. The mutual compliments become a confirmation of the ties that bind the two kings and their courtiers. The form of courtly praise for the two kings is significantly symbolic and visually oriented. Even with the mediation of diplomacy and the “interchange of gifts, letters, loving embassies” the kings are imagined in physical proximity: “they have seem'd to be together, though absent; shook hands, as over a vast; and embrac'd, as it were, from the ends of oppos'd winds” (1.1.28-31). The courtly language of royal power imagines the “affection” between the kings nostalgically in the form of a wordless tableau, in childhood as in adulthood. In other words, the courtiers use a double, contradictory discourse that embraces the language of money, a slippery language which produces social position, and a nostalgic, romantic language to reflect an idealized relationship between the monarchs that is supposed to be fixed.

The silent proximity of the two kings in the opening speeches by the courtiers contrasts with what we see in the scene immediately following. The royals are involved in courtly dialogue themselves, and their conversation turns out to be a much more open playing field than that of the courtiers. They are acting in accordance with the courtly logic of self-presentation, but because they do not depend on endorsement by their superiors for social advancement, their words are not constrained by court ideology and the performative element surpasses the substantive aspect of their words. Guazzo's Anniball cautions against this possibility when he discusses the need for courtly eloquence: “for that wee are so much the more esteemed of, by howe muche our Civilitie differeth from the nature and fashions of the vulgar sorte, it is requisite that wee inforce our tongue to make manifest that difference in two principall thinges: in the pleasant grace, and the profounde gravitie of woordes” (123). The elaborate speeches by Polixenes illustrate what happens when courtly grace has become more important than gravity. Invited by Hermione to talk of childhood and respond to her idea of Leontes as “the verier wag o' th' two” (1.2.66), he engages in playful exaggeration to counter the suggestion of mischief:

\[
\text{We were as twinn'd lambs that did frisk i' th' sun, And bleat the one at th' other. What we chang'd Was innocence for innocence; we knew not The doctrine of ill-doing, nor dream'd That any did. Had we pursu'd that life, And our weak spirits ne'er been higher rear'd With stronger blood, we should have answer'd heaven Boldly, “Not guilty”; the imposition clear'd, Hereditary ours. }
\]

(1.2.67-74).
The general view of this passage is that Polixenes presents female sexuality as ending a male childhood of comforting sameness. Along with many other feminist and psychoanalytic readings of the play, Janet Adelman's reading has convincingly shown how these courtly speeches work on multiple levels, prominently featuring sexual references that resonate with Hermione's pregnant state and conveying the culture's underlying anxieties about female sexuality. She writes that the female body becomes the sign of disruption in this “idealized male pastoral,” a formulation which neatly sums up the critical consensus on the speech.15

While Polixenes's joke hints at a more serious male unease about female sexuality, the passage should also be read for its significance to courtly repartee. In anticipation of the crisis to follow, the speech shows how the importance of rhetorical performance undermines royal power and therefore social stability both in sexual and in non-sexual ways. The Bohemian king uses the symbolic equality of the two kings, so prominent in the courtly language of the opening scene, to depict childhood as a time of perfect, because tautological communication: the two lambs bleating at each other merely exchange innocence for innocence, that is, one word for the same word. The language of children is presented as devoid of meaning and therefore of rhetorical purpose. The pastoral childhood contrasts with the implied “fall” into courtly rhetoric paralleled by the sexual fall of man. By setting up an opposition between a presexual, prelinguistic childhood and the present dialogue, the speech captures the ways in which courtly conversation is corrupted in the sense that it is sexualized. The sexual, flirtatious content of the passage itself, of which Polixenes and Hermione are clearly aware, is shown to be acceptable in courtly conversation. That this is true for the court at large, and not just for Polixenes and Hermione, becomes clear when we witness the exchanges of Mamillius and Hermione's ladies. Graham Holderness has pointed out that the boy is engaged in sexually charged talk with the ladies, who “invite him with sublimated licentiousness into the sexual games of courtly love” (201). The pervasive sexual undertones of dialogue between men and women at court even includes the young prince, whose behavior belies Polixenes's notion of royal childhood as innocent.

The sexual nature of courtly conversation is the subject of the speech but also displayed by it. At the same time, the speech makes clear that courtly exchange threatens to undercut the ideology that supports the royal position of unquestioned authority. Polixenes draws on the very imagery of childhood that is used by the courtiers in the first scene to idealize the monarchs. In doing so, he gives it socially strategic rather than moral and political significance, using the concept for entertainment value. Leontes will, moments later, employ the notion of childhood again, this time to convey a threat. The “twinned lambs” image is frequently read as evidence of Leontes's state of mind with respect to the ideal male relationship, although the king never refers to childhood in those terms.16 Instead, he depicts it as a time when he was “unbreech'd, / In my green velvet coat, my dagger muzzled, / Lest it should bite its master, and so prove / (As ornament oft does) too dangerous” (1.2.155-58). Here, childhood is marked by barely contained phallic violence. Clearly, royal childhood has lost the political value it had in the opening scene, and it has become a conveniently open construct, employed to prove sexual and social dominance in the rhetorical battle that is such an important part of courtly pastime. The fact that childhood is used to score points rather than to underscore the symbolic stature of the kings means that the imperative of rhetorical performance that governs the court alters the discourse that is at the basis of royal power.

The contributions of the queen to the conversation locate the disruptive quality of the courtly constructions of social identity specifically in terms of gender. Thus, the play reveals that the nature of the determination of social position at court leads to a situation in which women speak with a degree of freedom that conflicts with patriarchal notions of femininity. By virtue of her position as queen, Hermione's behavior is supposed to be the epitome of sophistication and courtly display, but as a woman, she is controlled by a more rigid set of demands. In The Interpreter (1607), the legal dictionary repressed for its absolutist opinions in 1610, John Cowell captures the duality of the identity of the queen by marriage:

Queene (Regina) is either shee that houldeth the Crowne of this Realme by right of blood, or els shee that is maried to the King. In the former signification shee is in all construction the
same that the King is, and hath the same power in all respects. In the other signification shee is inferiour, and a person exempt from the King. For shee may siew and be siewed in her owne name. Yet that shee hath, is the Kings, and looke what shee looseth, so much departeth from the King.17

Unlike the “ungendered” queen by birth, the queen by marriage poses an interpretive problem. She is both a member of the royal household whose behavior is material to the king's authority and a female. Legally, she is a separate, “inferiour” subject, who may sue in her own name, but her possessions and losses affect the king. She is an ordinary woman who, by virtue of marriage, has attained exceptional status of great significance to the position of the king. Stephen Orgel has pointed out that Cowell's dictionary, although it reflected James's absolutism, was most likely repressed because it engaged in a process of demystification, explaining what was better left unexplained.18 This seems to be the case for this definition of the queen: the duality of the queen by marriage, ordinary woman and exceptional wife, is denied in courtly rhetoric found in courtesy books. Her position as one of many women is not mentioned, while her exemplary courtliness and natural beauty are highlighted to serve as the justification for her unquestionable place in the royal household. Placing the fashioning of the ideal queen outside the domain of the courtier, Castiglione's Julian declares that it would be sufficient to name her—the ideal and the real queen are synonymous (215). As a result, the queen by marriage faces the task of publicly performing in a way that denies her individuality as a woman and affirms her “natural” status as queen and paragon of perfect courtliness. The problem of social position at court is reflected in the predicament of the queen whose place in the household is not based on birth but on royal choice.

*The Winter's Tale* makes the duality of the position of the queen by marriage crucial to the crisis that unfolds. The importance of rhetorical performance to the court permits Hermione to contribute with remarkable freedom to the conversation of the two kings. The playfulness allowed in these circumstances leads to an impressive demonstration of the queen's verbal mastery. Her comments are suggestive of the ways in which courtly exchange offers women the opportunity to transcend their fixed status in the male-dominated hierarchy of the court by means of speech, even if they have to be commissioned to perform by the man in charge. The social equality afforded in courtly exchange becomes evident when the queen makes her famous claim, “a lady's 'verily is / As potent as a lord's.”19 In the spirit of rhetorical contest, Polixenes's reference to man's fall as a result of female sin does not offend Hermione. She reads the remark as a challenge and responds to the patriarchal charge with another challenge: “Th' offenses we have made you do we'll answer” (1.2.83). In jest, the queen is able to refute the apparatus of patriarchal discourse summoned up (equally jokingly) by Polixenes.

The double injunction for women quickly asserts itself when Leontes tries to re-establish control over Hermione's speech. On the surface, he remains in the context of polite conversation with his guest, when he praises her success in persuading Polixenes to stay, claiming that she “never spok'st / To better purpose” (1.2.88-89), except when she uttered the marriage vow. But at court, this reminder of the female condition does not lead to silence. Hermione responds with a complicated reflection on the contradictions involved in her status of simultaneous sovereignty and inferiority, all the while speaking in the terms of playful entertainment of her royal guest. Commenting on the extent to which the relation of women to language is marked by ambiguity, she interrupts her husband's attempt to silence her with a witty provocation:

cram 's with praise, and make 's
As fat as tame things. One good deed dying tongueless
Slaughters a thousand waiting upon that.
Our praises are our wages. You may ride 'a
With one soft kiss a thousand furlongs ere
With spur we heat an acre.

(1.2.91-96).
In his discussion of courtly counsel in the play, Stuart Kurland has overlooked this moment. Posing as courtly advisor to the king, Hermione creates a situation in which Leontes himself faces the female dilemma: he is told both to speak and to remain silent. The queen imposes this double-bind by urging him to praise women because they are in need of moral guidance, while evoking the language of over-feeding associated with a life of luxury. Praise, she tells him, makes for good deeds and fat women. In addition, she comments on the female exclusion from the economic realm: “Our praises are our wages.” The passage highlights the ambiguous relation of the queen to praise. Ostensibly, praise serves to confirm the unique position of the queen, but the term “wages” shows that it also keeps her dependent on male endorsement for her livelihood. The phrase resonates with the recurrent use of the language of money at court. As silent receivers of praise, women are not allowed to engage in the exchange of symbolic currency in the network of male host-guest relationships. Implying that praise helps to maintain male authority over women, this representation of women as domesticated animals and silent consumers of language is of course contradicted by Hermione's own virtuosity in constructing the metaphor.

Once allowed to speak, Hermione is not only in a position to engage fully in a rhetorical competition with men, but she is also permitted to question her own status in full view of the court. She shows that praise of women is open to alternative interpretation, that its use is ideological and political, and that it helps to keep her, as a woman, in her rightful place. In doing so, she deliberately fails to distinguish between praise of herself as a queen and as a woman. Consequently, she deprives praise of the queen (along with praise of women in general) of its “natural” place in courtly discourse. The danger of engaging in courtly conversation for the queen is not merely that she may be subject to suspicions of promiscuity by virtue of the fact that she speaks, but also that she has been allowed to offer an interpretation of her own position that is not sanctioned by the ideology of the monarchy. In doing so, she herself has given the precedent for the exposure of her body and voice to other cultural constructions of femininity.

Part of the difficulty critics have felt in understanding Leontes's jealousy is its sudden onset in what seems to be a mature relationship. His outbursts are often seen as a form of inadequacy, in understanding the language of others in general or in comprehending courtly language in particular. While readings that place the blame for Leontes's crisis with his individual personality are of course valid in their own right, they may run the risk of overlooking the cultural and institutional aspects of his breakdown. Without pretending to give a comprehensive explanation for Leontes's crisis, I feel that the significance of the immediate context of courtly exchange is often underestimated. His jealousy is less a violation of courtly ethics than the outcome of a situation in which an emphasis on rhetorical performance has destroyed ideological certainties.20 From the first expression of his suspicions to Camillo, royal power is subject to questioning. This is not only true for Polixenes, who, like a courtier and not like a king, finds that his “favor … begins to warp” at court (1.2.365), but also for Leontes himself, who is suddenly addressed with the informal “thee” by Camillo in a way that has puzzled editors (1.2.324).

Rereading the dialogue of Polixenes and Hermione as a perversely encoded, public performance of illicit sexuality, Leontes explains the behavior of the queen by denying her royal status and drawing instead on the patriarchal link of female speech and performance to promiscuity.21 Courtly performance has been brought down to the level of the everyday deceit of the “vulgar sort.” Much like in Henry VIII, every interpretive shift at court is marked by a female public performance to confirm the collective nature of the consequences.

Graham Holderness writes, “The experience of tragic suffering, which folds Leontes in onto a tormenting subjectivity, draws Hermione out towards performative communication” (214). But we have to remember that these are forced performances in front of increasingly larger groups of men, which confirm and intensify the degeneration of female courtliness. At each of these moments of humiliating display, Hermione tries to gain control over the public's view of her behavior, sidestepping the king and addressing the rest of the spectators directly. At trial, she points out the incongruity between her position as a queen and her exposure to a general audience, describing herself as “A fellow of the royal bed, which owe / A moi'ty of the throne, a great king's daughter, / The mother to a hopeful prince” (3.2.38-40). The attempt to recover her former position involves a
reestablishment of her own dual place in the patriarchal hierarchy as sexual partner and wife, daughter, and mother, combined in each instance with the royal status attached to these conventional categories of female identity. Her efforts to acquire some measure of control over Leontes's court recalls Queen Katherine's behavior in *Henry VIII*. Similarly refusing to show feminine tears, Katherine decides she will not be forced to perform in a court ruled by Wolsey, telling him, moments before walking out, “I do refuse you for my judge” (2.4.118). Hermione shows more concern for her general audience as she appeals to divine spectators who will confirm her innocence. In doing so, she places those present in the famous dilemma of the Jacobean subject: whether or not to obey the king if he abuses his royal prerogative and acts in disagreement with the religious beliefs that are at the basis of his position.22

Ironically, the king's attempt to exclude Hermione from the court enhances his own isolation, for the courtiers remain committed to the rhetoric of nobility and chastity with respect to the queen. Antigonus shows his perfect courtliness, when he declares that he will “geld” his daughters if this accusation is true. Unable to reconcile Leontes's discovery with normative praise of the queen, he can only deduce that if the queen is untrue, all women must be—the interpretive reversal of Leontes's suspicion. This reluctance brings Leontes to the realization that he has now made himself subject to the judgment of the court. Guazzo's Anniball argues that the deeds of monarchs are “altogether without the compasse of our judgement, and alwaies mistaken of us” (203). The need for such a statement makes clear that in actual practice such judgment is frequently made. The addition of the proviso that this is true for rulers “by nature” rather than “by violence” indicates that Anniball grants absolute authority only to the monarch whose status is derived from birth. It is significant that George Pettie chose to insert his praise of Queen Elizabeth just before this passage, suggesting that the translator felt the need to establish her position beyond question before the possibility of judging a ruler is even touched on.23 Leontes has suffered a loss of the prerogative of royal birth once he has made himself subject to courtly judgment. From a ruler “by nature,” he becomes a ruler “by violence.” The culmination of the monarchical crisis is his rejection of the oracle. It heralds the complete secularization of his government and therefore a loss of the divine endorsement that underpins his authority. The courtly emphasis on performance has resulted in extreme social fluidity.

Nevertheless, the oracle is the first sign that social order will be restored at court. In contrast with the ambiguity of courtly conversation, the oracle provides the court with a text in control of its own meaning: “Hermione is chaste, Polixenes blameless, Camillo a true subject, Leontes a jealous tyrant, his innocent babe truly begotten, and the King shall live without an heir, if that which is lost be not found” (3.2.132-36). Assigning absolute identities for each of the members of the royal household involved, the oracle breaks with the playful nature of the courtly language heard in the first act. Each of the royals takes on a fixed stature, losing individual agency in self-presentation as they are placed beyond signification for any purpose other than that already contained within the text. Once Mamillius's death is announced, followed quickly by Hermione's supposed death, the oracle asserts itself as an unavoidable frame of reference for the explanation of future and past events. From here on, royal position at court will be grounded in the truths stated in the text.

In the pervasive critical tradition that reads the Bohemian scenes as a benign and liberating transformation of the Sicilian scenes, Paul Alpers has described the fourth act of *The Winter's Tale* as a reworking of the crises at court to save the “possibility of exchange,” that is “the possibility of action and utterance that establish connections between separate persons.”24 Alpers finds in the pastoral scenes a freedom of exchange that contrasts with the stifling atmosphere at court. He shows that it is important to distinguish between the actual pastoral figures and those who are merely temporarily seen to be such (in varying degrees, ranging from Perdita's pastoral status to Florizel's disguise). Yet, the notion of pastoral as courtly self-representation brings on the question whether these scenes involve a liberating form of disguise and temporary suspension of courtly identity, as Alpers argues, or an equally mediated and overdetermined mode of representation. Even if courtly rules are momentarily transformed into pastoral codes, Alpers's reminder of the close ties between court and pastoral helps us to see that, in their own way, the Bohemian scenes contribute to the play's reformulation of the courtly feminine ideal. Compared with Hermione's wit, Perdita's speeches signify a move
away from the courtly spirit that allowed for a radical insistence on female equality in the first act. Instead, Perdita is unaware of her own ancestry and therefore of her rightful place in the social hierarchy. With all the obvious pointers in the direction of her noble birth, Perdita is firmly convinced of her lowly status. Her modesty is given expression in the admission that she cannot speak well, to amount to a transformation of the female voice. Perdita's humility in speech and manner is always paired with a natural superiority that is noticeable to everyone. Unlike the highly sophisticated court lady, who has to give the impression of chastity while calculating the effect of her behavior on her audience, Perdita manages to combine the image of modesty, obedience, and chastity with a new type of courtly self-display: a physical and pastoral performance that denies that it is a performance, presenting the audience with social behavior that is the result of “being” rather than “showing” and a rhetoric that hides its own rhetoricity.

Florizel's declaration of love helps construct this new ideal. Foreshadowing Hermione's final performance, his praise of endless repetition of speech, song, and dance deprives Perdita's voice of its independent power to signify. He turns her into what Maurice Hunt has called a “speaking picture.”

What you do
Still betters what is done. When you speak, sweet,
I'ld have you do it ever; when you sing,
I'ld have you buy and sell so; so give alms;
Pray so; and for the ord'ring your affairs,
To sing them too. When you do dance, I wish you
A wave o' th' sea, that you might ever do
Nothing but that; move still, still so,
And own no other function. Each your doing
(So singular in each particular)
Crowns what you are doing in the present deeds,
That all your acts are queens.

(4.4.135-46).

By locating female beauty in the symbolically significant daily acts, Florizel creates an ideal that is unconventional, yet inherently courtly. Whigham notes that at the Elizabethan court, the actions that seem most trivial are subject to courtly signification to enhance elite identity. Perdita's unawareness of the grace of her acts lifts her Courtliness above Castiglione's sprezzatura, used by the courtier “to cover art withall and seeme whatsoever he doth and sayeth to do it wythout pain, and (as it were) not myndyng it” (59). The covering of art, the seeming, and the inclusion of the phrase “as it were” make clear that sprezzatura is itself of course a performative concept. In the 1561 edition, Hoby translates the word as “Reckelesness” (59); in the 1588 version, he makes his anxiety over the concept even clearer when he replaces recklessness with “disgracing.” Beyond suggesting feigned recklessness or a pretended lack of care, the word disgrace points to the notion of grace as an attribute that requires effort that needs to be hidden from view, but it also puns on the “disgrace” involved in courtly performance. Perdita's courtliness, not a product of upbringing, is presented as true, natural behavior, lacking the deliberation involved in sprezzatura. For that reason, her courtesy outdoes that of Castiglione's courtier in that it is not a product of performance but a grace derived from birth.

In putting forward this new ideal, the play mystifies female courtliness by locating it in the body rather than in words. Florizel's description of Perdita proceeds from female speech to song, and finally to the purely physical dance, to locate her queen-ness in her movement. Hunt writes, “Paradoxically, Perdita's deeds become physical words unintentionally excelling not only her restrictive ways of thinking and speaking but her special ‘flower’ speech as well” (100). Even if we do not agree with Hunt's presentation of this transformation as an artistic achievement on Shakespeare's part, his observation allows us to see that the effect of Florizel's speech is to modify the female courtly voice. Significantly, it comes just after one of Perdita's least courtly expressions of love for the prince, which contains an unexpectedly sexual depiction of Florizel in her arms. While that moment is remarkable in itself, it is important that Florizel quickly “corrects” it with a
representation of courtly femininity that will be more closely aligned to Perdita in the rest of the play. Perdita follows his tribute with a correction of her own, warning him of a possible sexual interpretation of his speech and the fear that Doricles might be wooing her “the false way” (4.4.151). The impression of stillness in movement combined with the chaste words constructs a model of femininity that is closely affiliated to Guazzo's image of the lady who “frameth her jestures so discretely, that in speakyng, shee seemeth to holde her peace, and in holding her peace to speake” (241). In other words, the Bohemian scenes represent female courtliness as both self-evident and natural, impossible to imitate and therefore impossible to question or to undermine, and, above all, physical rather than verbal. Perdita's character establishes a crucial link between nobility and birth. Elite identity is no longer fluid because it has now been firmly placed within the confines of the female body, from where it cannot be removed.27

Under the guidance of Paulina, Leontes and his court are reformed in the absence of the female members of the royal family. As a third female voice heard at court, Paulina's seems to represent a shift away from the courtly eloquence of Hermione and the pastoral modesty of Perdita. David Schalkwyk, Graham Holderness, and others have remarked on the empowerment of the female voice in her case.28 Certainly, the fact that a lady from the court is seen to speak so openly and powerfully to the king seems to suggest a subversive potential that conflicts with the general requirements of female speech. The character of Paulina, however, is excepted from the injunctions placed on the female voice in a variety of ways. She rules at the court when Leontes has lost his authority and it is in need of reform. Her rejection of the flattery and politic advice of Leontes's male courtiers suggest that her position as main advisor to the king signifies a departure from the former ways of the court and from the manners of its courtiers. As a female character, she is distinctly uncourtly. In dramatic terms, she is partly a comic and partly a dangerous figure, whose characterization derives from, but can never be pinned down to any one of, a range of marginal female figures, such as the shrewish wife, the midwife, the widow, and the witch.

In terms of her own sexual behavior, Paulina is less likely to be accused of promiscuity (in spite of her public speech) as a result of her age and social status as mother and widow (for most part of the play).29 When she first accuses the king, he tries to harm her credibility in sexual, gendered terms by accusing her of being a shrew, witch, and bawd, but his own position has already been affected so deeply by his suspicions of Hermione that he is unable to expel her from the court. Once Leontes sees his mistake in accusing Hermione, Paulina is given powerful male sanction for her speech, as the king makes up for his earlier attempts to silence the queen. Yet the notion of Paulina as poised outside of the courtly realm remains present in her own and others' remarks even after Leontes accepts her as his main advisor over the conventional courtiers. D'Orsay W. Pearson has traced the connections between the character and witchcraft, showing convincingly that “her own actions and suggestive dialogue sustain it; as the play progresses, the accusation becomes increasingly a real possibility.”30 In other words, even as Paulina is instrumental to the change in female courtliness that is effected in the course of the play, she remains herself a slippery, marginal character to whom the ideal is not applied.

While it is important to recognize potential moments of female subversion, Holderness and Schalkwyk underestimate the extent to which Paulina's voice after Hermione's “death” is determined by the boundaries set by Leontes's suspicion and serves its purpose in transforming perceptions of women other than herself. Paulina helps to renew the female courtly ideal by rendering the connection between female speech and female sexuality irrelevant to the queen. When Leontes evokes the image of Hermione's ghost, Paulina carefully avoids giving it a voice and draws attention to her beauty. Substituting her own voice, she counteracts the suggestion of the king's possible marriage to another woman:

Were I the ghost that walk'd, I'ld bid you mark
Her eye, and tell me for what dull part in't
You chose her; then I'ld shriek, that even your ears
Should rift to hear me, and the words that follow'd
Should be "Remember mine."
Leontes's reply, “Stars, stars, / And all eyes else dead coals!” (5.1.67-68), shows that the glorification of Hermione's beauty proceeds by denigrating other women's bodies. In brief, Paulina does not argue for faith in female constancy and speech as such, but teaches the king to differentiate between women's bodies in general and the queen's body in particular, to rescue Hermione from association with lower-class female bodies and their uncontrollable sexuality. In this context, Leontes's violent claim that Hermione's ghost would “incense me / To murther her I married” (5.2.61-62) is endorsed by Paulina, whose discourse is of a darker kind than is sometimes allowed for in criticism. Her strong, verbal presence prepares the way for the restoration of courtly femininity to reputability at the end of the play, but is itself in disagreement with the ideal. To restore social harmony at court, a radically different female voice is allowed to be heard temporarily, until Perdita and Hermione are once again present.

Numerous readers have noted a shift from the verbal to the visual in the final scenes. In contrast with *Cymbeline* and *Pericles* (and with other more conventional recognition scenes), the audience is not given the elaborate proof of identity, the realization of misidentification by Polixenes, and the narratives of past events by lost family members themselves. Instead, bystanders provide the explanations, representing the monarchs as speechless with emotion and part of a verbal tableau of purely physical recognition. In the final act, courtly language becomes indicative of its own inadequacy as different characters testify to a preference for gesture as a means of expression during a moment of great emotional intensity (a preference that can itself ironically only be conveyed in language). The assertion that language is inferior to sight serves a social purpose for the entire court, which learns to redefine its relationship to courtly speech and to reappraise the centrality of the female body as evidence of social position.

During the statue scene, courtly dialogue is given a position of secondary importance to the spectacle when the female body takes center stage. In an important article, Abbe Blum coins the phrase “monumentalizing women” for this process, which she detects in Shakespeare's romances and tragedies, and which “entails the relinquishment of the woman's voice” (100). Blum claims the act of monumentalizing is on one level a form of commemorating, which, she writes, “fixes value, assigns noteworthiness, and … arises in part from a desire to possess what lies beyond possession—to render certain and permanent what is unknowable, unavailable, lost” (99). The resurrection of the queen by means of collective praise contrasts with Hermione's witty speech on the use of praise to pacify women in the first act. Therefore, the ceremony marks not only Leontes's renewed recognition of his wife, but also Hermione's own acceptance of her relation to language at court on the basis of the restrictions imposed on the female voice. In this respect, it is of course significant that the reconciliation with Leontes takes the form of a speechless reenactment of courtship and a wordless embrace.

Prompted to speak by the courtiers in order to prove that she is alive, Hermione utters her famous maternal blessing:

```
You gods, look down
And from your sacred vials pour your graces
Upon my daughter's head! Tell me, mine own,
Where hast thou been preserv'd? where liv'd? how found
Thy father's court? for thou shalt hear that I,
Knowing by Paulina that the oracle
Gave hope thou wast in being, have preserv'd
Myself to see the issue.
```

(5.3.121-28).

As readers of the play have observed, the speech is inconsistent with the events of the third act. Hermione was herself present at the reading of the oracle and did not need to hear from Paulina about the fate of her
daughter. The speech does not perform on a rational level. Its purpose is to heal the ruptures that have devastated the Sicilian court and caused the travesty of the law and the secularization of government. To have this effect, Hermione's blessing invokes yet again the presence of divine spectators, this time firmly establishing the court as a space that is subject to supervision of the gods, who “look down” upon the sacralized space of recognition.

In the conventional terms of the parental blessing, Hermione asks for divine “graces” to be poured on her daughter's head. In the course of the play, this term has been used no less than twelve times up to this point, throughout in different senses, as Bruce W. Young has shown. The slipperiness of the word is indicated by the fact that it is used by a range of characters, from Hermione (who says it in jest, but also at her trial) to Autolycus, who frightens the shepherd and his son, in picturing for them Polixenes's response to “An old sheep-whistling rogue, a ram-tender, to offer to have his daughter come into grace!” (4.4.776-78). Denoting divine and human favor, riches and upward social mobility, civilized behavior and beauty, the primary meaning of “grace” in the play is courtly, not religious. Castiglione's use of the term, a notorious bone of contention for critics, is similarly ambiguous. Lord Cesar asks Count Lewis for advice on grace, the indispensable attribute of the courtier and the lady of the palace, “because you have saide sundry times that it is the gift of nature and of the heavens, and againe where it is not so perfect, that it maye with studye and diligence be made muche more” (56-57). The Count, who repeats that grace is “not to be learned,” claims, “perhaps I am able to tel you what a perfect Courtyer ought to be, but not to teach you how ye should doe to be one” (57). Shortly thereafter, he obliges, however, and tells his audience how grace can be acquired: “even as the bee in the greene medowes fleeth alwayes aboute the grasse chousynge out flowres: so shall our Courtyer steale thys grace from them that to hys seming have it, and from ech one that percell that shal be most worthy praise” (58). The courtier assembles parts of ideal behavior to constitute his own, stolen grace. Subject to imitation, yet contingent on birth, the concept of grace embraces all the contradictions of the courtesy theory of the period.

Similarly, in The Winter's Tale grace can be a result of performance and an attribute of birth, as the word points to a spectrum of meanings between intention and passivity, remaining impossible to pin down on the side of courtly ideal or divine benefaction. In Hermione's final speech, by contrast, the significance of grace is unmistakably restricted to the religious sense, emphasizing the fact that courtly grace has been overcome by divine grace. The notion that grace is not learned but a sign of divine endorsement of noble birth (and ultimately passed on, as Young notes, through the mother's mediation in the parental blessing) is first suggested in the pastoral scenes, then reaffirmed in the recognition scene, and finally stated explicitly in the statue scene, to refigure female courtliness as God-given proof of royal essence. This use of grace helps end and prevent social mobility and perilous female speech.

For these reasons, the significance of Hermione's blessing is to be found in its restorative function in binding the courtly community together. Her questions addressed to Perdita take on a similar role. Reminiscent of the lambs in Polixenes's speech, she offers the possibility of exchange in language that is “innocent” and thrives on tautology. As her repetition of the word “preserv'd” indicates, the queen's questions do not initiate a dialogue, but establish a bond between mother and daughter to bridge the gap that has opened up among the members of the royal family. The type of language needed for this purpose is singular in meaning, in contrast with the sexually ambiguous courtly exchanges of the first act. Leontes's final speech promises a return to verbal exchange at court, as he tells Paulina to “Lead us from hence, where we may leisurely / Each one demand, and answer to his part / Perform'd in this wide gap of time, since first / We were dissever'd. Hastily lead away” (5.3.152-55). It is difficult to imagine what form renewed conversation at court will take, but the king's last words suggest that linguistic exchange between members of the royal family will no longer be limited to the public arena of the court. Now, it has become necessary to find an off-stage, private space.

While the final scene achieves a naturalization of the female courtly ideal and a re-mystification of royalty, the question of social mobility lingers on the margins of the play. The comic speeches of the clown, “a
gentleman born” before his father (5.2.139), show that these newly made gentlemen do not pose a serious threat to the exclusivity of royal identity at court. Simon Forman may not have been credited with great insight as a critic of the Jacobean theater, but his recorded impressions of *The Winter's Tale* bring out the importance of rhetorical performance to the play:

> Remember also the Rog that cam in all tottered like coll pixci /. and howe he feyned him sicke & to haue bin Robbed of all that he had and howe he coasoned the por man of all his money. and after cam to the shep sher with a pedlers packe & ther coasoned them Again of all ther money And howe he changed apparrell with the kinge of bomia his sonn. and then howe he turned Courtiar &c / beware of trustinge feined beggars or fawninge fellouse.32

Whereas Forman's suspicion of beggars has been the subject of much attention, it has not been noted that his mistrust is directed equally at “fawninge fellouse” who reside, presumably, at court. It was commonplace in the period to identify flattery with courtiers, so it is not surprising that Autolycus is an ex-courtier. Tracts such as *A Discourse Against Flattery* (1611) describe “fawning hypocrisy” as “base merchandise of words” and warn sternly against flattery at court because it endangers the commonwealth.33 Autolycus's status as a peddler as well as an ex-courtier link the presentation of words as money in the courtesy literature and the opening scene of *The Winter's Tale* with the peddler-trickster's ability to sell his wares and his words to unsuspecting victims.

Given the materiality and therefore the unreliability of clothes as signifiers of rank, an effective rhetorical performer like Autolycus is impossible to place socially. The trickster, beggar, peddler, and ex-courtier capitalizes on the effective speech needed to function well in each of these professions. Even after he has been banished from the court, Autolycus continues to profit from it when the unsuspecting Florizel and Camillo provide him with the means to turn courtier again. His trickery is profitable not only because he has access to the apparel needed to fool others, but also because he can deny the significance of his clothes when necessary. He deceives the clown by claiming that a villain called Autolycus has put the filthy rags he wears on him, controlling the interpretation of his apparel by the unsuspecting gull. Forman's caution against “feined beggars” and “fawninge fellouse” highlights this thematic parallel between the trickster and the courtier. In the end, the rogue, whose past association with the royal family is caused by the court's emphasis on verbal performance, ends up in mock-service to the shepherd and the clown and joins their ranks as a harmless comic figure. His muted responses in the last encounter with the rustics indicate that here too, a performing voice has been transformed.34

*The Winter's Tale* employs different dramatic registers for its representation of the relation between class and gender at court. Social harmony is restored by means of a renunciation of playful conversation and an appreciation of gesture and tableau as less disruptive, ideologically more effective courtly means of confirming royal authority. Yet, the play seems conflicted about this resolution. While Perdita's courtliness is entirely natural, Hermione's performance as a statue suggests that there remains a performative aspect to courtly self-presentation. And, as is the case with so many Shakespeare plays, the ending is marked by a sense of loss, of life, of the female voice, and of entertaining and playful conversation. Acted in front of a royal audience, as *The Winter's Tale* was twice, the play may have constituted an act of persuasion that amounted to a reformulation of courtly ideals for the benefit of the royal family and the unstable court of King James. Whether it was seen as such or not, the play explores the contradictory constructions of class and gender that emerged from the Stuart court and the courtesy literature of its day. Shakespeare shows that the behavior of women is a crucial means to gauge the social order and that a reconfiguration of courtly femininity serves to anchor social hierarchies and harness elite identity. In *Henry VIII* Shakespeare would turn yet again to the subject of courtly performance and social mobility, combined with a concentration on the significance of the female presence at court to the political authority of the monarch. Voicing the feelings of many, Herschel Baker writes in his Riverside introduction to the play, “*Henry VIII* is very strong in pomp and pageantry … Some of these elaborate display pieces—notably the coronation and the christening—are so frankly theatrical
that they do not require the spoken word, but only sights and sounds; and others, even where the focus is
dramatic, are so formal in their presentation that they have the weight and texture of tableaux.”

It seems that this historical examination of the mechanics of social life at court begins where *The Winter's Tale* left off.

**Notes**


3. Jones perceives a shift from the feminine ideal of courtesy theory, the witty court lady who was adept at self-display, to the obedient, silent housewife of the 17th-century bourgeois marriage manual. Joan Kelly has argued, however, in her influential essay “Did Women Have a Renaissance?” that Castiglione's work already represents a setback in its depiction of the feminine ideal in comparison with the relative freedom and independence of the feudal lady as the object of courtly love. *Women, History and Theory: The Essays of Joan Kelly* (U. of Chicago Press, 1984), 19-50.


8. Court performances of *The Winter's Tale* were held by the King's Men on November 5, 1611 and during the Christmas celebrations in 1612 (E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1945 4:125, 127). David M. Bergeron speculates on the significance of these performances in light of recent events in the royal family, such as the death of Prince Henry, in Shakespeare's Romances and the Royal Family (U. Press of Kansas, 1985), 157-78.

the rapid rise and fall of councillors and favourites, repeated crises and more or less open faction war” (9). Linda Levy Peck argues of the Stuart court that “corrupt practices … became a matter of increasing concern in the early seventeenth century.” *Court Patronage and Corruption in Early Stuart England* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990), 5. Cf. also for information on the sale of honors and titles, Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), ch. 3.

10. While contemporary theorists like Judith Butler see performativity as a permanent and pervasive condition, the Renaissance text does not, although the court is often perceived in terms of performance. My concern here is with how and why the play locates certain types of behavior and social identities as a product of performance. Cf. for the relevant theory on the subject, Judith P. Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990) and *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (New York: Routledge, 1993) and the helpful introduction to *Performativity and Performance*, eds. and introd. Andrew Parker and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (New York: Routledge, 1995), 1-18.


13. Guazzo, 117-18. Jean-Christophe Agnew cites part of this passage to support his claim that Guazzo chose the marketplace as the “ideal locale” of his civil conversation. This is not borne out by the text, which reviews a wide spectrum of settings. Moreover, the words quoted by Agnew are not spoken by Magnocavalli, the advocate of civil conversation, but by the more pessimistic William Guazzo, whose description of the comings and goings of marketplace, legal court, and royal court is far from enthusiastic. *Worlds Apart: The Market and the Theatre in Anglo-American Thought, 1550-1750* (Cambridge U. Press, 1986), 77.

mentions (like money, coin, treasure, purchase, commodity, exchange, dole) occur, predictably perhaps, in the fourth act, when the setting shifts to Bohemia. *Disowning Knowledge in Six Plays of Shakespeare* (Cambridge U. Press, 1987), 200-01. For Cavell the significance of the use of these terms is universal and philosophical, whereas I stress the specificity of the setting. In *Patriarchal Structures*, Peter Erickson examines the importance of royal entertainment and its transformation by the female presence.


16. Many critics simply shift the significance of the speech from Polixenes to Leontes. In *Impersonations*, for instance, Stephen Orgel writes, “The childhood world to which Leontes imagines himself returning has been described by his royal guest and inseparable childhood friend Polixenes as both Edenic and presexual” (15). In M. M. Mahood's book on Shakespearean puns, the attribution of the passage is completely muddled: “Leontes is able to recall a primeval innocence when he was ‘Boy eternal’” (151). This misquotation is simply a literal form of the general critical conflation of Polixenes's speech with Leontes's mindset. See *Shakespeare's Word Play* (London: Methuen, 1957).


19. 1.2.50-51. Schalkwyk provides an elaborate discussion of the phrase in the context of poststructuralist theory.

20. An aggravating circumstance is the lack of privacy at court. In this respect, the play diverges from its source: in Robert Greene's *Pandosto*, it is the very possibility of crossing the boundary between hospitality and “too private familiarity” (158) that brings on the king's jealousy. Bellaria, “the flower of courtesy,” gradually develops an intimate friendship with the royal guest, “oftentimes coming herself into his bedchamber to see that nothing should be amiss to mislike him. This honest familiarity increased daily more and more betwixt them … Bellaria would walk with him into the garden, where they two in private and pleasant devices would pass away the time to both their contents” (157). By contrast, the garden in *The Winter's Tale* is a place where Hermione and Polixenes offer to “attend” the king (1.2.178). Robert Greene, “*Pandosto: The Triumph of Time*,” *An Anthology of Elizabethan Prose Fiction*, ed. Paul Salzman (Oxford U. Press, 1987), 151-204, 158.

21. Katherine Eisaman Maus has noted that the “voyeur” motif recurs often in dramatic representations of female promiscuity of the period. She compares the cuckold's anxieties with the period's attitudes towards theatrical performance in general. “*Horns of Dilemma: Jealousy, Gender, and Spectatorship in English Renaissance Drama*,” *ELH* 54 (1987): 561-83.

22. Constance Jordan examines this vexed issue and its discussion in Jacobean political tracts specifically in relation to *The Winter's Tale* in *Shakespeare's Monarchies*.

23. This move by Pettie is of course highly problematic status as queen “by birth.” Cf. Orgel on this subject in his introduction to the Oxford edition of the play (29-31) and Liewsay on Pettie's translation and his minor and major intrusions into the original.


27. Cf. *Pandosto*, in which Dorastus wonders of Fawnia, “how so courtly behavior could be found in so simple a cottage” (179).

28. Schalkwyk sees this period of “female rule” as “an inversion, a form of carnival or grotesque, that might itself have been designated a form of enchantment” (27). This use of Bakhtinian vocabulary is misleading because the status of Paulina's word cannot simply be explained as a comic inversion of what is partly tragic (particularly when the audience still believes Hermione has died). It also seems problematic to employ the term “carnivalesque” and even “grotesque” for instances when women's words are validated.


33. *A Discourse Against Flatterie* (London, 1611), A7v.


36. I would like to thank Meredith Skura, Edward Snow, and Lloyd Kermode for their helpful comments and their willingness to read and reread different versions of this essay.

**Criticism: Themes: John J. Joughin (essay date 2000)**


[In the following essay, Joughin argues that a finer understanding of the role of aesthetics in Shakespeare's plays will serve to increase our understanding of his work in general, and The Winter's Tale in particular.]

Any discussion of the literary or artistic merit of Shakespeare's plays is almost bound to arouse suspicion. For most radical critics, aesthetics still tends to be discarded as part of the 'problem' rather than part of the 'solution', all too reminiscent of a brand of outdated idealism which privileged notions of refined sensibility and the immutability of 'literary value'. As a consequence, contemporary political and historicist criticism has tended to regard a 'commitment to the literary' as 'one of the major limitations' of traditionalist approaches to the playwright's work (Hawkes 1996b: 11). Yet more recently, the emergence in a British context of a critical formation, sometimes pejoratively labelled 'new aestheticist' in its orientation, has foregrounded the need to
give some further consideration to the transformative potential of the aesthetic.

In the course of resituating some of the assumptions of post-structuralist thought in relation to the philosophical analysis of modernity offered by the Frankfurt School tradition of Critical Theory, philosophers like Jay Bernstein (1992), Andrew Bowie (1990; 1997a), Howard Caygill (1989) and Peter Dews (1987; 1995) have enabled a reconsideration of key issues concerning aesthetic validity which were often neglected in the first stage development of literary theory.¹ I want to argue that this work has also indirectly paved the way to the revival of the aesthetic as a politically critical category in English studies. Rather than ceding the question of aesthetic value as the exclusive preserve of the political Right, this chapter aims to demonstrate that the time is now ripe for a re-examination of the idea of the aesthetic in materialist criticism.

Of course the danger of a return to an old-style aestheticism in Shakespeare studies remains a constant threat, as Harold Bloom's (1999) celebration of ‘Shakespeare's universalism’ testifies. Bloom complains that, in relying on ‘ideologically imposed contextualization’, recent critical approaches like cultural materialism and new historicism tend to ‘value theory over the literature itself’. For these critics, Bloom reflects sadly, ‘the aesthetic stance is itself an ideology’ (Bloom 1999: 9). But in some sense, even as he is prone to overstate the case, Bloom is partly right. Cultural materialism usefully draws our attention to the fact that the question of aesthetic value is a politically loaded issue and not a neutral one. Yet while the deployment of Shakespeare is clearly open to ‘ideological misuse’, surely Bloom also has a point when he implies that the endurance of Shakespeare's texts cannot be reduced solely to the question of their ideological function in any given period.

Nor, I might add (and this is where Bloom partly misses the point himself), is this necessarily a position which recent critical approaches would wholly resist: after all, as the bulk of recent work on the cultural production and reception of Shakespeare's plays has demonstrated, historically speaking at least, the striking thing about the playwright's texts is their continued refusal to be exhausted by their continued appropriation and counter-appropriation in an endless variety of contexts (see e.g. G. Taylor 1991; Marsden 1991). This is not to say that the playwright's work is somehow of ‘timeless’ significance, nor is it to deny the value of work which has revealed the playwright's involvement in securing regimes which have deployed Shakespeare for their own oppressive ideological ends. There can be no doubt that the revival of certain plays, at specific moments, in particular contexts, usefully alerts us to the manipulation of Shakespeare as an instrument of social control. Yet the enduring longevity of the dramatist's work is also clearly related to its ability to sustain interpretations which are often contestable or diametrically opposed. Cultural materialism allows for precisely this type of contestation, yet as Andrew Bowie observes:

the failure [of radical criticism] to engage with the most powerful works of bourgeois culture … beyond revealing their indisputable relations to barbarism, means we do not understand why such works are enduringly powerful in ways which cannot finally be grasped by the category of ideology and which cannot be merely a function of their roots in barbarism.

(Bowie 1997a: 7)

Bowie offers us a more nuanced and effective defence of the aesthetic than Bloom can possibly muster, yet his point also implicitly echoes Bloom's complaint, that one of the limitations of ideology critique is that it fails satisfactorily to explain why it is that, in most circumstances, even once they are demythologized or problematized, outside of their immediate ideological function, certain canonical texts like Shakespeare's continue to remain meaningful and authoritative.

For Bloom the ‘ultimate use’ of Shakespeare is in teaching us ‘whatever truth you can sustain without perishing’ (Bloom 1999: 10). Yet paradoxically, as I have already implied, it appears as if Shakespeare's very survival as a literary text is less a product of the type of meaningful repleteness Bloom alludes to than a result of its resistance to ever being clearly understood (cf. Bowie 1997a: 11). Moreover, as I hope to demonstrate,
the question of Shakespeare's irreducibility to interpretation actually offers a fruitful resource for critical thought and has a direct bearing on our understanding of the relationship that obtains between literary interpretation and the question of its validity. In these and in other respects, an over-restrictively functionalist account of Shakespeare's involvement in sustaining the reductions and inequities of canon formation falls short of a more reflective acknowledgement that Shakespeare's 'literary' distinction is actually entwined with a more complex intellectual legacy: one which raises pressing philosophical as well as political questions. Again, Bowie puts the case still more succinctly, as he reminds us that:

The rise of 'literature' and the rise of philosophical aesthetics—of a new philosophical concern with understanding the nature of art—are inseparable phenomena, which are vitally connected to changes in conceptions of truth in modern thought.

(Bowie 1997a: 1)

Clearly, the specificity of literature's cognitive significance and the critical potential these 'literary' issues have in relation to canonical texts like Shakespeare is not something we can merely side-step or wish away. By way of developing Bowie's thesis, I want to argue for a reconceived understanding of the aesthetic in relation to Shakespeare's plays. The practical aspect of this argument will be to develop a reading of the closing scene of Shakespeare's The Winter's Tale (5.3), where I will be particularly concerned with unravelling the significance of the competing truth claims which surround Hermione's unlikely restoration at the end of the play. But the theoretical issues raised by Bowie also merit further consideration in their own right, and I will want to argue that they also have an explicit bearing upon our understanding of Shakespeare in its 'modern' context. In many ways, the 'changing conception of truth in modern thought' that Bowie alludes to goes to the very root of the formation of 'Eng. lit.' as a discipline and continues to sustain the claims to cognitive validity on which it continues to rely. While this 'modern' aesthetic distinction arguably post-dates the 'original' production of Shakespeare's texts, it nevertheless continues to mediate the tradition of Shakespeare's critical heritage in a powerfully influential fashion. A more critically nuanced and discriminative sense of the role that aesthetics plays in Shakespeare criticism reawakens a series of key issues concerning the broader consensual and regulative criteria which continue to govern our understanding of the plays themselves.

A BRIEF EXCURSUS ON ART AND TRUTH

Traditionalist viewpoints which uncritically endorse the 'superior validity' of Shakespeare's plays, to the exclusion of all other considerations, often claim that they are politically neutral. Excepting the qualifications I have outlined above, the major contribution of ideology critique in Shakespeare studies has been in unmasking this stance of polite disinterestedness, and in revealing the extent to which it effectively conceals a series of tendentious presumptions concerning the 'truth' of the human condition, the overall tenor of which Terence Hawkes helpfully summarizes in the following fashion:

That, in short, Shakespeare's plays present us with nothing less than the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth about the most fundamental matters of human existence: birth, death and the life that comes between.

(Hawkes 1996b: 9)

For all its self-evident transparency this 'common sense' view of literature actually secretes its own theoretical agenda, underpinning an approach to interpretation which Catherine Belsey helpfully characterizes as 'expressive realist' in its overall connotation:
expressive realism … is the theory that literature reflects the reality of experience as it is perceived by one (especially gifted) individual, who expresses it in a discourse which enables other individuals to recognise it as true.

(Belsey 1980: 7, Belsey's emphasis)

As Belsey argues, this apparently ‘natural way of reading’ actually presupposes a rather fixed understanding of the value of literary texts and their claim to authenticity.

Crucially, ‘expressive realism’ presumes a practice of reading literature which is founded on what philosophers would categorize as a correspondence model of truth. In other words, literature's relationship to the world is conceived in terms of a naive mimeticism which posits the truth of an anterior or predetermined ideal reality, of which literature is correspondingly a ‘true’ re-presentation. Furthermore, as Belsey's statement implies, empirical-idealist variants of lit. crit. locate their premise on the assumption that the origination, reception and knowledge of these ‘truths’ is generally accessible to experience and self-evident—although more so to some than others, and especially to the more refined sensibilities of ‘high and solitary minds’. In effect, literary texts are treated as if they were physical phenomena whose very existence serves to verify clear and testable ideas. In the case of its neo-classical variants, literary criticism re-implies an understanding of art as corresponding with the pre-existent uniformity of nature itself.

As Belsey, Hawkes, and a host of other critics have demonstrated, recent developments in literary theory have revealed just how restrictive these ‘rational’ truth claims actually are. Materialist approaches to the plays demonstrate that the ‘meaning’ of a text is historically determined and is dependent on its cultural context. In turn, a poststructuralist critique of metaphysics has produced a healthy climate of hermeneutic suspicion, both in disclosing the complicity between truth, reason and domination, and in revealing language itself to be ‘perpetually in process’ and productive of a potential plurality of meanings (cf. Belsey 1980: 19-20). Yet, in taking an exclusively linguistic and culturalist turn, recent criticism also runs the risk of excluding from its consideration the distinctively qualitative aspects of literary meaning. In short, as Bowie observes, literary theorists are often effectively in danger of being ‘without a valid way of talking about “literature”’ (Bowie 1997a: 5). While poststructuralism usefully focuses on the reader's role in the constitution of meaning and allows for the possibility that texts are open to a number of interpretations, it tends to neglect the truth-potential of the particular transformation wrought by the aesthetic experience itself. For new aestheticists like Bowie, our understanding of the relationship between art, truth and interpretation is not merely dependent on an openness to the fact that literary texts transform meaning, but is also equally concerned with asking precisely how this revelation is to be construed (Bowie 1997a: 5). Understood in relation to more conventional truth claims, the distinctive articulation of truth in works of art—in being truer than empirical or mimetic ‘truth’—underpins what Bowie terms a ‘disclosive’ literary distinction, which he characterizes in the following terms:

rather than truth being the revelation of a pre-existing reality, it [art's truth status] is in fact a creative process of ‘disclosure’. Artworks, in this view, reveal aspects of the world which would not emerge if there were no such disclosure: truth ‘happens’—it does not imitate or represent.

(Bowie 1992: 33)

Such moments could conceivably be construed purely in formal or ‘linguistic terms’, in relation to overturning conventional expectations or in breaking with existing rules. Yet the revelatory potential of aesthetic disclosure suggests that it also needs to be understood as a more participatory and consensual event, in the course of which, as Bowie puts it, in defamiliarizing habitual perceptions: ‘something comes to be seen as something in a new way’ (Bowie 1997a: 301).
Crucially, the relationship between the ‘happening’ of aesthetic disclosure and the interplay by which we understand it to ‘be’ a distinctively literary happening throws a new light on the question of interpretation and enables us to retain a sense of the creative and evaluative dimension which informs judgement (esthetic or otherwise), without then merely lapsing back into the restrictions which obtain to the more traditionalist truth claims of essentialism or empiricism. Instead, in developing a Heideggerian sense of the disclosive capacity of the aesthetic (without wanting to restrict ‘disclosure’ to uncovering ‘some kind of already present essence’), Bowie persuasively locates ‘seeing as’ as a constitutive experience which effectively: “discloses” the world in new ways … rather than copying or representing what is known to be already there’ (Bowie 1997a: 5, 301). I shall want to return to these distinctions during my reading of The Winter’s Tale.

ART, TRUTH AND JUDGEMENT IN THE WINTER’S TALE

For mainstream criticism much of the attendant moral outrage at the apparent sundering of the link between art and truth in radical criticism has tended to oscillate rather reductively between two extreme polarities. On the one hand, traditionalist critics complain that, if claims to knowledge are not grounded in a fixed or absolute way, but are endlessly contingent and uncertain, the lure of epistemological relativism will ensure that a type of critical nihilism will ensue as a result. In short, meaninglessness rather than meaningfulness will be the order of the day. Somewhat contradictorily, this accusation of critical relativism tends to chime intermittently with the complaint of critical reductionism; so that, for Bloom, recent approaches move in from the outside ‘on the poor play’. Radical critics are ‘gender-and-power freaks’ whose insidious act of cultural imperialism is to ‘shape Shakespeare’ by imposing in advance their own prescriptive brand of cultural politics (Bloom 1999: 9-10).

I have to say that my own experience of teaching Shakespeare is at once more mundane and more revealing. For most students, on first studying Shakespeare at university level, the empirical and essentialist truth claims underpinning traditionalist approaches to the playwright's work are often already residually in place. These assumptions are fairly easily overturned, yet even while students are willing to take a more relativistic view of Shakespeare's plays, they are still drawn back to the assertion that Shakespeare's texts are somehow qualitatively distinctive. There is a resistance to the cultural reductionism which Bloom caricatures as the pedagogical norm, though, as yet, there is often a lack of a developed critical lexicon by which to explore the issue of literary value. As a result, students often ‘cope’ with the singularity of the Shakespeare text in a rather vague and unsituated fashion.2

In practice, the closing scene of Shakespeare’s The Winter’s Tale tends to operate as a type of critical degree zero for locating some of these issues in a more critical context. In its eloquent silence and unfathomable recovery, the puzzle of Hermione's restoration at the end of the play immediately invites idealization, and often does so precisely in terms of those old-style critical unities which would endorse a sense of the literary artefact as the source of some unsullied or immanent value. As she steps down from her pedestal, somewhere between automaton and living being, the ‘resurrection’ of Hermione has tended to double as a tableau vivant for Shakespearicity itself—that impossible thing, ‘a living monument’. Yet, crucially of course, Hermione's unlikely transformation during the scene in question remains ‘meaningful’, only insofar as she is not restored to what she once was. Leontes is quick enough to point this out for himself on first seeing the statue:

Hermione was not so much wrinkled, nothing
So aged as this seems.

(5.3.27-9)

Almost by default, Leontes' momentary regret here indirectly confirms the essentialist-type error that he had already implicitly committed moments earlier when, indulging in a kind of wishfulfillment, on first seeing his
daughter Perdita, he is immediately reminded of his wife—‘I thought of her / Even in these looks I made’ (5.1.226-7)—and against which the shrewd counsellor Paulina anticipates a sharp reproof (cf. 5.1.223-5).

It is precisely because of these and other ‘inconsistencies’ that the statue scene is the one episode in the whole of Shakespeare which in confounding expectations simultaneously throws a ‘common sense’ understanding of the relationship between art and ‘truth’ into sharp relief. In my experience of teaching the play, the provocation presented by the scene’s manifest improbability immediately tempts students to restrict matters to the ‘status quo’ of empiricism. On paying closer attention to the text, they insist that it is clear that ‘She didn't really die’—their case often unwittingly hinging on the probability or otherwise of (that old critical chestnut), Hermione's ‘voluntary concealment’ (5.3.126-9). Yet curiously, as the discussion proceeds, it is clear that Hermione's recovery is not explicable in these ‘evidentiary’ terms: after all, the point remains that even if we were to judge matters in terms of the most restrictive truth-only criteria, earlier on, at least, the play is certain enough about the ‘fact’ of Hermione's death (cf. 3.2.201-5, 232-4; 3.3.15-18).

My point, of course, is that the statue scene remains meaningful while also flouting most of our conventional criteria for understanding. And for this reason, a brief flick through the play's ‘critical heritage’ is enough to confirm the students' intuition that the question of Hermione's restoration constitutes the key interpretative dilemma of the play, as, from Dryden onwards, the critical consensus consistently maintains that The Winter's Tale is, in effect, ‘grounded on impossibilities’ (Vickers 1995, vol. 1: 145). We might say that Hermione's unforeseen recovery unwittingly confirms the unsettling effect of a meaningful temporal dis-continuity. Nor, of course, is this the first instance in the play when the audience is suddenly alerted to the transformative potential of a dramatic recontextualization. Earlier on, at a related moment of incongruity, Time's interpolation (4.1) itself ensures that the action 'slide(s) / O'er sixteen years' (4.1.5-6). Each episode produces a conjunctural clash of past and present which, in remaining resistant to interpretation, has remained critically significant ever since.  

These improbabilities and temporal dislocations have clearly served to focus issues relating to the validity of past interpretations of the play; yet coming to a more reflective understanding of the particular transformation wrought by Hermione's restoration, depends precisely on how we address the question of its 'meaning'. As I have already implied, it is pointless to somehow try to ‘fix’ the meaning of the statue scene, either by attempting to pluck out the kernel of its ‘truth’, or by skewing the ‘evidence’ so that it somehow fits with our quest for certain knowledge. Each of these moves produces an over-reductively schematic and distortedly unified account of particular events.

Interestingly of course, it was precisely this type of misjudgement which ensured that Leontes remained such a bad judge during the early stages of the play, where, plagued by certainty, and in his determination to prove truths irrefutably, he quickly emerges as an early prototype of the dogmatic ‘systems thinker’ whom Theodor Adorno has in mind as he outlines ‘Idealism as Rage’ in Negative Dialectics (1990):

> The system in which the sovereign mind imagined itself transfigured, has its primal history in the pre-mental, the animal life of the species … The more completely his actions [the ‘rational animal’s’] follow the law of self-preservation, the less can he admit the primacy of that law to himself and others … The system is the belly turned mind, and rage is the mark of each and every idealism.

(Adorno 1990: 22-3)

The ‘belly turned mind’ would serve as a more than adequate description of the destructive yet ravenous incorporative rage which Leontes exemplifies in the totalitarian state that was the first half of the play. Leontes' behaviour here is typical of the type of ‘identity-thinking’ which, in its ‘progressive’ domination of nature, would reduce all particulars to conceptual generalization and ensures that in a ‘systematized'
post-Enlightenment society, ‘the sublimation of this anthropological schema extends all the way to epistemology’ (Adorno 1990: 22). Jay Bernstein (1991) offers a useful clarification of this aspect of Adorno's critique of ‘enlightened’ reason:

[S]uch a rationality must treat unlike (unequal) things as like (equal), and subsume objects under (the unreflective drives of) subjects. Subsumption, then, is domination in the conceptual realm. The purpose of subsumption is to allow for conceptual and technical mastery. When subsumptive rationality came to be considered the whole of reason … the ends for the sake of which the path of enlightened rationality was undertaken became occluded. Without the possibility of judging particulars and rationally considering ends and goals, the reason which was to be the means to satisfying human ends becomes its own end, and thereby turns against the true aims of Enlightenment: freedom and happiness.

(Bernstein 1991: 4)

For Adorno then, instrumental reason (reason which effectively becomes a means to its own end) excludes the ‘cognition of the particular in its own right’ (cf. Bernstein 1991: 4). Any interpretative paradigm which is governed by these assumptions tends to fix the meaning ‘which already lies behind the question’ (Adorno 1977: 127), so that, as Adorno himself puts it: ‘The things philosophy has yet to judge are postulated before it begins’ (Adorno 1990: 24).

Yet, in contrast, during the statue scene, Leontes’ habitual tendency to foreclose on his interpretative options in advance undergoes an abrupt and remarkable transformation. Suddenly his capacity for ‘judgment’ confirms itself as a newly dynamic and creative process, which involves an open-ended awareness of participating in the sensuous particularity of the ‘truths’ that are unfolding before him. The experience of suffering Hermione’s restoration opens out on to a series of qualitative distinctions which, fittingly enough (for Leontes at least), proceed to constellate themselves around the metaphor of ingestion itself, the expression of which is now freshly modulated and comparative: ‘this affliction has a taste as sweet / As any cordial comfort’ (5.3.76-7), ‘let it be art / Lawful as eating’ (5.3.110-11, my emphases). In terms of the reflective capacity of judgement we broached earlier on, this productive ability to ‘see more in things than they are’ constitutes what Adorno terms ‘aesthetic behaviour’:

Aesthetic behaviour is the ability to see more in things than they are. It is the gaze that transforms empirical being into imagery. The empirical world has no trouble exposing the inadequacy of aesthetic behaviour, and yet it is aesthetic behaviour alone which is able to experience that world.

(Adorno 1984: 453)

Like the reconciliation scene which precedes it, Hermione's restoration proceeds largely in silence; and as ‘a sight which was to be / seen, cannot be spoken of’ (5.2.38-9), its ‘world-disclosing’ capacity cannot be reduced to paraphrase, as art itself ‘renders reality visible’:

PAULINA:

Were it but told you, should be hooted at
Like an old tale. But it appears she lives,
Though yet she speak not. Mark a little while.
Beyond any correspondent sense of a ‘true’ representation, in Bowie’s terms ‘something comes to be seen as something in a new way’ during the statue scene. That which ‘appears’ as true cannot be proven to be true: ‘truth “happens”—it does not imitate or represent’ (Bowie 1990: 5; 1992: 33). Indeed, during the process of Hermione’s ‘recovery’ discursive place appears as still more complex and overdetermined precisely in ways that place an emphasis on the non-representational rather than the formally coherent, or mimetic aspects of art. Music, silence, and most decisively of all of course, ruination itself, are very much to the fore, as, beyond mere recovery, ‘existing meanings are most decisively transformed … to the point of the destruction of those meanings’ (cf. Bowie on Adorno: Bowie 1997a: 25, Bowie’s emphasis)—or as Leontes himself has it: ‘Hermione was not so much wrinkled’.

In short, it is precisely because Hermione’s restoration is ‘newly fixed’ (5.3.48) that it undoes attempts to unify meaning. The key to understanding aesthetic judgement in the statue scene then is to see that it proceeds on uncertain grounds, or ‘begins in the middle’ so to speak (cf. Bowie 1997a: 104-6). It is certainly not the unifyingly fulfilling or unreflectively transcendent category of the aesthetic caricatured and maligned by so much early ‘radical’ cultural criticism.

**SHAKESPEARE, MODERNITY AND THE AESTHETIC**

In order to develop the significance of the distinctions I have raised so far, I want to move on now to consider the relation of Shakespeare to the aesthetic in its ‘modern’ context. As I hope my brief analysis of The Winter’s Tale has demonstrated, the statue scene discloses the potential to constitute new meanings which, in their refusal to submit to existing rules, are ‘self-validating’ in their own right. In its modern form, this independent truth potential of art to ‘give the law to itself’ is often discussed in terms of the notion of ‘aesthetic autonomy’ (Bowie 1992: 33-7).

Doubtless, for many, the very idea of aesthetic autonomy risks contamination by the residual idealism of ‘Eng. lit.’, insofar as it tends to evoke ideas concerning the ahistorical fixity and ‘autotelic’ self-sufficiency of the ‘text in itself’—an outmoded approach to the question of aesthetic validity which was favoured by the old New Critics and others, but which was effectively overturned by the first-wave theorization of Shakespeare studies (see e.g. Barker and Hulme 1985: 192). Yet literature’s becoming merely self-sufficient or, as poststructuralists might prefer its ‘lack of a referent’, actually serves only to underpin its historical and political significance within modernity. In the course of breaking its ties with tradition, it is precisely because literature is forced back on its ‘own’ resources that, in its autonomous ‘exceeding moment’, it provides new means of expression and accommodates the creative potential for new forms of social cognition, not least around the related question of subjectivity. This proto-political potential of the aesthetic to unleash unrealized possibilities for ‘human emancipation’ is of particular importance to Marxist theorists of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory, and is linked in complex fashion to their critique of the more dominative aspects of enlightened modernity (cf. Bowie 1997a: 14-15). In its qualitative independence, autonomous art resists subsumption within the instrumentalist logic of capital production and offers an enclave for the articulation of alternative values. In this form, aesthetics is not a rejection of reason; indeed, as Andrew Bowie observes: ‘it becomes the location in which what has been repressed by a limited conception of reason can be articulated’ (Bowie 1990: 4). The appearance of a separate aesthetic domain during the eighteenth century proceeds to provide a compensatory site for the evaluation of our experience of those sensuous particulars, which are now also increasingly denied to us in our newly ‘alienated’ modern condition. And in this respect, the survival of canonical texts like Shakespeare continue to confirm their significance in manifesting the potential to play a crucial role in reconfiguring our understanding of modern society. Tied to actuality, in ways that cannot be reduced to the empirical, the emergence of literature serves as a type of ‘non-empirical record’, which allows for the creation of ‘possible-worlds’ (Bowie 1997a: 16-27) beyond but also within the regulated sphere of its ‘new’ bourgeois confinement.
Coinciding as it does with the emergence of what Habermas (1992) would term the public sphere, the ground-breaking utopian potential of art to ‘move beyond the world of what there is to a world of as yet unrealised possibility’ (Bowie 1997a: 14) has theoretical as well as practical implications. In the context of an enlightened modernity, aesthetic discourse provides new concepts and tools of analysis with which to challenge existing conceptual frameworks. In this respect, just as the modern division between distinct spheres of ‘knowledge’ itself becomes increasingly restrictive and specialized, the ‘intellectual’ pursuits of art and literature also begin to have potentially far reaching effects.8

Yet crucially of course, the relegatory shift of art to the relative exclusivity of an autonomous realm (within which the assimilation of Shakespeare is evidently implicated at a very early stage) also, in the same process, proceeds to produce a formative practical dilemma for literary criticism. On the one hand aesthetic autonomy ensures art's significance as a potentially transgressive or ‘critical’ location. On the other hand art's ‘untheorizable excess’ also promotes suspicion, insofar as the distinctiveness of art's newly autonomous ‘self-regulating’ truth claim is perceived to present an alternative to those restrictive notions of empirical truth which continue to govern neo-classical literary criticism itself in its early emergence, and against which contemporary literary theorists have so consistently railed.9

As the early antecedents of aesthetic theory and literary criticism become increasingly ‘institutionalized’, the relation of literature to the criticism which attempts to explain or understand it serves to sustain literature's claim to validity. Yet, paradoxically, as I have already suggested, it is only because Shakespeare evades any finite sense of conceptual determination that, in resisting appropriation and in stirring debate, the playwright's work continues to offer us such a valuable resource for critical thought. This distinctive ‘excessive’ quality is clearly at the heart of canon formation itself, so that, as Bowie observes: ‘texts which retain a productive ambiguity in thoroughly different contexts over long periods seem to be those to which the name literature is now often attached’ (Bowie 1997a: 7). Yet the categorical separation of ‘artistic truth’ from other kinds of philosophical truth in modernity has also necessarily proceeded to haunt the convergence of a secularized literature and its criticism ever since. Bernstein formulates the dilemma in the following theoretical terms:

If art is taken as lying outside of truth and reason then if art speaks in its own voice it does not speak truthfully or rationally; while if one defends art from within the confines of the language of truth-only cognition one belies the claim that art is more truthful than that truth-only cognition.

(Bernstein 1992: 2)

In a nutshell then, the problem, as David Wood incisively puts it, is that: ‘poetic discourse may be able to say what philosophy can know it cannot’ (Wood 1990: 2). In this sense of course, the very notion of ‘aesthetic theory’ is something of a contradiction in terms. Indeed, as more than one commentator has suggested, the title of Adorno's last major unfinished work Aesthetic Theory itself implicitly constitutes its own form of ironical epitaph, in that, as Adorno himself observes: ‘What is called philosophy of the art’ (Adorno 1984: 498; also see Zuidervaart 1991: 3). It is in confronting this situation that, as Bernstein argues, more recent ‘post-aestheticist’ philosophies of art like Adorno's actually take art's critical potential seriously by ‘employ[ing] art to challenge truth-only cognition’, while also facing the dilemma that ‘philosophy cannot say what is true without abandoning itself to that which it would criticise’ (Bernstein 1992: 4-9).

It is possible to extend the significance of the implications of Bernstein's thesis on the critical potential of art in terms of its related impact on recent trends within cultural criticism and literary theory. Key paradigm shifts in contemporary variants of Shakespearean criticism are clearly themselves indirectly reliant on the transformative cognitive potential of the aesthetic. Consider, for example, the ‘disclosive’ aspects of new historicism's more general recontextualization of anecdotal material, drawn from a variety of non-literary contexts and freshly deployed in ‘illuminating’ rereadings of canonical texts. These and other interpretative
procedures produce precisely the type of unsettling interpretative ambiguities which Russian Formalists, at least, would have still recognized as ‘literary’ (cf. Bowie 1997a: 4-13). Yet while ambiguous faultlines, ruptures, fissures, crises in representation and so on, litter the corpus of cultural criticism, and frequently provide the foci for its activity, there is often an overall lack of any reflective engagement concerning the cognitive implications of such excesses, or, indeed, concerning the relationship between such moments of ‘textual excess’ and the emancipatory politics they implicitly promise as a payload (also see Middleton 1998: 152). The disclosive power of the aesthetic has implicitly enabled cultural critics to open up ‘a world which was hidden by existing forms of articulation’ (Bowie 1992: 36), yet crucially, in its attempt to break with the prescriptive ‘truth-only’ formality of traditional ‘Eng. lit.’, this reconciliatory impulse still necessarily ‘hibernates’ only within the confines of the very metaphysical hierarchy it would seek to overcome (see Bernstein 1992: 9). It follows that literary criticism is necessarily caught in a double bind of its own making, insofar as its relative ‘freedom’ and the autonomous truth potential which sustains its critique are wholly dependent on the rigid categorical distinctions which simultaneously ‘prohibit the fulfilment’ of its goals (cf. Bernstein 1992: 1-7). Viewed in this light, the newer formations of cultural criticism in literary studies could be viewed as ‘post-aestheticist’ in Bernstein’s sense of the term: that is to say, not merely in the weaker sense of having broken with a reductive notion of aesthetic value or in ‘being’ postmodern anti-aestheticisms—but also in the potentially stronger sense that cultural criticism continues to deploy the cognitive import of the truth potential of the aesthetic against its own implication in disciplinary division, but has not itself always faced up to the divisive implications of its own interpretative procedures. The particular lure (and simultaneous frustration) of institutionally central or canonical texts like Shakespeare’s is that they accommodate a form of critical displacement which is valid and ‘meaningful’ only insofar as they tend to accentuate the very institutional limits that continue to make critique possible, but which then also deny its realization as a meaningful form of political praxis. Indeed, when it is conceived within, as well as against, the oppressive constraints of the instrumental rationality of which it is part, the ‘meaning’ of ‘dissidence’, in its very displacement, might actually serve to symptomatize ‘the absence of a truly political domain’ (see Bernstein 1992: 3). A position which has been inadvertently confirmed and consolidated during the recent past as, since the 1960s or so, the rising stock of non-traditional cultural critique within the academy has actually expanded at an inversely proportional rate to its ability to intervene against, let alone stem or prevent, the ravages of capital’s advance in what remains of the public realm.

Here, as elsewhere, it is apparent that the ‘fate’ of art in modernity is that, inasmuch as it remains ‘critical’, then as Bernstein argues, it necessarily continues to ‘suffer’ its alienation, either as a form of betrayal or ‘bereavement’. As a result, even for those who would refute nostalgia, each critical act is inevitably, in some sense, a displaced form of memorial. In short, cultural criticism becomes an act of testimony or remembrance, or as Bernstein puts it:

  every conception of the alienation of art from truth is simultaneously a work of remembrance, a work of mourning and grief, even for those philosophers who doubt that such an ‘original’ state of union ever existed. In modernity beauty is not only alienated from truth, but grieves its loss; modernity is the site of beauty bereaved—bereaved of truth.

(Bernstein 1992: 4)

In this sense, as Bernstein's comments serve to suggest, our reliance on the thwarted aesthetic potential of Renaissance or early modern texts might actually be reconstrued as a conventionally ‘modern’ predicament. If there were time to do so here, alongside new historicism's ill-fated desire to speak with the dead, it would be tempting to survey the melancholic fort-da game that cultural materialism has enacted in its continued allegorization of a lost ‘corpus’ or body of truth in Renaissance ‘literature’. From the initial intensity of its disavowal of the organic community of Tillyard onwards, in its encounter with Renaissance texts, cultural materialism enacts a type of ‘memorial aesthetics’ which centres on representations of dead bodies or on images of their dismemberment. Yet it seems to me, that the issue of memorial surfaces as the key
conceptual register for Renaissance criticism in recent years only insofar as it begins to function in its very displacement as a ‘sign of modernity’ (see Bernstein 1992: 4). And to this extent, our need to ‘remember’ is also an indirect symptom of a failure to come to terms with what Bernstein rightly identifies as the ‘discordance’ between art and truth in a modern secular society.

**SHAKESPEARE AND DE-TRADITIONALIZATION**

Modernity, as Adorno reminds us, is ‘a qualitative, not a chronological category’ (Adorno 1978: 218; also cited in Osborne 1995: 9). In this respect, as Peter Osborne suggests, ‘modernity’ situates itself as a temporal determinant of a ‘very specific kind’; indeed the German term for modernity, Neuzeit, locates precisely this sense of its fuller significance, as a new or different ‘kind of time’ (Osborne 1995: 9, 5, 1-29). During the Enlightenment, as Osborne observes, this ‘qualitative claim about the newness of the times’ manifests itself ‘in the sense of their being “completely other … than what has gone before”’ (Osborne 1995: 10, citing Koselleck 1985: 238). As we have seen, the emergence of an independent aesthetic sphere is clearly caught up in this distinctive shift in the temporal matrix: both in the form of the newly distinctive experience of modernity it engenders, but also in relation to its attempt to transform its historical consciousness of this transition into a ‘general model of social experience’ (Osborne 1995: 12).

Yet this sense of the qualitative newness of a ‘modern’ aesthetic distinction or, indeed, of the ‘aestheticization’ of modernity itself, also needs some further qualification. The question of aesthetic autonomy only arises as a question when in the course of its progressive secularization, culture effects its own act of self-legitimation. Which is to say that, in understanding itself to be distinctively ‘modern’, and in the course of dislodging a God-centred universe, culture somewhat contradictorily installs itself as ‘the tradition of the new’—a tradition which in being modern is simultaneously without tradition (see Rose 1992: 3, my emphasis). As such, modernity could be said to inaugurate itself as a tradition of de-traditionalization; indeed as Simon Critchley argues:

> [I]t could be claimed that the consciousness of tradition as such only occurs in the process of its destruction, that is to say, with the emergence of a modernity as that which places in question the evidence of tradition.

(Critchley 1995: 20, original italics)

The overall consequence of de-traditionalization for a modern cultural criticism is double-edged. On the one hand the innovative aspect of de-traditionalization enables a newly critical sense of engagement with the past and could be said to encourage an affirmative stance, engendering a sense of autonomy and freedom: a liberation from the religious constraints which preceded it. On the other hand, the post-theological world can be a solitary place: one which locates the finiteness of the human condition and amplifies our sense of its contingency and inherent ‘meaninglessness’. As Andrew Bowie (1990) observes, either response to modernity—liberatory or nihilistic—inevitably attaches an enormous significance to a secular aesthetic: ‘either as an image of what the world could look like if we were to realise our freedom, or as the only means of creating an illusion which would enable us to face an otherwise meaningless existence’ (Bowie 1990: 3).

It follows that, in confronting secular disenchantment, art’s transformative potential is clearly closely linked to an utopian impulse: the felt need to overcome the limitations of the present. Yet in this sense, as we have seen, the encounter of most cultural criticism with modernity could also be said to be exclusively ‘tragic’, as in relativizing the question of authority it then fails to deliver us from the consequence of doing so. In its moment of overturning or undermining its precursors, a critical engagement with tradition often locates a type of ironic discomfort which alerts us to the deleterious consequence of a break with the past. In this sense, as Gerald Bruns observes, an encounter with tradition is potentially:
an event that exposes us to our own blindness or the limits of our historicality and extracts from us an acknowledgement of our belongingness to something different, reversing what we had thought.

(Bruns 1992, cited in Critchley 1995: 21, Critchley's emphasis)

As a result, as I have already implied above, in relativizing tradition, contemporary forms of de-traditionalization can all too easily enshrine a form of melancholic entrapment or memorial: an indeterminate form of ‘self-definition through difference’ (again also see Osborne 1995: 14), which endlessly intensifies a meaningful sense of loss in the present, without offering the possibility of redemption in the future.

Interestingly of course, Leontes is presented with a roughly analogous dilemma mid-way through The Winter's Tale as, in regretting the past, he recognizes his own, non-redemptive future as a form of eternal return:

The causes of their death appear, unto  
Our shame perpetual. Once a day I'll visit  
The chapel where they lie, and tears shed there  
Shall be my recreation.

(3.2.235-8)

Yet significantly, during the statue scene, Leontes moves toward a renewed conceptualization of his former misdemeanours by engaging in a more reflective sense of remembrance. Crucially, this newly evaluative understanding of his historical situation, which manifests itself as an openness to the other, depends on his willingness to concede his continuing involvement in upholding the very process he would now seek to overcome. The moment of transformation effectively pivots on Leontes' critical ability to recognize the fuller extent and deleterious consequence of his own past misrecognition:

Even with such life of majesty—warm life,  
As now it coldly stands—when first I wooed her.  
I am ashamed. Does not the stone rebuke me  
For being more stone than it? O royal piece!  
There's magic in thy majesty, which has  
My evils conjured to remembrance

(5.3.34-40)

Intriguingly, of course, when it is viewed in these terms Leontes' admission of guilt and complicity resonates with the key ‘procedural dilemma’ of cultural criticism itself, which we might now shorthand as the perennial problem of ‘how to overcome authority without claiming authority’. In the course of coming to terms with the question of self-implication—‘my evils conjured to remembrance’—Leontes might be said to follow ‘the path of self-reflection’ opened up by critical theory—a process which Bernstein helpfully glosses in the following terms:

Adorno-esque critical theory is a continuation of the modern project of self-reflection beyond all transcendental understanding. Self-reflection without transcendental reflection is the ethical act of self-consciousness that brings the subject before and into his or her historical situation … in Adorno's act of self-implication: he is part of the barbarism that he is seeking to understand and overcome. Only through the confession of guilt can immanence be achieved; that guilt is the guilt of self-reflection's totalization of experience: the history it
recounts and the explanations it offers. When the totality is reflected and challenged in the
same thought, ethical action begins to surmount itself toward the political world whose
absence calls it into being.

(Bernstein 1992: 16)

In surmounting self-reflection by conceding ‘reflection from within experience’, Leontes learns to live with
the consequence of historical difference as well as remaining open to its potential affinities. In yielding to
affinity through distance, and conjuring the possibility of reconciliation into being, the transformative
potential of Leontes’ moment of acknowledgement is in implication structurally comic rather than tragic.

Yet such ‘traditional’ transactions are not indicative of a mere point of closure nor is the achievement of
reconciliation without considerable risk. In this respect the statue scene remains, in every sense,
ground-breaking: narrowly treading the line between oppressive reimposition and newly created consensus on
the one hand and the accusation of illegitimacy on the other. Indeed it is precisely because the statue scene is
law making (canonical even?), just as it is simultaneously indeterminate and law breaking, that in its
untheorizable excess it arouses suspicion, mistrust and ‘dread’:

PAULINA:

\[
\text{you'll think—}
\]

Which I protest against—I am assisted

By wicked powers.

(5.3.89-91)

... my spell is lawful.

(5.3.105)

Faced with the intractability of tradition, the temptation for cultural criticism will either be to wager away its
implication within tradition, or, as I have argued elsewhere, to merely remain melancholically enchanted by
its productive failure to conjure tradition (Joughin 1997b: 290). Yet, as I have tried to make clear, it is not
merely a matter of reconciling ourselves to the tragic discomforts which accrue to our persistent attempts to
de-traditionalize Shakespeare, but also, rather, attempting to overcome them—in the process of doing so, we
will need to remain alert to tradition’s moment of truth. As Adorno’s work serves to remind us, a more
reflective engagement with remembrance does not merely collapse the past with the present—either by
fetishizing a ‘contemporaneous’ sense of its alienated detachment from the past, or alternatively by endorsing
a more reductive sense of a metaphysical continuity between past and present. Rather cultural critics need to
achieve what Adorno terms ‘an attitude which raises tradition to consciousness without succumbing to it’.
This means remaining open to the ‘past that persists’ in those works which (like Hermione's statue) refuse to
‘be restored to what they once were’ (Adorno 1993/4: 78-80). In this form at least, as The Winter's Tale serves
to remind us, the sedimented truths of aesthetic disclosure continue to be historically substantiated, even
insofar as they are ‘newly performed’:

So much the more our carver's excellence,
Which lets go by some sixteen years and makes her
As she lived now

(5.3.30-2)
CONCLUSION

Revisiting the question of aesthetic autonomy in Shakespeare studies need not entail a return to the uncritical uniformities which informed the bad aestheticisms of the past. Yet rethinking Shakespeare in aesthetical terms will require an altogether more rigorous form of correspondence with the past: one which resists the lure of nostalgic recuperation in either its radical or conservative forms, in maintaining a more reflective attitude toward tradition. Such a stance would remain attuned to what Adorno terms in his own reflection ‘On tradition’—‘affinity through distance’ (Adorno 1993/4: 79-80): the more substantial risk of which, we, like Leontes, might yet learn to live with.

In the course of becoming aesthetical and in disclosing truths which are ‘truer than truth-only cognition’, Shakespearean texts clearly manifest the transformative potential to sustain a critique of modernity, while also presenting the possibility of producing what Bernstein terms a ‘non-neutral’ defence of rationality. While there are evidently moral, political and aesthetic implications entailed in lifting Shakespeare's plays out of their immediate seventeenth-century milieu, the virtue of reconceptualizing Shakespeare in relation to a later ‘middling’ definition of modernity lies in acknowledging the mediating categories of modern Shakespearean reception as ‘our own’. Just as Shakespeare seems to anticipate a ‘modern’ secular culture, he does so for us only by continuing to reside within its constraints. In their attempts to challenge the dominant rationality assumptions of disciplinary division, recent advances in cultural and literary criticism have inevitably continued to rely on the transformative power of the aesthetic. As a result, the cognitive and revelatory potential of the aesthetic has already proved crucially informative, not merely in productively accommodating the discontents of ‘Lit. crit.’s’ insular dislocation, but also in tacitly reshaping the direction cultural and literary studies have taken in recent years. A newly conceived reappraisal of the qualitative significance of the aesthetic in Shakespeare criticism is now overdue. A more reflective materialist approach to the Shakespearean aesthetic will enable us to come to a fuller understanding of the determinants which currently govern our own displaced late modern compulsion to engage with the thwarted truth-potential of Renaissance texts, accommodating a fresh understanding of the playwright's significance for critical thought, even as it discloses new opportunities for interpretation.

Notes

1. My indebtedness to these thinkers will be evident throughout, but I am particularly grateful to Bowie, on whom I draw heavily here and below, and whose exploration of the philosophical origins of literary theory has proved especially informative (see esp. Bowie 1997a: 1-27). For more on the emergent debate surrounding ‘new aestheticism’ in its British context see Beech and Roberts (1996), Bernstein (1997) and Bowie (1997b).
2. For more on ‘the haunting singularity of the literary text’ and for an incisive reassessment of the question of literary value in its post-theoretical context and in relation to Bloom on Shakespeare, see Bennett and Royle (1999: 44-53, esp. 50-3).
3. I am grateful to Howard Felperin for illuminating this point for me.
4. I am partially indebted here to Robert Weimann, for his suggestive treatment of the fuller interpretative consequence of conjunctural historicity in relation to a reflective account of his own contribution to Shakespearean criticism in its ‘German’ context (Weimann 1997, see esp. 187).
5. Or as Leontes might put it:—‘Say it be, ’tis true’ (1.2.300); ‘How blest am I / In my just censure, in my true opinion!’ (2.1.38-9); ‘No. If I mistake / In those foundations which I build upon, / The centre is not big enough to bear / A schoolboy's top’ (2.1.102-5). And so on.
6. This last dictum on art belongs, of course, to Paul Klee. Also cited in Bowie (1997a: 5).
7. I am grateful to Terry Eagleton for clarifying these distinctions in the course of a panel discussion on ‘The uses of literature’ at the symposium on ‘The Value of Literature’ held at the Kaetsu Centre, New Hall, Cambridge on 3-4 July 1998. On the emergence of the aesthetic as the site for an alternative conceptualization of the ‘self’ within modernity see also Bowie (1990) and C. Taylor (1989).
8. In short, the institutionalization of literary criticism and the early precursors of aesthetic and literary theory are, from the start, also implicitly caught up in ‘a questioning of the borders between differing disciplines’ (Bowie 1997a: 13-16).

9. From its very beginning then, the rationalization of the Shakespearean corpus, and the attendant editorial apparatus which quickly grows up around his work, is actually snared on the hook of a characteristically ambiguous dilemma. And in their ‘British’ context, the pressure of situating these variant truth claims in relation to Shakespeare's work in some part serves to locate the inherently contradictory formation of an emergent ‘national literary criticism’ itself. Such, as Christopher Norris (1985) reminds us, is the ‘paradoxical consequence’ of Dr Johnson's early editorial project that:

On the one hand Shakespeare has to be accommodated to the eighteenth-century idea of a proper, self-regulating discourse which would finally create a rational correspondence between words and things, language and reality … On the other hand, allowances have to be made for the luxuriant native wildness of Shakespeare's genius, its refusal to brook the ‘rules’ laid down by more decorous traditions like that of French neo-classicism.

(Norris 1985: 49)

10. Again I have reappropriated the phrase ‘memorial aesthetics’ from Bernstein's The Fate of Art (1992), where he develops the philosophical and artistic significance of the term in specific relation to a re-reading of the implications of Kant's third Critique.

11. For a provocative interrogation of some of the key procedural features of de-traditionalization which differs from my own reading in its deconstructive emphasis, but which nonetheless provides an extremely persuasive account of the philosophical tradition as a tradition of de-traditionalization, compare Critchley (1995).

12. The formulation is Rorty's (Rorty 1989, cited in Bowie 1997a: 86), though the inference is my own.

13. If it is not already apparent, by a ‘middling’ definition of modernity I mean to imply a shift away from a preoccupation with the ‘early-modern’ with its emphasis on Shakespeare's liminal placement between feudal and modern, in order to hasten the reconceptualization of a modern sense of a Shakespearean aesthetic and its criticism, in more direct relation to the categorical differentiation between value spheres that is itself constitutive of an enlightened modernity (see Bernstein 1992: 2).

14. There is not enough time to unravel the full complexity of this formation here. But, briefly, one could point immediately to the performative dimension of gender studies and queer aestheticism; cultural criticism's persistent allegorization of the body and its concern with the libidinal intensities, affectivities, pulses, flows, rhythms, and becomings which inform any properly ‘materialist’ sense of our understanding of the significance of culture; Black Atlanticism and the aesthetics of alterity and post-colonialism; work on the creativity of counter cultures, the carnivalesque, subcultures of resistance, and so on.

References


The Winter's Tale (Vol. 81): Further Reading

CRITICISM


Explores the motif of the statue in The Winter's Tale, noting that the idea of a statue coming to life was a popular one in Shakespeare's time.


A close analysis of the bear scene in The Winter's Tale, finding it a technique Shakespeare used to wrap up several thematic elements in the play in order to make room for new developments.


Analyzes Autolycus as a character who represents a host of Jacobean concerns regarding social instability.


Examines the theme of love and affection in The Winter's Tale.


Reviews Brian Kulick's 2000 production of The Winter's Tale at the Delacorte Theatre in New York City, noting that the stylistic acting and staging of the play detracted from the complex emotions of the characters.


Surveys the interpretive movements of time and thought in The Winter's Tale.


Traces the significance of the figure of Time in the play, noting that its presence would have been fully appreciated by contemporary audiences.
The Winter's Tale (Vol. 91): Introduction

Scholars believe that Shakespeare wrote The Winter's Tale in late 1610 or early 1611. The first recorded performance of the play occurred at the Globe Theatre on May 15, 1611. In The Winter's Tale, Leontes, King of Sicilia, becomes jealously obsessed with the intimate friendship between his pregnant wife, Hermione, and his visiting boyhood friend, Polixenes, King of Bohemia. In a jealous rage, Leontes accuses Hermione of adultery and attempts to poison Polixenes who, in turn, flees Sicilia. After Hermione gives birth to a daughter, Leontes proclaims the baby a bastard and orders it to be abandoned outside of Sicilia; the infant is left on the seacoast of Bohemia, where she is discovered by shepherds and raised with the name Perdita. Meanwhile, misfortune besets Leontes when his beloved only son, Mamillius, dies. Hermione collapses with grief and is reported dead by her waiting-woman, Paulina. Leontes is left alone to ponder the consequences of his tyrannical actions. After sixteen years of lonely penance, Leontes is reunited with his long-lost daughter, Perdita, and with Hermione, who has been hidden from him by Paulina. Modern critical analysis of The Winter's Tale has emphasized how Leontes's extreme jealousy reflects a latent Jacobean masculine anxiety about the maternal and sexual power that women hold over men. Many modern commentators have observed that while Shakespeare boldly challenged ideological concerns about adultery, paternity, and illegitimacy in The Winter's Tale, the fact that he wrote the play as a reconciliatory romance as opposed to a catastrophic tragedy suggests that he held an optimistic view that humankind would overcome its irrational prejudices.

A number of recent critics have linked the themes of adultery and paternity in The Winter's Tale to Jacobean patriarchal concerns about the voracious sexual appetites and dubious fidelity of women. Aaron Kitch (2001) documents how Shakespeare conceived of the print industry as a metaphor for paternity and illegitimacy in The Winter's Tale. As Kitch shows, this theme touches on broader Jacobean anxieties about reproduction in both the sexual sense—such as concerns about adultery and bastardy—and in the textual sense—such as the difficulty authorities had in monitoring and regulating rapidly produced printed matter. Kirstie Gulick Rosenfield (2002) maintains that The Winter's Tale exploits prevailing Jacobean cultural and ideological attitudes that associated feminine sexuality, maternity, and outspokenness with witchcraft. The critic argues that Shakespeare “reappropriates” these socially destabilizing feminine characteristics and cannily transforms them into a metaphor for the magic of artistic creation and theatrical performance. In a departure from Jacobean ideological readings of The Winter's Tale, Simon C. Estok (2003) petitions for the academic recognition of a new critical theory called ecocriticism, or the study of how the environment has been perceived and represented in literary texts. Using the precepts of this fledgling literary theory, Estok posits that The Winter's Tale reveals Shakespeare's latent “ecophobia” through his representation of nature as hostile and his depiction of crossbreeding as genetic pollution. Maurice Hunt (2004) provides a departure of his own
from recent critical trends by presenting a conventional examination of Shakespeare's use of the term “bear” in *The Winter's Tale*, associating it with such themes as tyranny, suffering, redemption, and sexual domination.

Commentators have put forth a number of theories to explain Leontes's irrational and intensely malevolent jealousy—the agent which precipitates the dramatic conflict in *The Winter's Tale*—and yet his motivations continue to defy critical analysis. Jennifer Richards (1999) maintains that a principal motivating factor in Leontes's paranoid jealousy is his anxiety about social status. The critic examines a number of Renaissance courtesy treatises in an effort to demonstrate how Shakespeare adroitly recreated the dialectical Jacobean relationship between courtly and common attitudes that fueled Leontes's insecurities. Cristina León Alfar (2003) discusses Leontes as the embodiment of the tyranny of patriarchal absolute rule and the commoditization of women. By challenging Leontes's patrilineal sovereignty, the critics aver, Hermione and Paulina represent “fantasies of female evil” who threaten the very underpinnings of the patriarchal order through their perceived adultery and rebellion. Alfar concludes that Shakespeare rejected “monarchical and conjugal tyranny” through the generic transformation of *The Winter's Tale* from a potentially violent and destructive tragedy to a romance that points to an optimistic future of reconciliation. Travis Curtright (2002) takes exception to such serious ideological interpretations of Leontes. Indeed, Curtright challenges the critical position that Leontes displays characteristics of a tragic hero who must suffer as a result of his overweening pride, arguing instead that Shakespeare envisioned the protagonist as merely a melodramatic stage villain intended to evoke laughter from a Jacobean audience. B. J. Sokol (1994) also favors an optimistic reading of *The Winter's Tale*, maintaining that the comic roguery of Autolycus lends crucial support to the “reparative structure” of Shakespeare's romance. According to Sokol, Shakespeare dramatized Autolycus in a non-moralistic fashion in order to demonstrate how “creative activity” emanates from the darker side of human nature.

*The Winter's Tale* has become a staple of modern theatrical production, tempting directors and actors alike with its exotic settings, its evocative sense of wonder, and its passionate characters. In 1995, internationally acclaimed director Ingmar Bergman presented a memorable staging of the play at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in New York. Reviewers admire several of Bergman's bold experimental innovations, including imagining the drama as a play-within-a-play set at a nineteenth-century wedding banquet at a Swedish manor house; showcasing Hermione's trial as the pivotal point in the play; and unconventionally interpreting the discovery scene (Act V, scene iii) as a somber affair rather than as an occasion for joy and wonder. While commentators do not wholly embrace Bergman's daring conceits, they applaud him for attempting to offer a fresh interpretation of the romance. Critics also praise Gregory Doran's 1999 Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) production of *The Winter's Tale* which, they contend, featured lucid direction and a superb ensemble cast. The actors, in the view of most reviewers, so brilliantly communicated the rich psychological details of Shakespeare's characters that the play's many thematic blemishes were obscured by their virtuoso performances. Critics particularly laud Antony Sher's performance as Leontes; Paul Taylor (see Further Reading), for example, deems it a “wonderfully rich and complex characterisation,” noting that Sher's great insight was “that the spitting hatred is the defence mechanism of a man who, through some sudden intuition of inadequacy, is running scared of his own life.” Alexandra Gilbreath also receives praise for her strikingly realistic portrayal of Hermione. As a result of such memorable performances and Doran's adroit direction, David Jays (1999) concludes that he witnessed a “supremely intelligent production, lucid in every detail.”

Nicholas Hytner staged a modern-dress revival of *The Winter's Tale* at London's Royal National Theatre in 2001, depicting Sicilia as a monochrome corporate milieu and Bohemia as a communal, Woodstock-like environment. While most critics agree that this approach adeptly distinguished the two worlds of the play, they also maintain that the actors' uneven performances failed to imbue the play with its requisite emotional intensity. Indeed, reviewers castigate Alex Jennings and Claire Skinner for their restrained performances as Leontes and Hermione, but assert that Deborah Findlay's Paulina stole the show. According to Judith Flanders (2001), Findlay's Paulina “is sassy at the beginning, threatening as tragedy looms, and, finally, matures into
the personification of an austere reproach, the conscience to a king.” A year later, Matthew Warchus and the RSC mounted an Americanized staging of *The Winter's Tale* at the Roundhouse Theatre in London. In keeping with his premise that the texture of American English is closer to its Elizabethan antecedent than that of British English, Warchus encouraged his actors to adopt American accents in their delivery of Shakespeare's lines. Warchus further explored the American motif by placing Sicilia in a monochrome Hollywood film noir context and Bohemia in an Appalachian hillbilly setting. While most commentators credit Warchus for his experimental attitude, they nevertheless conclude that this approach did little to bring any new insights to Shakespeare's play. Further, they censure the largely British cast for its poorly executed American accents; the only portrayal to receive positive critical notice was the Paulina of American actor Myra Lucretia Taylor.

**Criticism: Overviews And General Studies: Aaron Kitch (essay date 2001)**


>In the following excerpt, Kitch examines Shakespeare's representation of the print industry as a metaphor for paternity and illegitimacy in *The Winter's Tale.* According to Kitch, this theme touches on broader Jacobean anxieties with regard to reproduction in both the sexual sense—such as concerns about adultery and bastardy—and in the textual sense—such as the difficulty authorities had in monitoring and regulating rapidly produced printed matter. Hermione's restoration in the statue scene (V.iii) represents a triumph, the critic concludes, of live theater over the court's desire to regulate the printing press and paternal legitimacy.]

In act 2 of *The Winter's Tale,* Paulina boldly appears before King Leontes and his court with the newborn Perdita in her arms. Her self-appointed mission is to convince them that the infant she carries is legitimate. Imploring the assembled to observe the babe's physical features and be assured of its true paternity, she employs the language of print:

>Although the print be little, the whole matter
And copy [are] of the father—eye, nose, lip,
The trick of's frown, his forehead, nay the valley,
The pretty dimples of his chin and cheek, his smiles,
The very mould and frame of hand, nail, finger.

(2.3.97-102)¹

Although the word “print” had multiple meanings in early modern England, including handwriting, stamping an image, and imprinting a seal, its combination in this passage with “matter” and “copy”—and especially with the technical terms “mould” and “frame”—alludes to the printing press specifically.² Paulina lists the infant's body parts individually as ocular proof of the legitimacy of the royal offspring, though it requires both Apollo's oracle and the deaths of Mamillius and (supposedly) Hermione in act 3 to convince Leontes that Hermione is faithful and the “innocent babe truly begotten” (3.2.132). Leontes rejects Paulina's argument, at least initially, but he absorbs its logic. After an extended period of contrition and his eventual submission to Paulina's will, the king uses the same language in 5.1 when he tells Prince Florizel that his mother “was most true to wedlock … / For she did print your royal father off, / Conceiving you” (5.1.123-25). Both passages imagine the press as a tool for measuring the legitimacy of paternal relations. This repeated figuration, I would like to suggest, offers an important perspective from which to evaluate the central but paradoxical structure of paternity and its anxieties in the play, the threat of bastardy as a form of material debasement, the function of Autolycus and the early modern print practices he stands for, and the play's own hybrid generic
status as a “mongrel” tragicomedy.

The printing press is not an obvious institution for a Jacobean playwright (and this Jacobean playwright in particular) to invest with authority and legitimacy. If technical language of the printing trade seems out of place in pre-Christian Sicilia, where ultimate judicial authority is vested in Apollo's oracle, it would also have been counterintuitive as a model of validity to early modern viewers. Shakespeare's own ambivalence toward the press perhaps reinforces what many of his contemporaries considered to be the dubious status of print as degraded and unauthorized because made common, a stigma which early modern authors frequently acknowledged and used to negotiate the category of authorship in their own printed works. But the model of paternal control based on print as it functions in The Winter's Tale must be understood in relation to other formulations in the play, including Leontes's misogynistic polemic against the word of women who “will say anything” (1.2.130), bastardy as a threat to the linguistic polity of Sicilia, and the dangerous ballads of Autolycus that appropriate codes of print-oriented authority in order to spread lies. These ballads also embody anxieties of uncontrolled reproduction manifested within the Stationers' Company itself, exposing the material dialectic of print and paternity as it functioned both in the drama and in society more generally. One specific broadside genre alluded to by the play, the monstrous-birth ballad, functioned for early modern print producers as a way to displace anxieties of reproduction about the press as a cultural institution.

The shared anxieties of paternity and print in the play inscribe broader cultural anxieties about printing as a shift in modes of material production. The press offers a more complex and conflicted model of paternal authority than the traditional “imprint” model traced by several contemporary critics and found, for instance, in Shakespeare's Sonnet 11: “[Nature] carved thee for her seal, and meant thereby / Thou shouldst print more, not let that copy die” (lines 13-14). The print/paternity dialectic provides a cultural context from which to analyze plot, character, and generic status in a way that is unique to The Winter's Tale, with its multiple investments in forms of print—not only the source text in Robert Greene's romance Pandosto but also the broadside ballad as a competing commercial commodity. But I argue that the play ultimately resolves this dialectic in the statue scene, from which a feminine aesthetic of “living sculpture” emerges that can both accommodate the marks of time and mediate between fixed forms and diachronic change.

In an influential account of the relations between Elizabethan structures of gender and power, Louis Montrose identifies paternity as a “shaping fantasy,” an act of imprinting, drawing on Theseus's speech in A Midsummer Night's Dream depicting the father as a “god” to his malleable daughter, who should be “but as a form in wax / By him imprinted, and within his power / To leave the figure or disfigure it” (1.1.47, 49-51). The paternal relation for Montrose becomes a “fantasy of male parthenogenesis” that entails complete patriarchal control (40). Margreta de Grazia examines the “imprint” metaphor as it is used by Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, and Shakespeare to understand “reproductive bodies and minds … [and] the conception and generation of ideas and children” (90). She traces the cultural semantics of the imprint in sealing wax, stamping, coining, and ultimately printed texts, which she sees as an extension of the signet/wax model. While the printed press in The Winter's Tale can be situated within these accounts of paternity as acts of masculine imprinting, it also problematizes the notion of the paternal imprint because it is a more complex and collaborative form of labor that alters the structure of paternity modeled around it. The “imprint” model which Montrose finds in Midsummer constructs the father as a “demiurge or homo faber” (40), where paternity shapes formless matter like the God who breathes the first human life out of clay. The fantasy of the printing press elaborated by The Winter's Tale, however, situates the labor of parenting on a wholly different level—what Marx specifies as an early form of alienated and disembodied labor in industries that depend on machines. By linking the mechanical labor of print with the human labor of childbirth, the play demonstrates a cultural link between the fantasies of authentic paternity and identical printed copies but also stages the defeat of both models by exposing the flaw of print as an authorizing institution: the structure of authority imbedded within print as an ideal of fixity unravels through the circulation of identical copies whose appearance seems to buttress their truth value while their iterability actually transforms the authoritative structure they enact. The promise of uniformity and centralization of textual production inherent in the press succumbs in the play, through its
alliance with paternity as a category, to the inability to control multiple copies and to anxieties of hybridity and illegitimate form that pervade discourses of early modern printing.

Traditional accounts of paternity from Aristotle to St. Thomas Aquinas identify the masculine seed as more perfect than the female ovum, a seed that the poet Statius in Dante extols as the “perfect blood … that's never drunk / … [but] acquires, within the heart, formative powers / to build the members of the human shape.”6 By this model, paternity imposes spiritual form on maternal matter in reproducing the child. James I famously defined his absolutist monarchy in terms of being a father to England, and patriarchalism as the direct justification of social and political obligations also pervaded seventeenth-century institutions. In the Anglican Church, catechistical instruction drew on the Fifth Commandment to vest in fathers, magistrates, masters, and teachers the authority of the original Father, while in political discourse Robert Filmer offered the fullest example of patriarchalism as a defense of divine-right monarchy (based on God's original bequest to Adam) in his Patriarcha, a book and an argument against which Locke notoriously positioned his contractual theory of government.7 Yet the paternal bond as a biological function is inherently unstable, dependent for its legitimation on an external material or narrative source traditionally associated with the mother.8 When Leontes seizes on Paulina’s metaphor of the printing press as a potential method of authentification, he supplants the word of the mother as the traditional guarantee for paternal legitimacy with a mechanical process of “labor,” replacing the woman's reproductive organs with a machine that was in Shakespeare's day overseen primarily by men.9

This intervention in the biological process of reproduction occurs in the context of one of Shakespeare's most sustained and complex explorations of paternal relations.10 Beyond the frequency of references to fathers and sons in the play and the importance of paternal bonds to the plot, there are moments like Antigonus's offer to spay his daughters and “glib” (emasculate) himself if the charges against Hermione prove true that register the play's obsession with models of paternity and legitimate “issue” (2.1.144-49). In the opening dialogue we learn from Archidamus and Camillo that the young prince Mamillius, a “gentleman of the greatest promise,” “physics the subject, makes old hearts fresh,” and heals “they that went on crutches ere he was born” (1.1.34, 36-37). Much like the kingdom of James, the political stability of Sicilia rests on the shoulders of a healthy male heir.11 But the positive sentiment voiced here is undermined by the unequal relation between the two courtiers, who speak of the “great difference” between themselves and a corresponding inability of Bohemia to live up to the “magnificence” which Sicilia has bestowed (1.1.3, 11). The promise of the son exposes cracks in the diplomatic relations between Sicilia and Bohemia reflected eventually in the split between Leontes and Polixenes. When Hermione in 1.2 attempts to convince Polixenes to extend his stay in Sicilia, she suggests that the only excuse that would justify Polixenes's return to Bohemia is his desire to see his son: “To tell he longs to see his son were strong; / But let him say so then, and let him go; / But let him swear so and he shall not stay—/ We'll thwack him hence with distaffs” (1.2.34-37). Hermione here suggests that the paternal bond should be allowed to trump the codes of hospitality and international diplomacy that might otherwise keep Polixenes in Sicilia. But using the paternal bond as a way to justify the separation of the two kings anticipates how Leontes and Polixenes will find in paternity a sign of their deteriorating relationship. After feeling the first pangs of jealous suspicion against his wife, Leontes asks his “brother” Polixenes if he is as “fond” of his son as Leontes is of Mamillius, to which Polixenes replies:

He's all my exercise, my mirth, my matter;
Now my sworn friend and then mine enemy;
My parasite, my soldier, statesman, all.
He makes a July's day short as December,
And with his varying childness cures in me
Thoughts that would thick my blood.

(1.2.163-69)
Post-Freudian readers may recognize in this confession an element of excessive libidinal investment in the filial object. Florizel fulfills many roles at once for his father—parasite, soldier, statesman, friend, enemy—in ways that seem to preclude the healthy functioning of the state and of the king himself by concentrating all necessary actors into one person, and a person of “varying childness” at that. This element of excess in Polixenes’s reply to what is on the surface a straightforward question indeed mirrors the psychological state of Leontes himself at this moment in the play, since he asks the question as a way of disguising his own “tremor cordis” that has overcome him after witnessing his queen and Polixenes arm in arm (1.2.109). The fraternal bond implied by Leontes’s many references to Polixenes as a “brother” and reciprocated in Polixenes’s “twinned lambs” speech (1.2.66) begins to “branch” (1.1.23) not just around the issue of the fall into sexual activity that Hermione identifies (1.2.79-85), but also around the question of paternity—that vertical relation of biological heredity within a family that puts strain on the horizontal bonds of identification between them.

Polixenes himself contributes, however subconsciously, to the onset of Leontes’s jealous furor by lacing his language in the early part of the scene with words of conception and procreation. This language also introduces the conjunction of sexual reproduction and print to the play:

Nine changes of the watery star hath been
The shepherd's note since we have left our throne
Without a burden. Time as long again
Would be filled up, my brother, with our thanks,
And yet we should for perpetuity
Go hence in debt. And therefore, like a cipher,
Yet standing in rich place, I multiply
With one "we thank you" many thousands more
That go before it.

(1.2.1-9)

When Polixenes describes himself as “standing in [a] rich place,” he invokes the womb, as in Titania's reference in A Midsummer Night's Dream to her pregnant serving woman, “rich with my young squire” (2.1.131). His procreative imagery continues in his use of words like “breed” (“I am questioned by my fears of what may chance / Or breed upon our absence” [1.2.11-12]) and provides a sexual subtext in his language that proves damaging to the fragile mental state of Leontes. Polixenes describes himself as a “cipher” in the sense of a character or number of no value in itself that multiplies other characters by virtue of its relative position, deriving from the Arabic word for “zero” (ṣifr). This is how the passage is typically glossed. But another definition of the word common to early modern England was a “secret or disguised manner of writing” that required a code for interpretation (OED 5.a). This second level of meaning, with specific reference to writing, aligns procreation in the womb with making “many thousands” of copies, a process most readily associated with the printing press by Jacobean viewers. This “rich” womb has a copiousness that eclipses the capacity of biological reproduction in humans and imagines a fecundity of reproduction found only in the mechanical world of print.

Leontes’s initial test of his suspicions against Hermione is to inspect Mamillius for signs of resemblance to himself. “What, hast smutched thy nose? / They say it is a copy out of mine … / yet they say we are / Almost as like as eggs—women say so, / That will say anything” (1.2.120-21, 128-30). Paternity must be secured through examination of a textual “copy” that will reveal the supposed evidence of the mother's truthfulness (or her sins), a text whose physical similarity to its originating father is a guarantee of paternal legitimacy. Though this “copy” is not explicitly printed in the context of the speech, its relation to Polixenes's earlier “cipher” speech and foreshadowing of Paulina's explicit reference to print in act 2 make its association with print consistent with the logic of the play. Leontes elevates the supposed fixity of the printed copy over the untrustworthy word of women, who will “say anything” and are as “false / As o'er-dyed blacks, as wind, as waters” (1.2.130-31), a metaphor taken from the early modern practice of mixing two or more dyes together to
make colored cloth. Where print ideally fixes words on paper through punches and standardized letters that control the flow of ink, the “o'er-dyed blacks” represent uncontrolled and unstructured dissemination of vitriolic dye that makes the resulting fabric weak. Paulina appropriates the metaphor when she says with regard to Hermione's imprisonment, “Here's such ado to make no stain a stain / As passes colouring” (2.2.18-19), suggesting that it is Leontes himself who is guilty of making something out of nothing, of groundless excess in his baseless accusations. But her appropriation nevertheless subscribes to the logic of the structure of paternity as a textual mark whose uncertainties demand something like the machine of the press for standardization.

Leontes carries the figure still further when responding to Camillo's doubts about his accusations against Hermione:

Dost think I am so muddy, so unsettled,  
To appoint myself in this vexation? Sully  
The purity and whiteness of my sheets—  
Which to preserve is sleep, which being spotted  
Is goads, thorns, nettles, tails of wasps—  
Give scandal to the blood o'th'prince, my son  
Who I do think is mine and love as mine,  
Without ripe moving to't?

(1.2.322-29)

The preservation of manly honor and peace of mind is aligned with textual imprints through the image of adulterated white sheets whose original purity is like a piece of paper before it is sullied by ink. The king's peace of mind is imagined as a clean sheet, a blank page for which the threat of adultery is a stain. Both the method of verifying the truth of paternity using textual and/or printed signs as well as the image of mental and social equilibrium imagined as a clean sheet are male qualities. The orderly impression of color or letters is equated with legitimate paternity, while the amorphous stain, the illegible excess of ink, connotes bastardy.

Leontes concludes from his examination of his son and his speculations about his wife that his newborn daughter is a bastard, a word which becomes a virtual mantra in 2.3—used five times by Leontes in the space of ninety lines (73, 139, 154, 160 [twice])—and which does a significant amount of work in the play as a register of the dangers of adulteration, hybridity, and illegitimacy. The bastard in early modern England was a cultural and political exile, a potentially subversive force connected with the failure to control discourse as well as with illicit sexual union. But the word also had ramifications for material production in print and cloth making, since it could mean a mixed cloth of low quality or unusual size (OED I.5.a), a print typeface, and, starting in the seventeenth century, an incomplete page before the full title page of a printed book (OED I.6.d and I.11). Richard Huloet's 1552 dictionary defines the word as a style of handwriting, the litera adulterina. And in printing the batârde typeface imitated cursive handwriting to combine mechanical print with the human hand.

Bastardy, of course, also had quite tangible political consequences in early modern society, threatening not only monarchy as an institution based on authentic and pure bloodlines (Elizabeth and James were both subject to political challenges based on their heredity), but also primogeniture as the primary institution for transferring wealth and property—a legal institution built around paternal bonds. The Winter's Tale frames the threat of bastardy as a threat to the legitimacy of language systems in such a way that opens up the space for a model of paternity based on print. When Leontes sees his wife holding hands with Polixenes and says “Too hot, too hot! / To mingle friendship far is mingling bloods,” his fear of mixing categories of relationship shades easily into a fear of hybridized or bastardized bloodlines (1.2.107-8). The stability and well-being of the state, not to mention Leontes's own psychological condition, depends on the purity of language and its use within a social system. In accusing Hermione of allowing Polixenes to impregnate her, Leontes draws on his
wife's supposed transgression to construct a theory of linguistic polity:

Which I'll not call a creature of thy place
Lest barbarism, marking me the precedent,
Should a like language use to all degrees,
And mannerly distinction leave out
Betwixt the prince and beggar. I have said
She's an adulteress, I have said with whom.

(2.1.82-88)

Leontes imagines social order as founded on language, where words both constitute and enforce social status; he fears that his use of a vulgar word might tear down the system of social difference, leaving the distinction between “prince and beggar” no longer valid. Language for Leontes both defines the speaker's class identity and, in certain cases, undermines the structure of oppositions between classes itself. Because it lies at the very foundation of society, language must be constantly surveyed and policed in its connection to social difference. Leontes, who sees himself at the center of this order, is driven to relate sexual reproduction with this linguistic order, which includes, as we have seen, both the oral register of women's talk and the textual register of Mamillius as a “copy” of the father. This relationship anticipates the need for a machine that might regulate and fix textual production as a way to secure proper sexual reproduction and thus retain fixity and order within his linguistic polity.

But the press that might contain this disorder by extending the pen/paper or signet/wax model of paternal reproduction also alters the model of paternity it adopts. The Winter's Tale demonstrates how the printing press complicates the “imprint” model of paternity in which the father shapes the child as a signet impresses wax. That is, both the press and paternity are legitimating structures (of texts and children, respectively) whose weak link is in the reproducibility of that structure through the production of multiple copies. Shakespeare shows the double-edged capacity of printed texts to authorize the written word in the same way that a true father authorizes his child, but also to make that authenticity dependent on reproducible signs that are easily appropriated and redirected in ways that challenge the entire structure of authority itself.

The dissemination of printed materials in the late sixteenth century to a broader and more diverse reading public than ever before produced new social arrangements that brought with them new anxieties about forms of representation and their cultural and political impact. The act of printing was often figured by printers and authors in early modern England in biological terms, whether in the naming of the parts of the press or in the representation of authors as fathers to their texts and printers as stepfathers to abandoned textual children. Early modern authors themselves were often conscious of the alteration to existing structures of cultural authority that print introduced. Henry Chettle, for instance, describes in his Kind-Hartes Dreame how print produces visible signs that create a false sense of authority. Through the persona of the balladeer Anthony Now Now, Chettle complains about ballad sellers who “sweare” that their wares “are published by Authoritie: and people farre off thinke nothing is printed but what is lawfully tollerated” (60). The act of printing overcomes the distance between the central site of authorization and the periphery, but in bridging this gap, it also usurps the original proximity or immediate presence on which authority depends; its authoritative structure is weakened by the reproducibility of the signs of that authority. The broadside ballad in particular exemplifies this dual nature of the press in relation to cultural authority: on the one hand, its seeming uniformity and centralized mode of production create an aura of fixity and legitimacy, making possible the differentiation between good and bad forms of textuality, but on the other, it is part of an explosion of printed texts in which classifications and hierarchies of authority were becoming dependent on their forms of expression, rather than resting in existing non textual sources.
In *The Winter's Tale*, Autolycus is associated with printed ballads and bastardy alike. Alluding to Ovid's account of Chione's double rape by Apollo and Mercury, resulting in the birth of the twins Autolycus and Philamon (Ovid 11.345-402), Autolycus claims to be “littered under Mercury” (4.3.25) and thus aligns himself with a pagan mythology fitting for Bohemia and the play's other mythical sources in the Prosperina and Pygmalion stories. But in his connection to the printed broadside and the London print industry, he also signifies his contemporaneity with the audience. Vagabond, petty thief, con artist, impersonator, peddler, and court exile, Autolycus traffics in stolen “sheets” that echo Leontes's references to the stained purity of his marriage sheets. He also sells linens, ribbons, gloves, and other trinkets (“inkles, caddises, cambrics, lawns” [4.4.209]), “bastard” remainders of the textile industry that were sewn into other garments to complement an outfit, emphasizing his connection with a mobile marketplace and with fragments rather than wholes. His versatility and status as a “snapper-up of unconsidered trifles” (4.3.25-26) connect him with new market economies and the expansion of capitalism rather than traditional rural agricultural economies such as Bohemia.

His own impersonations, first as a beggar who has been robbed, then as a courtier in the borrowed garb of Florizel when the latter elopes with Perdita, align him with forces of malleability. He decenters the play, yet the play cannot do without him, in the sense that he cheats the simple peasants out of their money by fictionalizing himself but is at the center of the sheepshearing in Bohemia because his fictional ballads are a prime source of the festive energy of the country ritual.

Autolycus sells a specific form of printed broadside that was new to the sixteenth century, a type of ballad that appropriated traditional oral ballads for commercial printers. For a penny, consumers could purchase these broadsides depicting religious primers, verse libels, political “flytings,” epitaphs, and bawdy songs. Autolycus sells ballads like the one about a “fish that appeared upon the coast on Wednesday the fourscore of April forty thousand fathom above water, and sung … against the hard hearts of maids” (4.4.273-76), and another, “how a usurer's wife was brought to bed of twenty money-bags at a burden” (4.4.260-62). The latter ballad refers to an actual genre of broadsides that first achieved popularity in the 1560s and feature an explicit conjunction of print and paternity in early modern culture. An examination of this genre of monstrous-birth ballads reveals how it provided a format within a nascent print marketplace for producers of print to navigate the murky waters of their own cultural authority. …

It is no coincidence that Anthony Now Now invokes the ballad specifically as a problem of the authority of print. The mobility and cheapness of the ballad as a printed sheet, part of its function as one of the earliest mass-produced commodities, was also a mark of potential degradation. Henry Fitzgeffrey, for instance, seems to have the monstrous-birth broadsides specifically in mind when he fulminates in 1617, “Let Natures causes (which are too profound / For every blockish sottish Pate to sound.) / Produce some monster: some rare spectacle … / Bee it a worke of nere so sleight a waight, / It is recorded up in Metre straight, / And counted purchase of no renowne, / To heare the Praise sung in a Market-towne” (sig. A7v). Fitzgeffrey scoffs at the lowly reduction of profound matter and denounces the association of “Nature's causes” with the marketplace, where a matter of “so sleight a waight” achieves “purchase.”

The monstrous-birth ballads can be read in the context of the nascent print industry of England that fostered their formal and generic possibility. Their obsession with aberrations of natural form represented by the figure of the monstrous child—the potentially endless deviations from the norm that the human body can take—occurs at a time when the broadside format itself became a target of reform within the Stationers' Company as a bastardized type of print commodity. A majority of the ballads were produced during an important period of increasing regulation in the printing trade, including the 1551 proclamation of Edward VI requiring all printed matter to secure approval in advance, the formal charter of the Stationers' Company in 1557, Queen Elizabeth's injunctions of 1559, and the 1566 Star Chamber decree expanding the powers of search and seizure of printers in their policing of illegally printed materials. The commercial trade in ballads was especially hard to regulate due to its small size and quick printing time; printers of ballads were repeatedly fined in the book of records kept by the wardens of the company for “disorderly printing,” meaning either piracy or failure to register a group of ballads that they had sold. The single-sheet broadside was
relatively cheap and easy to produce. It was also sold primarily in wholesale until well into the seventeenth century, mostly to itinerant chapmen. Where the English and Latin stock institutionalized entire classes of books as valuable commodities that secured financial reward for many printers, no ballad stock was ever established.26

To compensate for anxiety about its form of production, the monstrous-birth ballad associates its own form with the amendment of the illegitimate birth it depicts as a way of displacing its own anxieties of inauthenticity, using the trope of uncontrolled and illegitimate sexual production. It assimilates the event of the deformed birth into a providential framework by which it is understood to be one of many wondrous natural portents that signify God's omnipotence and warnings of his forthcoming judgment against sinners. Such a gesture places the genre within the tradition of Protestant “providence” tales that documented God's presence on earth through unnatural events unexplained by natural laws and in such a way that would prove the superiority of reformed religion to Catholicism.27 The genre can also be understood as a problem of knowledge in the early modern period, denoting for scholars like Jean Céard, Lorraine Daston, and Katherine Park a shift in thinking about preternatural phenomenon as religious signification (“portents”) to scientific fact (“evidence”).28 Prodigies like monstrous births provide ways to transcend established systems of thought, whether classical accounts by Aristotle, Cicero, and Pliny, or Christian interpretations by Augustine and Aquinas, in favor of new disciplines of fact-based inquiry into the natural world.

The English monstrous-birth ballad was overtly concerned with theological meaning and thus justified its own representation of highly sensational and potentially transgressive content, including explicit pictures, by reinscribing this disorder within the Christian salvation myth. What seems like a breach in nature thus becomes part of God's will; the pain and suffering of the innocent child forms a necessary prelude to the reader's deliverance from the evil it represents. As one writer suggests, “Wherein the goodnesse great of God / we way and set so light: / by such examples callying us, / from sin both day and night.”29 As miraculous and unnatural signs, the ballads fulfill Christian providence, as described by an author calling himself John D.: “The heathen could forese and saye / That when suche wonders were, / It did foreshew to them alwaye / That some yll hap drew nere. / The scripture sayth, before the ende / Of all things shall appeare, / God will wounders straunge thinges sende, / as some is sene this yeare.” The specific act of printing broadsides, which could be construed as commercial exploitation of suffering on the part of printers and balladeers, becomes an act justified and even demanded by God. Indeed, printing can uniquely perform God's work, as John D. argues:

No carver can, nor paynter maye,
    The same so ougly make,
As doeth itself shewe at this day,
    A sight to make the[e] quake!

But here thou haste, by printing arte,
    a signe thereof to se;
Let eche man saye within his harte,—
    It preacheth now to me.”

The printing press performs what painting and sculpture cannot. Representing the printed ballad as a minister that “preacheth” to each reader individually, according to his or her conscience, the press invokes the authority of the church to buttress its own insecure claims to legitimacy. This appropriation of the institutional authority of the pulpit for the fledgling institution of print is one method by which to reauthorize the institution of print, one that not incidentally draws on a model of divine authority overtly invested in the metaphors of the Father, and shows how it mediates its own uncertain cultural status by displacing its anxieties of illegitimate print production onto the topos of the monstrously deformed birth.
Shakespeare incorporates the monstrous-birth broadside in part to parody the naive association of print with truth by the peasant class, but also, echoing the sentiments voiced by Anthony Now Now in Chettle's *Kind-Harte's Dreame*, to stage exactly the kind of threat to established structures of authority that print undermines through its processes of reproduction and distribution:

**MOPSA:**

Pray now, buy some. I love a ballad in print, a-life, for then we are sure they are true.

**AUTOLYCUS:**

Here's one to a very doleful tune, how a usurer's wife was brought to bed of twenty money-bags at a burden, and how she longed to eat adders' heads and toads carbonadoed.

**MOPSA:**

Is it true, think you?

**AUTOLYCUS:**

Very true, and but a month old.

**DORCAS:**

Bless me from marrying a usurer!

**AUTOLYCUS:**

Here's the midwife's name to't, one Mistress Taleporter, and five or six honest wives that were present. Why should I carry lies abroad?

(4.4.258-69)

The monstrous-birth ballad here conflates unnatural birth with the unnatural breeding of money in usury, both instances of reproduction out of control. Typical of many “wondrous” accounts found in broadsides that Shakespeare himself might have seen, this one has eyewitnesses who vouch for its truth value. Moreover, as Maurice Hunt notes with relation to the concept of labor in the play, the midwife's name puns on the process of birthing and publishing (“Taleporter/Tailporter,” 355). The midwife is a “tale” porter in the sense of one who spreads gossip orally, with associations again of an untrustworthy feminine oral network. Autolycus appeals to this Mistress Taleporter as an oral authorization of the truth of his printed ballad, suggesting within the logic of the play (and of course through the satire of the scene) that the printed broadside, like the child as “copy,” needs an authorizing structure but that this structure itself—the word of woman—is woefully inadequate to guarantee the truth of its printed content, figured here explicitly as the offspring brought to the print marketplace by a midwife.

The introduction of a different commercial genre like the monstrous-birth broadside into Shakespeare's play implicitly raises questions about the play's own generic status. When these broadsides depict monstrous births and midwives in the process of making “tales,” they draw specifically on a connection between biological and mechanical modes of production, between the worlds of nature and of art. It is indeed not surprising that *The Winter's Tale* filters the question of its own generic status through the concepts of bastardy and hybridity during the debate between Perdita and Polixenes in act 4 about the “gillyvor” flower, or “nature's bastard.” Perdita doesn't allow the gillyvor in her rustic garden because of its dangerous hybridity, vowing that she will “not put / The dibble [spade] in the earth to set one slip of them; / No more than, were I painted, I would wish / This youth [Florizel] should say 'twere well, and only therefore / Desire to breed by me” (4.4.99-103). She equates hybridity with deceptive artifice of a sort that is inappropriate for a pure pastoral heroine like herself,
though this disdain entails a certain amount of irony in the context of Perdita's and Florizel's double disguises—Perdita's ignorance of her own parentage and Florizel's disguise of his, plus their costumed impersonations of Flora and Doricles, respectively. Polixenes, however, defends the “pied” gillyvor flower, arguing that:

```
    nature is made better by no mean
    But nature makes that mean; so over that art
    Which you say adds to nature, is an art
    That nature makes. You see, sweet maid, we marry
    A gentler scion to the wildest stock,
    And make conceive a bark of baser kind
    By bud of nobler race.
    .....Then make your garden rich in gillyvors,
    And do not call them bastards.
```

(4.4.89-95, 98-99)

Polixenes’s language of genetic engineering celebrates what he himself will soon reject—the discovery of his own noble son’s wish to “marry” Perdita, a member of that “wildest stock.” According to Polixenes, the gillyvor provides a positive model of hybridity, not one that deserves denigration as a bastard. But the language of bastardy in this exchange clearly echoes the high tragic consequences of bastardy in the first three acts, filtered here through the lens of the humanist débat tradition. The exchange between Perdita and Polixenes uses bastardy to evaluate artistic form, echoing (as Harold Wilson and others have noted) a passage from George Puttenham’s Arte of English Poesie (1589) that uses the gillyvor flower as a way of illustrating his version of the art/nature interaction where the artist is like a gardener. Polixenes becomes an apologist for the mixing of categories by deconstructing the art/nature binary.

The “gillyvor” speech is a self-conscious attempt in the play to question the purity or impurity of art. The “pied” mixing of categories here reverses the paradigm in Hamlet where art holds up a mirror to nature, suggesting that Shakespeare is conscious of occupying a different aesthetic register in this later play. Within contemporary debates on the subject, Philip Sidney provides the most useful terms for understanding the relation of mixed categories to generic form in his Apology, where he downgrades drama that takes abundant liberties with conventions of representational reality. Sidney scorns a play that can stage “three ladies walk[ing] to gather flowers and then [asks us to] believe the stage to be a garden” before abruptly representing a “shipwreck in the same place.” His criticism of drama engaged in the “mingling of clowns and kings” would perhaps extend to most of Shakespeare’s plays, but he singles out for criticism the genre of “mongrel tragicomedies” that “match hornpipes and funerals,” interestingly using the same language of crossbreeding that Shakespeare uses in act 4 to discuss the hybridity or bastardy of artistic form. The logic of the “gillyvor” analogy in Shakespeare, then, equates tragedy with the “bud of nobler race” and more mixed comedy with the “wildest stock.” The pastoral mode of the sheepshearing festival, highlighted by the presence of the shepherd and the costumed youths Flora and Doricles, is the genre of mediation between the two, an appropriate role for a genre regarded by Renaissance theorists as the earliest literary type from which its “offspring” tragedy and comedy emerged.

But if the pastoral mode at the heart of The Winter’s Tale cites the Edenic origins of drama itself, this space is haunted by the figure of Autolycus as a figure of contamination of the pastoral, not least through his printed broadsides. He is aligned with the new potential of print to undermine existing authoritative structures, and the printed broadside he introduces troubles the authenticity of pastoral as the original father of the genre and challenges the ideology of closure offered by Leontes and Paulina in proposing the press as an instrument of regulation of sexual reproduction. This highlights the importance of print and the question of its status as labor—whether it can be considered as an artistic technique or merely a machine. The presence of the dialectical model of print and paternity in the play depends, that is, on historically determined conditions of
seventeenth-century England, including the increased circulation of printed matter in everyday life, technological innovation that makes possible new kinds of knowledge, and the role of mechanized labor as a mode of production associated by Marx with the increasing reification and rationalization of the external world.

The play's generic status as a tragicomedy, perhaps the only true tragicomedy in Shakespeare's plays, can be seen in part as a function of the intersection of print and paternity we have been tracing. This relation might be understood as a change in modes of production (the printing press) that reifies natural relations (sexual procreation) in a process that Fredric Jameson describes as the "analytical dismantling of the various traditional" unities into their constituent parts in order to reorganize them "into more efficient systems which function according to an instrumental" logic (227). The press itself, considered as a social force of reification, not only opens up the possibility for imagining biological reproduction through the lens of the mechanical labor of print, but also anticipates the divisions and structural fragmentation of the play. The structure of mutual anxiety in the relationship between print and paternity, in this sense, exposes the ideal of technological rationalization of natural reproductive relations as a newly available cultural fantasy of Jacobean society that demands new forms of cultural expression.

At the time when Shakespeare composed *The Winter's Tale*, tragicomedy was the dominant genre on the London stage, spurred by John Fletcher's rewriting of Guarini's *Il Pastor Fido* in *The Faithful Shepherdess*. Fletcher's English defense of the genre picks up the classical definition of depicting both "familiar people" and the gods, adding that "tragical comedy is not so called in respect of mirth and killing, but in respect it wants deaths, which is enough to make it no tragedy, yet brings some near it, which is enough to make it no comedy." In staging two real deaths, *The Winter's Tale* perhaps favors Sidney's definition over Fletcher's, by emphasizing a "mongrel" form of construction as a tragicomedy through the appearance of figures like Time and the bear that eats Antigonus, as well as in the relative autonomy of its constituent parts. The multiple genres of the play appear as a series of separate and relatively distinct modes, so that the tragic ethos of Sicilia, for instance, contains only one brief exchange that could be considered tangential comic relief (2.1.1-32), and the spectacle of Hermione's reanimation achieves the status of an autonomous theatrical set piece, a status emphasized by nineteenth-century directors who staged it separately as an interlude.

The final two scenes exemplify this fragmentation in modes of representation, contrasting the highly mediated narrative mode of 5.2 with the direct revelation of the play's final, visual-oriented interlude. Shakespeare in 5.2 stages the recognition scene between Leontes and Perdita indirectly as a mediated narration by Autolycus and a series of courtiers who rush in and out with breathless excitement about the scene they have been privileged enough to witness. Their language is peppered with words like "amazedness" and "wonder," and they deliberately construct their "news" of the paternal reunion between Perdita and Leontes in relation to the generic mode of the broadside ballad, explaining the otherwise inexplicable presence of Autolycus in the scene: "such a deal of wonder is broken out within this hour that ballad-makers cannot be able to express it" (5.2.23-25). "This news, which is called true, is so like an old tale that the verity of it is in strong suspicion," another courtier adds (5.2.27-29). Shakespeare acknowledges the affinities of his own "tale" in *The Winter's Tale* with the "old tales" of yore and as more "wondrous" than the very ballads that Autolycus has just offered for sale several scenes earlier. But the mode of narration depicts, as the Third Gentleman says, something that "cannot be spoken of" (5.2.43)—that is, a scene beyond the powers of language to describe even though description remains the only means of expression available. With the introduction of the commercialized and exaggerated pathos of the printed ballads, which Shakespeare simultaneously acknowledges and distances himself from in the play, the most emotionally charged scene of human interaction must be staged as inaccessible. The numerous references by the narrators in the scene to the world of "wonder" and the ballad also remind the audience that what they are witnessing is a highly mediated form of representation.

Scene 5.2 achieves the most important reunions of the play: Leontes discovers that the strange but beautiful girl who has arrived in Sicilia is actually his daughter; Polixenes and Leontes heal their sixteen-year rift;
Florizel is reconciled to his father as well as to Leontes; Camillo is welcomed back to Sicilia; and missing details of events, such as the story of Antigonus and the storm, are discovered. Even more than the final scene of the play, which actually leaves certain threads unraveled (Leontes and Hermione, for instance, never actually speak to each other), 5.2 provides the comic reunion and recuperation from the potential tragic loss introduced in the first three acts. Most importantly for our purposes, it is the moment of the recuperation and reunion of father with child. Because Shakespeare stages the scene in such a highly mediated fashion, however, he ironizes the paternal fantasy of authenticity based on print by using a print-related frame to represent the return to paternal fullness. Where Mamillius in act 2 provides a means of direct examination of the “copy” under the lens of paternal authentication and legitimization, here the father-and-child relation can be realized only through mediated stage narration by hitherto unknown characters and one (Autolycus) whose authority and legitimacy are tainted by print. The genre of the broadside challenges the dramatic representative mode at the moment that the play successfully reunites father and daughter and brings unity to its central plotline.

The final scene, in which the statue of Hermione is awakened through the reanimation of Leontes's faith (and a touch of music), moves in exactly the opposite direction of 5.2, as if to reexamine the potential of unmediated dramatic representation in the wake of the disturbance to the play by the printed broadside at the level of genre. Shakespeare returns to a directly visual theater, though the scene also announces itself as a source of “marvel” and “wonder” (5.3.68). Here, however, it is “silence” as opposed to forms of print that expresses such wonder (5.3.21). Paulina, as if in direct response to the previous scene, explains why she chooses to stage the statue scene in the way she does: “That she is living, / Were it but told you, should be hooted at / Like an old tale” (5.3.115-17). The fictional spectacle of the statue coming to life again, staged through the visual mode of sculpture, allows for apprehension as truth in a way that narratives—specifically those of Autolycus—cannot. But, of course, the play is an old tale, and Paulina's comments draw attention to the need for a specific mode of visual dramatic representation in order to ring true and to achieve authority.

The statue scene defines this authority against the inauthentic wonder of the broadside ballad by retelling the Pygmalion myth, as Leonard Barkan has masterfully explained. But where Ovid depicts a masterful sculptor who can tap into the potential life of stone and thus animate his creation, here the sculpture of Hermione is nonidealized and “wrinkled” (5.3.28). Paulina justifies the wrinkles as products of the “carver’s excellence” (5.3.30), redefining artistic value in terms of mimetic authenticity rather than, as in Ovid, as an idealized form that is so unspoiled in its purity that Pygmalion fears that “sum blacke or broosed print / Should come by touching over hard.”39 Such a gesture says something about the fantasy of print-based paternity that Paulina herself introduces into the play, since Hermione's statue is a fixed form that can accommodate change over time and that “rebuke[s]” Leontes as “more stone than it” (5.3.37-38). The scene's focus on the feminine aspects of reanimation that resemble a new birth, overseen by the midwife figure of Paulina and allowing the reunion of mother and daughter, emphasizes what Janet Adelman and others have noted as the maternal force of recuperation in the play.40

But the feminine forces of recuperation still depend on Leontes as the representative of law to legitimize the “spell” of Paulina, whose defense of her magic raises the specter of its illegitimacy (5.3.104-106). By proclaiming, “If this be magic, let it be an art / Lawful as eating,” Leontes legitimizes the spectacle of the statue's awakening (5.3.110-11). This “lawful magic” is also the space of generic negotiation between the illegitimate and the formal which pushes the play finally beyond the fantasy of printing as a legitimating device for paternal production. Its feminine strength reappropriates the positive valences of motherhood from the inhuman printing press itself, but the model of the wrinkled statue also accommodates the fixed form of representation (whose highest art is sculpture) with the synchronic change that can register the deformative hand of time. Hermione's rebirth is not monstrous, but it is a birth in which youthful features have been stretched and marked up. As sculpted by the Italian sculptor Giulio Romano (one of the few contemporary persons named in Shakespeare), she is also an imported artifact from that most cutting-edge nation of formal literary innovation, Italy. Her youthful/aged hybridity and defiance of theatrical conventions (where characters
who die stay dead) justify the hybridity of tragicomedy as a mode of theater, gesturing beyond the anxiety-producing dialectic of print and paternity associated with Leontes and the court's attempt to regulate both sexual and textual reproduction. Hermione represents the triumph of live theater, present and in the flesh on stage, over the cheap miracles of the popular broadsides. In this triumph, the court's misplaced desire to use the printing press as a guarantee of paternal legitimacy is safely returned to the institution of the theater itself.

Notes

2. The “mould” was an iron device into which molten lead was poured to make letters. The “frame” was a wooden storage unit for sets of matrices (pieces of type) and punches (steel dies) which the compositor used in setting pages of typeface. Both terms are explained in Moxon 134-42 and 30-33, 401, respectively. Moxon cites “matter” as a technical printing term (347), and the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) gives examples of “copy” (s.v. 9a) as related to print practices in the sixteenth century.
3. See, for example, Saunders 139-64. For an account of how authors “reproduced this stigma in published works as a way of safeguarding class distinctions and at the same time displaced it onto sexual ideologies that reinforced the writers' masculine authority,” see Wall 17.
4. Jeffrey Masten provides an influential account of this dialectic in tracing the emergence of authorship as inextricably bound with discourses of paternity and political authority in early modern England; see Masten.
5. The printing industry exemplifies for Marx the problem of the division of labor, since in gradually dissolving the guild trade in which apprentices advanced through the ranks to higher positions, the printing machine creates positions for young boys who are largely illiterate to spread sheets of paper under the machine, never progressing to a better-paying job. See Marx 615.
7. For James I's statements about paternity as a principle of government, see James I 65. The domestication of absolutist claims through the family in Stuart England is discussed in Goldberg. On Filmer and patriarchalism within the context of seventeenth-century English political theory, see Schochet.
8. See, for example, Kahn.
9. According to Cyprian Blagden, the first female wasn't apprenticed to the printers' guild until 1666, though it was a common practice for women to inherit print shops from their husbands. See Blagden 162. On the gendered division of labor in the printing shop, see de Grazia 87-90. For accounts of women's participation in the print trade before the Restoration, see Orgel 72-73 and Bell.
10. B. J. Sokol has found, for instance, that the word “father” appears 57 times and is the most common substantive in the play, excluding pronouns and proper names, followed in rank by “time” (49), “son” (40), “daughter” (32), “brother” (20), and “mother” (13) (Sokol 42). Peter Erickson devotes an essay to “patriarchal structures” in The Winter's Tale, arguing that the play refashions a “brutal, crude, tyrannical” concept of patriarchy into a more “benign” one modeled on feminine nurture and natural bounty (819). His reading is accurate, up to a point, but it depends on a model of paternity as a cohesive force that is disrupted and then revived by an essentializing feminine nature (based on ideas of nature, harmony, and nurturing motherhood), rather than one that employs specific strategies in order to define paternal relations from the start. See Erickson.
11. Interestingly, both James's England and Sicilia experience the death of the first-born male. Shakespeare wrote his play before Prince Henry died of typhoid fever in 1612, but it was performed as part of the celebration of Princess Elizabeth's betrothal to Frederick in late 1612 or 1613.
12. See Shakespeare, Winter's Tale, ed. Orgel, 95; Shakespeare, Winter's Tale, ed. Greenblatt, 2884; and Shakespeare, Winter's Tale, ed. Schanazer, 162. For more on the relationship between the history of
arabic numerals, accounting practices, printing, and bookmaking in early modern Europe, see Jaffe.
13. For other accounts of the copy metaphor in the play, see Barkan's analysis of the play's investment in the rivalry between the arts and Hunt's allusion to “copy” as a means of aligning the labor of childbirth with that of writing.
14. See, for instance, Findlay.
15. Huloet [unpaginated], “bastarde hande” entry.
16. The batārde typeface elicited criticism even in the twentieth century for its “extremely untidy” appearance (Isaac 29). See also Isaac xii-xiii, 10, 29, and 31, and plates 13, 22, 24, 29, 30, and 58.
17. Elizabeth was technically considered a bastard, according to Henry VIII's 1536 Succession Act, and James I was subject to the rumors that he was son to his mother's secretary, David Riccio, rather than Mary's husband.
19. One account of these changes in the material conditions of authorship (including print) with relation to the legitimacy of the theater itself as an institution is Murray, esp. 16, 35-37, 57-63, and 147-53.
20. For a discussion of the gender connotations of the naming of the parts of the press by Moxon, see de Grazia 82-86. An example of representing printed texts as abandoned children is given by the printer Walter Burre, who describes the text of Beaumont and Fletcher's The Knight of the Burning Pestle as an “unfortunate child … begot and born, soon after was by his parents … exposed to the wide world, who … utterly rejected it” (Beaumont and Fletcher 3). For a discussion of this passage in the context of collaborative authorship, see Masten 21-26.
21. The evolution of authority as a function of representation itself, rather than of classical tradition, is traced in Weimann; Müller argues that numerous institutions were required with the advent of print for the selection and maintenance of texts to ensure their endurance and cultural effectiveness (32-44).
22. Subsequent collections of ballads, such as Rollins, associate the name Autolycus with the printed ballad and with the specific kind of topic with which he is associated.
24. See Livingston for a catalog of extant sixteenth-century printed ballads.
25. Reprints of the 1557, 1559, and 1566 documents can be found in Arber 1:xxvii-xxxii, 1:xxxviii-xxxix, and 1:322, respectively. For the 1551 document and an account of the development of the Stationers' Company in the sixteenth century, see Clegg 14-65. See also Blagden 38-46.
26. For a discussion of the ballad partners and the failure of the regulation of trade in ballads, see Jackson xii-xiv.
27. Popular examples of these providence tales include Anthony Munday's A View of Sundry Examples (1580) and Phillip Stubbes's Anatomie of Abuses (1583), as well as parts of John Foxe's Acts and Monuments (1563). For a historical account of the providence tale genre, see Hartman 1-3, 18-25, 39-63.
28. Céard; Daston and Park; and Daston. See also D. Wilson. For a discussion of the monstrous-birth genre as a problem of truth, see Cressy.
29. Mellys. The same sentiment can be found in other examples, including Fulwood; Elderton; and three anonymous accounts: “True Description,” “True Discription,” and “Forme and Shape.”
30. Achinstein discusses the exclusion of the ballads in the Elizabethan and Jacobean process of defining literature and discusses the scene of Autolycus and the peasants as a “dramatization of fears about authors of unacceptable literature” (314).
31. For more on the association between breeding and usury, see Fisher.
32. H. Wilson. Frank Kermode discusses the horticultural analogy of gardens and nature, with reference to The Winter's Tale, in his introduction to the Arden Tempest (xxxv-xxxvi).
33. Sidney 174-75. For an analysis of the play as a response to Sidney, see Frye 56-57.
34. J. C. Scaliger in his Poetices libri septem (1581) describes pastoral as the “most ancient” form of dramatic art, compared with the most recent forms “comedy and its offspring, tragedy” (emphasis added). Quoted in Herrick 125.

758
35. For consideration of The Winter's Tale as the only authentic tragicomedy of Shakespeare, see Herrick 258-60.
37. For accounts of the association of the bear with generic classification, see Clubb; Bristol.
38. For examinations of Robert Greene's Pandosto as a popular printed wonder book of the day, of mass production of print as a form of abstraction of human labor to make the printed commodity a “social thing,” and of The Winter's Tale as a rejection of its own origins in popular fiction “but with an insistence that tends to emphasize its own fictiveness,” see Newcomb 753-81, quotation at 772.
39. Ovid 256 [10.278-79]. Leonard Barkan reads the statue scene as a triumph of Renaissance artistry and the fulfillment of Pygmalion's art of releasing the potential life from stone, though he acknowledges in the final paragraph of his essay that the wrinkled statue suggests the victory of Nature over Art in its power of verisimilitude. Nevertheless, he concludes by observing how the scene represents the “ability to crystallize a true essence.” See Barkan 664.
40. The feminine source of positive transformation and recuperation in the play is noted in Barber and Erickson. Carol Thomas Neely argues that the play concludes with “an extended acknowledgement of [women's] power and centrality” (182). Janet Adelman suggests that the play dramatizes the “return of a masculine authority grounded in a benignly generative maternal presence” (194).

For their helpful criticism on earlier versions of this essay, I would like to thank David Bevington, Douglas Brooks, Zachary Cannon, Janel Mueller, Michael Murrin, Sarah Rivett, Josh Scodel, Richard Strier, and the members of the 1999 Renaissance Workshop at the University of Chicago. The two anonymous readers at Renaissance Drama also offered valuable observations and suggestions.

Works Cited


759


In the following essay, Estok petitions for the academic recognition of a new critical theory called ecocriticism, or the study of how the environment has been perceived and represented in literary texts. The critic then presents a brief ecocritical assessment of The Winter's Tale, noting how the play reveals Shakespeare's “ecophobia” through his representation of nature as hostile and his depiction of crossbreeding as genetic pollution.

Recent accounts of Shakespeare have done a lot of useful work in exploring discursive intersections between gender and categories such as class, race, and sexual orientation, but there has been almost no work done that looks seriously at how representations of the early modern natural environment fit into such equations. While it is true enough that until recently fairly “little attention has been paid, in cultural analysis, to material means employed in cultural production,” it is perhaps less obvious to question how material resources (outside of the processes of the physical production of texts and their distribution) are figured in, called up, called into being, recalled, produced, and so on in processes of cultural work (such as plays by Shakespeare, for instance). Can we make “a case for an environmental basis of history?” How can a materialist criticism investigate the ways that the environment is worked in discourse? What are the ideological purposes and conditions for which the natural environment is produced in literature?

Critical tradition has read The Winter's Tale as political, religious, and autobiographical allegory; as fantasy; as geographically improbable; as the work of someone other than Shakespeare; as realism par excellence; as a sophisticated vegetation myth; as boring; as a falling off; as a structural, thematic, or philosophical experiment; as a general failure; as a perfect example of symbolic technique; and so on. There have been reams written on that nasty bear who runs off with Antigonus; discussions about the tension between art and nature in the play are everywhere; and there have certainly been enough analyses of the role and function of natural imagery in the play. Sustained ecocritical readings of The Winter's Tale, however, are not part of the play's critical history. Part of the reason is simply that the necessary critical and pedagogical terms for meaningful discussion are only now becoming available.

It is possible for at least two reasons to debate such well-established issues as misogyny, racism, homophobia, and anti-Semitism in Shakespeare: first, in each case the estranged and disaffected subjects are material things that walk among (often as a threat to) fully enfranchised subjects; and second, it is possible to debate the issues because there is a whole litany of terms with which to describe and then examine the concepts. If, for
example, “misogyny” is a hatred of women; “racism,” of racial difference; “homophobia,” of same-sex issues; and “anti-Semitism,” of Jewishness and Jews—then what should we call a fear and contempt for the environment? Perhaps we might use a term such as “ecophobia,” but whatever the terminology, the ways in which the environment is perceived and represented—for better and for worse—are concerns of ecocriticism.

There are, of course, several important questions here: what on earth is ecocriticism, how does one do it, what does it do, and, most important, why bother? Are there revealing links between environmentally and socially oppressive systems, overlapping and interlocking structures that need to be examined? Keith Thomas maintains that “it is impossible to disentangle what the people of the past thought about plants and animals from what they thought about themselves”; but is it possible to proceed on (or avoid) such an assumption without reproducing the anthropocentrism that undergirds our current environmental crises?

For a play that foregrounds the pastoral tradition so heavily, that stresses so insistently a relationship between nature and art, that is so deeply rooted at many levels in conceptual dividedness, an ecritical approach can help to give the student an understanding of the literary traditions at work in the text. It can also give insights about “interconnectedness” (a keyword of ecocriticism); of ways in which nonliterary texts and assumptions about nature come to bear on the play; of ways that the division between men and women in the play might be viewed as part of a larger dynamic (larger than simple anthropocentric models) through which difference is designated; and of ways that the play might be seen to participate in our own relationship with the natural world. If our critical work is really directed toward helping people change the way they think and behave, then there has certainly never been a better time to look at these kinds of issues.

Yet as Jean E. Howard and Marion F. O'Connor point out, “it is only too easy to read and/or write as a born-again postructuralist/Marxist and still teach like an unregenerate New Critic.” It is a position that Richard Paul Knowles develops in his brief but evocative article, which seeks, as its subtitle suggests, a way “Towards a Materialist Pedagogy.” The problem, Knowles understands, is that the shift in theoretical analysis “has not yet made much impact on classrooms and curricula.” Consequently, when we start talking about the environment in The Winter's Tale in ways that are clearly not directed toward thematic or imagistic readings, it is not only strong curiosity but often a sense of bewilderment that students express in response. Students want to know what ecocriticism is and how it can be applied to a text such as The Winter's Tale.

ECOCRITICAL THEORY

The Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment (ASLE) recently posted a number of position papers on the Internet that attempt to define ecocriticism. Some are proudly antitheoretical. Some are dogmatic and prescriptive in their listing of ecocritical principles. Some claim that no such lists have yet been given and hunger for ecocritical theory. Some think they offer answers. Some only raise questions. All of them struggle with the hard reality that ecocriticism is a thing that was named before it was properly born.

The 1999 PMLA Forum on Literatures of the Environment, also posted on the ASLE Website, registers a continuing dissatisfaction with the status of ecocriticism, with many of the contributions (my own included) griping about ecocriticism's shortcomings. One of the recurring complaints (one that this current essay addresses) is that the boundaries of ecocriticism have been far too constricted. A primary question, inextricably linked to these discussions must be, what is ecocriticism, if it is anything at all? What counts as ecocriticism, and what doesn't?

Cheryll Glotfelty's 1996 Ecocriticism Reader did a tremendous amount in helping to formalize the critical status of ecocriticism. It was the first of its kind—an anthology of essays devoted to organizing an area of study whose efforts had, until then, not been “recognized as belonging to a distinct critical school or movement.” In it, Glotfelty defines ecocriticism as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment.” She argues that it is difficult to defend the traditional failure of the literary
profession to address “green” issues. Glen Love, paraphrasing Glotfelty's point, puts it best: “race, class, and
gender are words which we see and hear everywhere at our professional meetings and in our current
publications … [but] the English profession has failed to respond in any significant way to the issue of the
environment.”

That was then, and, as Love knows, things are changing: the English profession is
responding, but the direction of the response may not be very revolutionary. Love has recently noted that “the
study of literature and the environment and the practice of ecocriticism has begun to assume an active place in
the profession”; however, he also seems to feel some unease about “what that place is to be, particularly in its
theoretical and methodological base.”

In the same year that Glotfelty's collection came out, Lawrence Buell published *The Environmental
Imagination*, where he defines “ecocriticism … as [a] study of the relationship between literature and the
environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmentalist praxis.” Buell acknowledges that
there is some uncertainty about what the term exactly covers but argues, “if one thinks of it … as a multiform
inquiry extending to a variety of environmentally focused perspectives more expressive of concern to explore
environmental issues searchingly than of fixed dogmas about political solutions, then the neologism becomes
a useful omnibus term for subsuming a large and growing scholarly field.”

Buell's definition is valid, as far as it goes. Like Glotfelty—indeed, like many people who are calling
themselves ecocritics these days—Buell uses ecocriticism as if it were designed only for nature writing.

Examining nature writing is, of course, one of the things ecocriticism does, and does well; but when nature
writing constitutes the sole purview of ecocriticism, the lack of theoretical diversity, conceptual in-breeding,
and a weakening of contacts with the wider literary world will spell disaster for the approach. Focusing
exclusively on nature writing wrongly suggests an essential link between ecocriticism as a methodology and
nature writing as the natural object of its inquiry. As Ursula K. Heise poignantly asserts, “ecocriticism has
nothing specifically to do with nature writing.” Environmental issues are written into many nooks and
crannies of canonical literature, in much the same way that issues of concern to other kinds of theorists are
embedded in “the canon.” As Glotfelty herself acknowledges, feminist theorists do not confine themselves to
works about feminism any more than Marxist theorists confine themselves to works about Marxism or
commodity fetishism. The next logical question, then, is simple: why should ecocriticism restrict itself to
the genre of nature writing?

Assuming that ecocriticism need not (and, in fact, should not) restrict itself to texts about nature, the ecocritic
is immediately faced with another obstacle: namely, that the polyphony of critical voices articulate at times
seemingly opposed purposes—and, indeed, definitions—resulting in a hydra-headed monster that often seems
to be speaking in tongues or at cross-purposes.

Stephanie Sarver goes as far as to say that ecocriticism has remained less a theory than a focus:
“Ecocriticism is … an unfortunate term because it suggests a new kind of critical theory. The emerging body
of work that might be labeled ecocritical is united not by a theory, but by a focus: the environment. This
ecocritical work draws on a variety of theories, such as feminist, Marxist, post-structuralist, psychoanalytic
and historicist.” In a sense, Sarver has a point, but it is a point that may be applied to any kind of theory,
indeed the very theories she mentions as being theories in themselves: feminist, Marxist, poststructuralist,
psychoanalytic, and historicist theories. All of these draw heavily on other theories that preceded them. Such
borrowing, however, is exactly what goes on in the articulation of a new critical practice. All theories are a
synthesis, and Sarver's apparent failure is in not recognizing this fact. Nevertheless, the argument Sarver is
making is valid insofar as it calls ecocriticism to task for not being theorized enough.

Patrick D. Murphy offers the most promising synthesis of material that works toward articulating a
methodology for ecocriticism. For him, the problem with ecocriticism is that too much of it “remains
theoretically unsophisticated. Too often, there remains an anti-theoretical, naive, realist attitude expressed in”
the work of ecocritics. In place of these theoretically unsophisticated stances, Murphy offers a Bakhtinian “dialogical orientation,” which, he maintains, “reinforces the ecofeminist recognition of interdependence and the natural need for diversity.” Sarver would argue that this is simply not good enough. In her own words, “Literary scholars who are environmentalists seem not to be creating a new critical theory; rather, they are drawing on existing theories to illuminate our understanding of how human interactions with nature are reflected in literature.” The dialogic answer would be that such borrowing is exactly what goes on in the articulation of a new critical practice. If nothing else, Murphy succeeds in taking ecocriticism out of the hands of the theoretically unsophisticated. If Murphy is to be critiqued, it is for the theory that he chooses rather than for the choosing of theory. We might debate the usefulness of Bakhtinian dialogics, for instance, but that is not part of my project here.

While ecocritical debates are developing, one thing is agreed on: ecocriticism must create change. In a sense, though perhaps few practitioners would agree, ecocriticism is an approach with heavy leanings toward various materialist critiques. We can answer the question about why bother with ecocriticism in the same way that we answer detractors who ask why, for example, bother with materialist-feminist approaches. We bother with ecocriticism because there are problems in these times; because understanding the relationship of humanity with the natural environment, both in contemporary times and in earlier periods, can help us to understand how we got to where we are; because it is time to start looking at the ways that we conceptualize the natural world, and how these conceptualizations affect our behaviors toward the natural environment; in short, because it is important.

**ECOCRITICAL THEORY AND PEDAGOGY FOR SHAKESPEARE: A BRIEF STUDY OF THE WINTER’S TALE**

What does ecocriticism have to do with *The Winter's Tale*, a text written hundreds of years before we noticed the hole in our sky? Students and teachers alike have wildly mixed responses to *The Winter's Tale*, and teaching the play (not to mention environmental issues within it) is no easy task. Part of the difficulty for students is that the play seems disjointed—the pastoral scene of act 4 radically counterposed to the court scenes, in terms both of physical and temporal scene, is one of the most immediate problems. Acknowledging the perceived disjunctions and continuities of the play is a useful pedagogical maneuver that helps students begin informed discussions.

One of the more fruitful lines of comparison for students looks, for example, at the dynamic similarities between representations of the natural environment and of women in the play. This approach is easily accessible because it resembles (and can too easily swing into) a formalist thematic groove (which students tend to prefer because it is easier to do than materialist criticism). The representations of women and the environment clearly articulate values about patriarchal power that the text carries. Both the environment and women are characterized in ideologically highly charged terms. The environment and women are often either good or bad in Shakespeare: in *The Winter's Tale*, the environment is a vicious space of bears and wolves, or else a beautiful place of fertility and abundance; women are liars, shrews, and lechers all, or else they are chaste, guiltless, or otherwise guileless. There is no ambiguity in this play. Paulina is a good woman, as is Hermione, but the spectator (constructed with all of the insecurities of a man like Leontes) is dragged along and made complicit in the testing of these women. Justifiably or not, the audience may wonder about Hermione and about whether Leontes has just cause in his worries. This possibility raises several questions that are difficult to answer but useful for students to consider. Do men and women in the class have the same thoughts about Hermione? Where do these responses come from? What ideological positions do these responses to Hermione support?

Of course, students soon see that there really are no evil women in the play, that Hermione is evil only in the mind of Leontes, and that Paulina's open revolt against constituted authority is for a higher moral good than that which the Crown pretends to represent. It is then worth pointing out to students that phobic reactions...
toward Hermione cannot be rationalized, and that misogynistic fear is the only foundation for Leontes' rage and jealousy.

We cannot, however, say the same of the fear and loathing that the play generates for the natural environment. If the play challenges gynophobia (no matter how weakly, ineffectively, or inadvertently), it fails to challenge ecophobia. After all, the hapless Antigonus does have an unfortunate and fatal encounter with a bear, which "tore out his shoulder bone" (3.3.89) and ate him. And moments before this, "the sea mock'd" (3.3.92) and "swallowed with yeast and froth" (3.3.87) the equally unfortunate mariners who accompanied Antigonus. The anthropocentric image is of the environment as some kind of disaffected subject (in competition with the men), whose raison d'etre is to cause chaos, pain, suffering, or loss. It is ruthless, both in the anthropocentric language that the characters in the play use to describe it, and in the audience's understanding of it as a hostile threat to order and goodness.

David Laird argues that the main problem for Leontes is in keeping a sense of order and goodness, and that it is a linguistic problem: "To control language, to exercise the power to name, categorize, and classify is an essential weapon in the arsenal" of things Leontes uses to control his world; so, when Leontes thinks that Hermione uses "a discourse where meanings are multiple, ambiguous," we may want to encourage students to talk about the various ways that the play talks about disruptions of order, transgressions, and, in particular, pollution. There may be times when we really do not like the environment that this play describes, and the two-dozen references, oblique and direct, to pollution in The Winter's Tale contribute to this ecophobic reaction.

Often metaphorical, pollution in the play covers a broad field: epistemological pollution (rotten opinions [2.3.90] and infected knowledge [2.1.43-44]), gender pollution (the blurred gender boundaries of the "mankind witch" [2.3.68]), sanguinary pollution (Polixenes' infected blood [2.1.58-59], "an infected jelly" [1.2.417-18]), and air pollution (the infected air of Sicilia [5.1.167-69], an instance of environmental pollution working allegorically as a metaphor for the pollution of the body politic). But by far the most important kind of pollution in The Winter's Tale is perhaps best described as "genetic." It is on this string that most of the plays thematic issues hang, and its acme is reached in the play's pastoral interlude. It is a formal debate between Polixenes and Perdita on the division between art and nature, resting on anxieties first about crossbreeding, and second about definitions, classifications, and naming.

The question of crossbreeding has numerous implications, both in the play and in early modern culture in general. It is an important question in regard to the protagonist couple, Perdita and Florizel, who, to all appearances, are mismatched: Perdita, ostensibly a country lass; Florizel, a prince. The whole section on what Perdita calls "Nature's bastards" (4.4.83) smacks heavily of allegory: if there is any doubt about whom the gentler scion or the wildest stock might refer to, it is dispelled a moment later by Perdita when she talks about Florizel breeding or reproducing by her (4.4.103). In an instant, she has colocated women with breeding animals and fertile flora. Yet this is the same woman who sees crossbreeding as a diluting of nature, a hybridization and infection of natural processes: "I care not to get slips from them [crossbred things]" (4.4.83-84), she insists, because she thinks that selective breeding "shares / With great creating Nature" (4.4.87-8). The argument that Polixenes makes is that Perdita (of ostensibly wild stock) and Florizel (a gentler scion) can crossbreed profitably and without fear of the kind of pollution Perdita seems to imagine. Polixenes has argued that in a material sense crossbreeding, rather than polluting nature is, in fact, natural: it uses natural materials.

Crossbreeding, nevertheless, a form of pollution in the text as in the larger culture of which the text is a part, disrupts classification systems, blurs "natural" with "unnatural," culturally acceptable with unacceptable, fair issues with monstrous ones. While we are, for the most part, spared real disaster in the play (perhaps because the play is generically confused, beginning in high tragic style and switching abruptly to comic mode with the sudden appearance of the bear in act 3, scene 3), what we do get is a jiggling of classificatory
schemata, and people suffer when there is this kind of jiggling. With all the images of monstrosity, disease, infection, and pollution that run through this play, and with all of the implied and explicit questions about what is what, people (children and women in particular) suffer. Mamillius dies; Hermione has half her life taken away and for sixteen years has no daughter. And why? We might ask our students if they think that Leontes is terribly strange in his feelings about women. We might also point out that there is a long history in Western culture of perceiving and constructing women as sources of pollution, and that we see this history in much early modern drama. We will ask our students to think things through, to try to understand how materials are manipulated in this and other plays. Camillo argues that “tis safer to / Avoid what's grown than question how 'tis born” (1.2.432-33), but doing this doesn't get us anywhere.

The methodological ground of ecocriticism is interdisciplinary, regardless of Stephanie Sarver’s views, and there are numerous routes we could take to continue an ecocritical reading of The Winter's Tale. We could use theories from social and feminist geography to help us think about space, place, and the widely disjunctive geographies in The Winter's Tale. We might argue that because the pastoral scenes represent not only a different geographical space but a different political economy, it is a mistake to think that we can talk meaningfully about social relations in the play without talking about how the production of space bears on these relations. Another issue that we could look at is the spatial dimensions of the play’s patriarchy: the patriarchal assumptions of Sicilia remain essentially unchallenged, and the space of Bohemia remains an unrealistic ideal (with a few fatal exceptions), insofar as it represents the “flower power” dream of the play, the never-never land where all is happy and peaceful but which cannot actually be located on a map. Certainly space and its conceptualization in this play are very significant, not only for the choppy plot but, more important, because they determine the structure of the lived experiences of the people in those spaces. Discussing such things is the heart and soul of literary criticism, and there are many more discussions to be had: ecocriticism is in its infancy.

Thematic and symbolic readings of green issues have had, as I noted earlier, a substantial history in Shakespearean criticism, but ecocritical readings, which position themselves on par with feminist, Marxist, and materialist readings have, for the most part, been ridiculed. I have tried to suggest what shape an ecocritical reading of The Winter's Tale might take, and though I suspect that I have not provided much more than a truncated, fragmentary study, I hope I have also provided at least the beginnings of a convincing argument for ecocritical Shakespeares and for confronting the “inevitable difficulties” that attend such an approach.

Notes

2. The most promising recent gesture vowing to link ecocritical approaches and Shakespeare texts came in March 2001 in Toledo, Ohio, at the Ohio Shakespeare Conference. This conference, entitled The Nature of Shakespeare, took as its focus the relationships between nature and Shakespeare and showed a remarkable openness to discussions that ranged far outside the thematicism that has so long beleaguered other similar discussions.
5. I use the term “ecophobia” to denote fear and loathing of the environment in much the same way that the term “homophobia” denotes fear and loathing of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals; see my “Conceptualizing the Other in Hostile Early Modern Geographies: Situating Ecocriticism and Difference in Shakespeare,” *Journal of English Language and Literature* 45, no. 4 (December 1999): 877-98.


13. Ibid., xviii.
17. Ibid.
21. Ibid., 22. See also Murphy's “Anotherness and Inhabitation in Recent Multicultural American Literature,” in *Writing the Environment*, 42.
23. There is no shortage of books and articles that look at the representations of natural environments in Shakespeare. In general, these books and articles fall under two general categories: the formalist camp and what I would call the proto-ecocritical group. The formalists have looked at birds, plants (especially flowers), gardens, the relationship between nature (as a general theme) and genre, the way the natural environment could be seen to fit into cosmic patterns, and so on. The difference between the group I am calling proto-ecocritical and the earlier group is in the kind of analysis that is being undertaken. While the former is structuralist (concerned primarily with enumerating instances of thematic clusters, with comparing such clusters, with trying to get idealist pictures of the English Renaissance, and so on), the latter is poststructuralist in its various movements toward theoretical analyses of the ways that thinking and talking about the natural world interrelate with other early modern discourses. In *The Shakespearean Wild: Geography, Genus, and Gender* (Lincoln, Neb., and London: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1991), Jeanne Addison Roberts “marks the stages in the evolution of Shakespeare's ideas” about the wild (84) in a largely formalist attempt to analyze discursive relationships, “how the construction of Culture and Wild [in Shakespearean literature] shapes our perceptions of females” (12). In *Shakespeare and the Geography of Difference* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994), John Gillies relies heavily on detailed discussions about the influence of classical texts on Shakespeare and elegantly maps the coordinates linking geographical difference with social exclusion and otherness. Richard Marienstras, a proto-new historicist, tries, among other things, to unearth early modern environmental laws, the background against which Shakespeare wrote; see his *New Perspectives on the Shakespearean World*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press; Paris: Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1985). Linda Woodbridge looks at interconnected representations of land and body, penetration and pollution, at how sexualized landscapes form part of semiotic systems that she calls “the discourse of fertility” (159), and at ways that this discourse overlaps and interacts with discourses of magic; in particular, see “Protection and Pollution: Palisading the Elizabethan Body Politic” and “Green Shakespeare,” in *The Scythe of Saturn: Shakespeare and Magical Thinking* (Urbana, Ill., and Chicago: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1994), 45-85, 152-205. There is a lot that has been written about the environment in Shakespeare, but none of it is properly ecocritical. None of it is, at core, ecologically revolutionary, and the goals are not explicitly to effect change in the way we think about and produce the environment. Nevertheless, much of the work, both from the proto-ecocritics and by the formalists and structuralists, is very useful.
24. Howard Felperin seems inclined to argue that Hermione is “tongue-tied” and that her contorted and tortuous syntax perhaps partly justifies the wild imaginings of Leontes; see “‘Tongue-tied our queen?’ The Deconstruction of Presence in *The Winter's Tale*,” in *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, ed. Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman (New York: Methuen, 1985), 10-12. It is more productive
for my purposes to look not at how her words might damn her, but at the ideological effects of her silence, at the workings of the words that are inscribed in the space left empty by her silence. What we are presented with is not merely a silencing, though, nor even an erasure, but an ossification, a pause held for Leontes to work out his matters. Hermione, a very real material presence, must, in this play, be denied her material realities for the man whose matters weigh more heavily in the sexist scales that the play presents. Hermione's presence can be turned on or off, depending on what the matters demand in the male arena that views and controls her. Such is her dramatic function, and it is one that is startlingly similar to the dramatic function of the bear. When it is needed, it is called in, and it is abandoned just as easily.


26. This is perhaps not so surprising, since Judeo-Christian society has a long history of allegorizing the environment; one has only to think of the tree that bears the fruit that yields knowledge of good and evil.


28. Ibid.

29. Laird goes on to say that “Hermione speaks a discursive skepticism that measures the distance between words and things” (27); unfortunately, he doesn't explore how this relationship between words and things functions in the objectification of Hermione, how words “thingify” her. She is a palpable material presence in the text, yet the text vigorously excludes her from much of the material action of the drama, the male action that determines her material fate. Made passive, excluded, and ossified, Hermione may be, as Laird implies, “singularly daring” (30), but she suffers singularly in a way that singularly daring men in Shakespeare don’t.

30. Witness the anxieties about crossbreeding in the many early treatises about monstrousities, deformities, and so on.

31. We don't see disaster of the kind that we see, for instance, in other plays of Shakespeare where there is similar substantial boundary transgression. Othello, Titus Andronicus, and even Romeo and Juliet come to mind (the latter because the warring families could be argued to constitute a version of class conflict and can unquestionably be said to profile a forbidden inter-breeding).

32. Linda Woodbridge explains that if pollution is primarily the transgression of culturally significant boundaries, bodily orifices being one such set of boundaries, then it is easy to see why men constitute women as a site of pollution: “women have more orifices than men to start with, which may be why the female body offers the more frequent image of society endangered” (“Protection,” 52). Leonard Tennenhouse urges much the same position, claiming that early modern tragedy “defines the female body as a source of pollution … any sign of permeability automatically endangers the community”: Power on Display: The Politics of Shakespeare's Genres (New York and London: Methuen, 1986), 117-18. The female rape victim becomes a site of pollution (as her tousled hair perhaps signifies), and the woman with her own sexuality is also a site of pollution (and a threat to the patriarchal hegemony). But the tradition that seeks to identify women as a source of pollution is not merely concerned with what goes in but with what comes out of the body as well. Thus, women who speak out of order become sites of pollution as do menstruating women.

33. Much of what I have been talking about in this essay centers on birthing—perhaps an unfortunate metaphor, since it genders my topic in ways that indent me for my own sexism. Nevertheless, I began by saying that ecocriticism is a thing that has been named but not properly born, and the question of how something is born—the methodologies of its birth—strikes me as vitally important.

34. The fantasy of an idyllic paradise, in part, is what fueled the imperial drive to the New World at precisely the time the play was written, as many people have noted over the last couple of decades.

Criticism: Character Studies: B. J. Sokol (essay date 1994)


[In the following essay, Sokol maintains that Autolycus's roguery lends crucial support to the “reparative structure” of The Winter's Tale. According to Sokol, Shakespeare dramatized Autolycus in a non-moralistic fashion to demonstrate how “creative activity” emanates from the darker side of human nature.]

THE DRAMATISATION OF INWARDNESS: THE DARKER SIDE

No other simply isolated element of The Winter's Tale has produced wider critical disagreement than the role of Autolycus.¹ A number of recent critics (surprisingly many) have condemned Autolycus morally; some have seen him as an abuser of ‘art’ deployed by Shakespeare to provide an ‘inverse’ to a positive role for art in the play, while others have seen his role as a savoury tonic for over-sweetness, likeable, funny, and/or dramatically very useful. It is my own view, however, that the play needs Autolycus' roguery for its reparative structure.

I will argue that the role of Autolycus highlights very clearly how, in a thoroughly non-moralistic way, The Winter's Tale traces the roots of creative activity to ‘the darker side of human nature’.² To show the importance of this, I want to discuss briefly how the darker impulses implied by the play are contributory to growth and realisation on a more serious plane, before turning to the comic role of Autolycus.

There have long been discussions of how The Winter's Tale is partly akin to tragedy, and often particular aspects of the play have been interestingly compared with Macbeth, Othello or King Lear, for instance.³ But such interesting correspondences tend to be argued structurally, or even in terms of the pattern of Shakespeare's career. I believe The Winter's Tale demands also more detailed attention to how ‘the darker side’ enters and works on a moment by moment level, and I think I can demonstrate how this can reveal some of the richest possibilities of the play.

To do that, let me review how two divergent critics have interpreted the same striking episode of the play. These critics' views may at first seem very similar, but actually are deeply different. In the brief ‘dark’ episode they approach we may sense incestuous undertones in the spectacle of a man of middle years desiring a very young woman who we are told resembles his wife, and who at least as an infant was said to resemble himself.⁴ Both of their readings derive from the ambiguous reply which Leontes makes to Paulina's rebuke of his ‘eye’ with ‘too much youth in 't’ having cast sexually admiring ‘gazes’ on Perdita: ‘I thought of [Hermione], / Even as these looks I made’ (V,i,226-7). The first of the readings I want to compare is in an article by Carol Thomas Neely which generally sanitises the play. It apparently accepts Leontes' odd reply as if it were a precisely literal description of a one-dimensional emotion, and a wholly rational explanation. So it concludes that Leontes' ‘too-youthful gazes at [Perdita] reveal, not incestuous desires as in Pandosto, but Leontes' acceptance of his own courtship and his desire to “enjoy” Hermione’.⁵ Yves Thoret, a more daring critic, offers a suggestion of a very different order, although it superficially reaches a similar conclusion:⁶ it is the reactivation of the king's sexual desire for his daughter that leads him to give up the absolute power of an archaic and exclusive love relationship and helps him accept that, even a king, may not make love with his daughter. Confronted by this recent sexual desire, the king feels himself more human when he stands in front of the queen's statue.

We may note that the two critics agree that finding Perdita attractive helps Leontes in his reunion with Hermione. Thoret is not really more speculative than the first critic in assuming an incestuous undercurrent in
the Leontes/Perdita encounter, for the newly self-corrective understanding he suggests in Leontes' mind could arise after the unveiling of Perdita's identity, yet in good time to become active in the statue scene. But Thoret differs radically in another dimension. For he, and only he, gives a living—a mentally liveable—emotional meaning to the encounter between what another writer described bluntly as the ‘sexual appetite and sexual appetizer’. That is to say, of the two readings only Thoret's suggests an internal mental reality for the character Leontes in which actual thoughts and dynamic thought processes take place. In this realm of thought, gaining some grasp of archaic phantasies may bring, aside from better behaviour, increased toleration, responsibility and self-realisation: it may make a character not only more moral, but also ‘more human’. If Thoret's reading could be theatrically portrayed (it was proposed for the theatre), it would have the power to make not only the character of Leontes, and the statue scene, but also a grateful audience, ‘more human’ as well.

I would like to suggest a proposition that generalises from Thoret's reading. This would be that in The Winter's Tale we are repeatedly shown circumstances requiring a growth of inner awareness. This need not be of transgression as it is Leontes' case; Perdita, for example, gradually becomes aware of her sexual maturity. Quite apart from morality, what the characters who are seen to grow in the play need is a conversion of archaic fears and/or compensatory omnipotence into a sense of the possibility of new relations to others. When this is achieved, it transforms fantasy into responsibility, and brings new life.

Such a pattern makes a very significant place for Autolycus. An important part of his role is to be a fairly pleasant but very outspoken representative of the desires to be mercurial, irresponsible and unaccountable, desires that are in all of us (in this respect he is in part like Falstaff). For want of evidence consistent with dramatic tone, it has very rarely been argued that Autolycus himself learns to accept responsibility for his feelings or actions by the end of The Winter's Tale. But he is a unique feature of the play in multiple ways, and one of these is how his sort of mischief indicates a mental realm less moral, yet more authentic, than that occupied by some purportedly more ‘honest’ characters. First we will view the role of Autolycus in terms of some larger patterns of the play, and then seek detailed ramifications of how it epitomises a kind of honest dishonesty.

AUTOLYCUS AND ANALOGY

It is very well known that on 15 May 1611, a date incidentally he noted to be under the sign of Mercury, a mountebank physician, quack astrologer and roguish seducer of women named Simon Forman saw Shakespeare's The Winter's Tale at the Globe theatre. He put brief notations on this play, as of others, in a manuscript (now accepted as genuine) headed The Bocke of Plaies and Notes thereof per formans for Common Pollicie.

Presumably for ‘Pollicie's’ sake, Forman culminated his notes on The Winter's Tale with a reminder to himself to ‘beware of feined beggars or fawninge fellouss’. But something other than purposes of practical ‘Pollicie’ may explain why Forman concentrated a full third of his observations on the antics of the ‘Rog’ character Autolycus. Although Forman may have denied it, his experience of the play was likely coloured by his fascination with a fellow professional con-man and seducer. If so, he was seeing in art a mirror, not of nature but of himself.

This we must all do to some extent. That extent, however, need not make for universal critical solipsism. We can easily speculate that Forman had his own motives for note-taking, and, in accord with these, not mentioning the reanimation of Hermione's statue need not prove him either an unreliable witness or a witness of a wholly different version of the play than the one we know. Neither does the assured tone of Forman's abbreviated account imply that he was overly perplexed by aspects of the play's irreducible ‘vagueness and confusion’, as has been argued about other original spectators of The Winter's Tale. Nor does the heavy emphasis Forman placed on the ‘Rog’ mean he distorted the play, for quite possibly the role of Autolycus was
very prominent in the 1611 Globe production that he saw.15

A wide range of interpretations of Autolycus results I think from his importance in a complex and rich play. Readings of his role vary so widely,16 in fact, that they may serve as a paradigm for several possible views of the whole play. The role of Autolycus has been seen as ambivalent in the extreme, or as very sharply theatrically focused:17 the play has been read as exemplary of radical indeterminacy in Shakespearian art,18 or as yielding some of the least uncertain moments in all of Shakespeare's work.19 Autolycus' mercurial trickery has been seen as an enlivening companion to the meta-theatre of the statue trick,20 or as in direct opposition to the 'true' art in the play's conclusion:21 the play in its 'obviously theatrical construction' has been judged to yield a uniquely valuable theatrical experience,22 or to evidence a late Shakespearian dramaturgic bodge.23 Autolycus has been viewed with benign approval, even with sentimental relish, for being 'as light-hearted as the lark he sings about',24 or as an egregious and unforgivable villain:25 The Winter's Tale as a whole has been judged from more or less moralistic viewpoints to have a dire or abject outcome,26 or judged to present in its triumphal conclusion the discovery of the 'true essence, whether of life, of art, or of love'.27

How, if ever, can we make these odds all even?

AUTOLYCUS IN THE STRUCTURAL PATTERN

Among its other oddities, the role of Autolycus in The Winter's Tale is a kind of icon for the structurally irregular dramaturgy of the whole play. He has his first entry just slightly short of halfway through the play,28 making the latest entry of a major figure in all of Shakespeare. I say he is a major figure because during the three partial scenes in which he is 'on' he speaks or sings the greatest number of words of any character of the play except (by a long margin) Leontes.29 Outside of these scenes he is never mentioned. Why Autolycus should be so very present when he is 'on', and so entirely absent when he is not, is among the conundrums of the play's construction.

Moreover, in the scene of his first entry Autolycus severely dislocates the play's narrative momentum concerning two anxious kings and their missing children. This headway, set up by old Time's acceleration of the plot followed by Polixenes' and Camillo's scheming, crashes to a halt against the seemingly flimsy obstacle of Autolycus' first heedless two songs, sung only to the road. These and his following soliloquy express a very different mood about progress, season and motive than the prevailing one. The red blood of the eternally recurring 'sweet o' the year' will bring him willing country doxies and gear enough to steal to excite his 'pugging tooth'. The appetite newly 'on edge' in Autolycus is as seasonal and sempiternal as his itinerant habits of sheet stealing and 'tumbling in the hay'. In these songs and soliloquy he writes his own Theophrastian 'character': his simple ambition is to avoid the stocks or gallows, and his wayward motto is 'when I wander here and there, / I then do most go right' (IV,iii,17-18).

It is remarkable that this plot-derailing hereditary 'snapper-up of unconsidered trifles', an artful, impudent, and brazen dissembler, becomes the unwitting agent for the play's moral, happy and truthful outcome. I will argue that there is something far beyond whimsy in this.

For one thing, what Autolycus thinks is given great prominence. He speaks or sings more than a hundred lines of soliloquies, asides and personal song lyrics, giving him more opportunity for direct self-revelation than any other character.31 We have noted that Camillo has important motive-revealing speeches—these comprise in total thirty lines. But Camillo, we have argued, lies to himself in his asides and glosses over selfishness in soliloquies. Autolycus, thinking aloud in these same conventions, is never for an instant dishonest about his lack of honour.

It may be a matter of more than quaint contrariness when we hear Autolycus' chagrin, or at least ruefulness, in his admission in soliloquy that he has 'done good … against my will' (V,ii,124-5). Similarly, when forced to
choose loyalties he says in soliloquy that he selects the worse, to be ‘constant to my profession’ (IV,iv,678-83). This choice leads him to flee with Florizel, as Camillo had done with Polixenes, but of course for an opposite professed reason. Autolycus’ calculation to preserve his ‘bad’ individuality is parodic of Camillo’s claimed morality in his own soliloquy (I,ii,351-64) which is focused on ‘flourishing’, as we have discussed in ‘Paulina's and Camillo's Tale’.

Parodic inversion is Autolycus' stock figure. He takes his oaths against the horrible possibility of virtue: ‘if I do not make this cheat bring out another … let me be unrolled, and my name put in the book of virtue!’ (IV,iii,116-18). He is pleased that his fortune prevented an act that ‘would not have relished among my other discredits’ (V,ii,122-3). But he also repeatedly mentions, in nearly all his soliloquies and longer asides, ‘honesty’, ‘good’ or ‘virtue’.

Taken together, such contradictions suggest that Autolycus may be a ‘liminal’ figure as defined in the anthropological studies of Victor Turner. This is a figure whose inversion of norms reinforces and defines the limits of the socially acceptable (as gender distinctions are reinforced by the cross-dressing in Christmas pantomimes). Indeed Autolycus does inhabit a world of holiday/everyday contrasts, yet I would resist defining him in terms of a festival pattern of liminality. Like many other emblematic, mythic and symbolic patterns in the play, a pattern of liminality is present, but taken alone would be excessively limiting to other meanings. I will argue that the necessity of Autolycus to the play is not merely schematic, any more than his deeds are merely incidental.

‘WE’LL MAKE AN INSTRUMENT OF THIS; OMIT / NOTHING MAY GIVE US AID’

I would hold that, in its own way, the comic role of Autolycus is as consistent as is the tragic one of Leontes with a very serious view of Shakespeare's late drama taken by Mary Beth Rose. She finds, particularly in Two Noble Kinsmen, ‘powerful evidence to support a view of the play and its protagonists as concerned in individualistic and psychological terms; to see the play, that is, as a representation of neurotic suffering’. Surely, it might be replied, Leontes suffers and Autolycus does not, but that, I think, is an assumption worth examining.

While it provides one of many self-flauntings in the strange dramaturgy of the play, there is also a presentation of a dramatised experience when Autolycus' blithely random adventures suddenly become fatal and consequential. His luckily gaining better ‘wearing’, for instance, allows him to be a crucial passenger to Sicilia. While causing this ‘accident’ Camillo is multiply deluded in his dismissive and disparaging remark on ragged Autolycus: ‘We'll make an instrument of this; omit / Nothing may give us aid’ (IV,iv,626-7). Camillo is not aware, but we are, that at this point the ‘poor fellow’ Autolycus is set quaking because he has just loaded himself with ‘booties’ at the feast. Does his pilfered wealth depart with his clothes, or does he somehow keep it hidden on his person? An analogy with the excellent stage business suggested by G. Wilson Knight for his earlier ‘shoulder-blade is out’ hustle of the Good Samaritan Clown suggests that Autolycus has the agility to hide anything that he pleases. Likewise the tone of his boastful soliloquy immediately after the clothing exchange (IV,iv,670-86) supports the use of stage business that works to produce profit upon profit for him, or as he says, ‘boot … with … exchange’.

But loaded on the irony that Camillo falsely thinks Autolycus so impoverished as to be negligible is the double irony that Autolycus falsely thinks he has a better ‘nose’ for mischief than the courtier Camillo. Consequently there is no truth at all in the opening of Autolycus’ following soliloquy, ‘I understand the business. I hear it’, etc., and more truth than he knows in his continuing remark ‘I see this is the time that the unjust man doth thrive’ (IV,iv,673-4). For when Autolycus proclaims with self-reassurance that he is not out of his depth, his remarks come on the heels of Camillo’s urging flight on Florizel and Perdita with ‘The swifter speed the better’. This, I have argued, is the culmination of a deception I called Judas-like. Without doubt the aside in which the audience hears Camillo admit his treacherous plan to betray the lovers (661-67) is
unheard and unguessed by Autolycus. So, exactly when Autolycus proclaims that he is in full command of the situation, the audience realises that he is wholly ignorant of a cunning subterfuge beyond his scope. Consequently, when we see Autolycus become involved in Florizel's doomed embassy, we see the duper duped. He is seen to have feet of clay—with intriguing symbolic and psychological implications.

For one thing, Autolycus' misjudgement of the situation makes us realise that, despite his obvious vitality and zest, he is not an elemental or transcendental figure. The ballad-selling and innocence-cozening rogue is not a magical trickster like Puck, Ariel or the thieving Buddhist monkey god in Wu Ch'eng-en's wonderful novel *Monkey.* Nor is he even semi-divine; like his own mortal father he was only in an astrological sense ‘littered under Mercury’.

The tease is that there are some associations possible between Shakespeare's Autolycus and his namesake in legend, who was the half-mortal son of Hermes or Mercury. In the fourth *Hymn*, the god Hermes, even as a baby, possesses dissembling and thieving skills similar to those of Shakespeare's rogue. In *The Odyssey* book 19 Mercury's thieving and equivocating son Autolycus is identified as the maternal grandfather of that most resourceful of men of the road, Ulysses, again with some teasing relevance to the career of Shakespeare's Autolycus. Yet the partial overlapping of the legendary Autolycus, or his father and offspring, with the rogue of *The Winter's Tale* chiefly highlights how Shakespeare's Autolycus is mortal to the point of the mundane. There is a lowly quality in the cozening of a Clown on a market trip ‘by the way of all [his] money’. Shakespeare's Autolycus (unlike Falstaff) does not even dare rob the highway; this, paradoxically, shows him entirely unheroic.

It is open to question whether Shakespeare was again setting up contrasts for the notice of the learned, pitting a cowardly coney catcher against the god-thief of classical legend. Such potential anomalies in *The Winter's Tale*, as I have suggested throughout, are generally not for idle delectation but often are linked to central issues.

The issue here would be related to how Autolycus' mundane humanity allows him scope to display symptoms of anxiety. In his first soliloquy he admits that he is terrified of ‘beating and hanging’. He later reveals more complex apprehensions. Let us review the soliloquy in which he chooses to preserve a boasted constancy to self:

The prince himself is about a piece of iniquity (stealing away from his father with his clog at his heels); if I thought it were a piece of honesty to acquaint the king withal, I would not do 't: I hold it the more knavery to conceal it; and therefore I am constant to my profession.

(IV,iv,678-83)

This decision apparently in favour of individuality over gain is arguably related to Autolycus' wondering ‘Sure the gods do this year connive at us, and we may do any thing extempore’, which continues in his next soliloquy with ‘If I had a mind to be honest, I see Fortune would not suffer me: she drops booties in my mouth’ (IV,iv,832-3). Autolycus' pleasure at sensing great things afoot is crowing, but I suggest it is also anxious with an apprehension that Fortune is up to tricks beyond his ken. Perhaps his joining the party of the outcast ‘Prince my master’ is best understood as an attempt of a small-time cheat to preserve his identity as a marginal figure at a time of momentous change.

Although we might say that Autolycus declines from a ragged master rogue to a prosperous grovelling courtier, his final transformation in the play is not Falstaffian, nor even Parolles-like, because Autolycus never entertains any grandiose ambitions or illusions. He chooses to remain, up to the play's end, a play-actor of profitable minor roles. I would explain this in terms of Autolycus' wish at all costs to avoid the responsibility of being in the ‘big time’. This factor in his character-type gives poignancy, I think, to his remarks on the
ongoing *annus mirabilis*:

Now, had I not the dash of my former life in me, would preferment drop on my head … But 'tis all one to me; for had I been the finder out of this secret, it would not have relished among my other discredits.

(V.ii,113-23)

The verbal inversion here in ‘relish among my other discredits’ is continuous with the satiric malapropisms of the following interchanges about new-made ‘gentlemen born’ whose rights are to ‘swear’ to lies. But the rationalising ‘tis all one’ I think presents also a sense of relief in Autolycus that he has not benefited greatly from his unintended good actions.

In addition to displaying a complicated character type, I think that Autolycus parodies here a paradox central to the play: that to ‘do good’ often requires the resources of a personal ‘darker side’—as for example in Florizel's defiance, Paulina's trickery, Perdita's commitment to unhallowed deception—but that using these may cause a painful threat to identity. As Autolycus is a charming coward, he does not risk the dilution of an identity quite comfortably comprised of ‘discredits’.

**AUTOLYCUS AND THE THEATRE**

On his first stage entry Autolycus describes himself as a masterless man, a dismissed courtier who became, in turn, a showman dealing in apes and puppets, a bailiff, a cowardly petty thief, and finally a coney catcher who ‘haunts wakes, fairs and bear-baitings’. His transported urban savvy, it has been claimed, may corrupt the rustics, or perhaps it ‘shows the limitation in naivete and gullibility of the shepherd's restricted life’.

It is not my view that the Shepherd's life is especially naive but rather that he is quite canny and knowing, as when speculating on Perdita's parentage. I therefore think that Autolycus' fleecing of the rustics is not meant primarily to mock country folk. After all, we see him fool the acute Camillo to obtain ‘boot’ as well. His cheating, I think, represents how all sorts of persons may be taken in by a skilful artist, regardless of their sophistication.

It may be particularly because he insists, uncomfortably, on revealing what lies behind his theatrical calling that Autolycus has so often had a ‘bad press’ from serious-minded critics. During his long appearance as a pedlar at the sheep-shearing festival (IV.iv,220-714), where Autolycus cries his ‘trumpery’ and sings and sells printed ballads as a cover for pickpocketing, the commercial and performative functions of a mountebank ironically re-echo the play's many other self-references to its own theatricality and mock-naive genre. Thus, for instance, when Autolycus claims that his outrageous ballads are reportage ‘Very true, and but a month old’, this counterpoints the play's repeated frame-breaking remarks along the lines of ‘Were it but told you, should be hooted at / Like an old tale’.

What may upset some critics about the role of Autolycus, then, is how clearly he insists that the counterfeits and grotesqueries he peddles and denigrates inspire the credulity of a paying public. Who is to say that the play's own audacities do not do the same? On what terms must its audiences ‘buy’ its irregularities and ‘obviously theatrical construction’? Do we know if we are being swindled—does taking a late Shakespeare play ‘seriously’ make the whole shameful matter worse?

We do know that *The Winter's Tale* was popular with audiences of its age, and frequently played at court. Hints and glimpses of how it may have been taken then with a poised mixture of seriousness and fun have been afforded by our investigations of some very sophisticated references embedded in details of the theatrical text. In a last attempt to unravel one of these, we will next consider the matter of Autolycus' profitably ‘nimble hand’, and try to place this in relation to the prominence of hands in play at large.
AUTOLYCUS AND THE LANGUAGE OF HANDS

In one of the soliloquies of Shakespeare's cut-purse extraordinary we are told that the country folk were so enthralled by the song he performed with Mopsa and Dorcas that 'you might have pinched a placket, it was senseless; 'twas nothing to geld a codpiece of a purse' (IV,iv,610-12). This links their aesthetic appreciation with sexual victimisation (shades of Perdita on gillyvors!), for the interesting articles of clothing Autolycus names—the placket and codpiece—denote or indicate also female and male pudenda.

The actions Autolycus describes here involve hands engaged equivocally between sexually predatory and thieving activities, recalling his earlier boast 'My traffic is sheets'. As is typical of his sort of 'polyphonic relation' to other aspects of the play, Autolycus' claim to special manual skills chimes with a notable prominence of hand gestures in *The Winter's Tale*.

Simple word counting shows the importance of a 'gestural dialogue of hands throughout the play'. This dialogue includes the denigrated gesture described in the fatal 'clap thyself my love' speech we have analysed in 'Leontes' Tale', the traditional handclasping to seal the marriage contract between Perdita and Florizel, and Paulina's last injunction to Leontes, 'Nay, present your hand', in the statue scene. In other important examples: Polixenes seems at first to redeem Leontes' ugly imagery of 'paddling palms and pinching fingers' with his beautifully accepting 'How prettily the young swain seems to wash / The hand that was fair before' (IV,iv,367-8); the Clown who in Bohemia had extended a charitable hand to aid swindling Autolycus repeats the identical gesture in Sicilia after announcing that 'the king's son took me by the hand, and called me brother' (V,ii,140-1, 156); domineering Paulina has the tables turned on her when Leontes orders Camillo to 'take her by the hand' (V,iii,144). In all these examples in *The Winter's Tale*, as in Shakespeare's theatre generally, the mutual action of hands signifies the sealing of social or sexual relationships.

However, hands can be active and effective in the play not only in dialogue. I am thinking particularly of the hand placement of Hermione's statue. Michael Baxandall explains how the hand gestures of early Renaissance statues portrayed for the individuals they represented the 'light of inner being through outward forms', by means of a detailed 'theory of Signs'. It may be significant for Hermione's statue as well that, in the Renaissance, lovers also had a secret code of 'chiromancia'; John Donne's Elegie VII contains for instance the complaint 'Foole, thou didst not understand / The mystique language of the eye nor hand'. Hermione is both statue and lover in a culture with a code of gestures for both, so the disposition of her hands when she plays the statue would seem to be crucial. A guide to what might be achieved could be found in the teachings of *hypocrisis*, the fifth stage of classical rhetoric, or in allied traditions of acting gestures. But these concern gestures keyed to speech, while Hermione is silent. An excellent model of the complexity achievable through silent hand gestures is found in the visual arts, such as described in Edgar Wind's splendid treatment of the hands of the Graces in Botticelli's *Primavera*.

Aside from how it might be done, there is the question of what should be expressed by the gestures and stance of Hermione's 'statue'. I would suggest that these should be as expressive as possible of the sort of intense emotional mixtures Wotton called 'Neighbors and Consiners in Arte', perhaps tempered by the kind of reserve seen in the Giulio Romano portrait of Isabella d'Este at Hampton Court, which we have discussed in 'Julio's Tale' (fig. 10). This would accord with how Hermione's statue, long kept 'Lonely, apart', must become for Leontes and others a true symbol of an individual possessing a separate 'light of inner being', while the statue's gestures also might express a contrary longing to restore a long-deferred relatedness to others. For, as Cynthia Marshall argues in connection with the statue scene of *The Winter's Tale*, resurrection of the individual alone is unimaginable. Because we identify ourselves largely through those we love and value life because of others, the hope of resurrection is a communal hope: we do not hope for resurrection of the body, but of our world: hence the idea...
of paradise.

I am suggesting a duality expressed in the 'statue' which invites passive contemplation yet promises active reunion. This rich contradiction is expressed fully in Perdita's role in the statue scene. She first asks, without 'superstition' she says, that the statue should 'Give me that hand of yours to kiss' (V,iii,46). That denied, in her own last line of the play Perdita resolves to be content to 'Stand by, a looker on' for a full twenty years (V,iii,85); that is, she resolves herself to contemplation of the statue. Her resolution is the immediate cue for the reanimation and human reintegration of Hermione, and Perdita receives the special reward of her mother's first words.

If Hermione's statue's static bearing, and especially its hand gestures, can suggest a hope for resurrection and renewed communal life, in a contrary way the lively hand actions of Autolycus in the cutpurse scenes may seem to represent the intrusion of furtive and grasping individualism into the gregarious, art-loving and erotic festival. Such an observation regarding the activity of Autolycus' mercantile hand in a play indeed packed with references to counting and financial exchange may make it tempting to suppose that Autolycus' activities stand entirely in opposition to the festival's hospitable, communal and generous impulses. But in fact Autolycus' cheats are not the serpent-in-an-Edenic-countryside they sometimes have suggested to critics: they are portrayed as quite harmless and painless in comparison with Perdita's and Florizel's dilemma, or even Mopsa's versus Dorcas's competition over the Clown. There is much more anxiety in the country setting than that caused by the minor depredations for which Autolycus is responsible. Yet the presence of his figure, I will finally claim, is crucial for the play at large.

AUTOLYCUS AND THE WINTER'S TALE

Rather than despising Autolycus, I am amongst those for whom he 'secures our admiration for his expert deceptions'. I do not even agree with the author of this remark that he must at the end ‘suffer defeat’ on account of his ‘pure materiality’, so that ‘in the last analysis his failure to find redemption provides contrast for Leontes’ achievement of it’.

This is because I do not believe that the principle of contrast gives the full measure of Autolycus' importance.

Yet Autolycus does parody or inversely mirror many aspects of the play. I have mentioned his manner of choosing between loyalties which perfectly inverts Camillo's claimed reason for leaving Bohemia. Other writers have argued that Autolycus' balladry, his specific uses of language, or his mirroring function as a character, are deliberately made to parody or invert more central features of the play.

But, beyond parody or acting as a ‘foil’ for others, Autolycus provides positive needs of the play. Marjorie Garber holds that his arrival marks the release of ‘sexual energies [not previously] acknowledged or accepted in the world of the sheepshearing feast’. In a less exhilarating way, Ruth Nevo notes that, ‘Autolycus is a figure of libido, unruly, lawless and volatile, uninhibited, cunning, subversive’. To a mention of his ‘harmless, even benign’ qualities she adds that ‘he offers a semilegitimized illicit enjoyment; but there is a self, and a wolf also, in his name’.

The ‘self’ and the ‘wolf’ in Autolycus are preserved by the fiction of The Winter's Tale from doing evil. Unlike the lion and the bear of the play, the wolf is not predatory, or molests only where no real harm is done. This, I believe, is because Autolycus represents a factor that must be preserved: he represents one side of the necessary ‘knife edge balance’ between integration and disintegration psychodynamics has discovered in all ‘creative effort’, the ‘leaven of malice’ necessary in all human creativity.

One last antinomy before I conclude. Autolycus' role is analytical in representing a vitally necessary component of creativity, yet Autolycus' trumpery ballads are not truly creative. This is because his role in the play represents also a conservative or static principle. It is notable that he deploys his vaunted possessions of
‘an open ear, a quick eye, and a nimble hand’ to most profit during a gullible ‘lethargy’ which his art induces: it is art not to waken but to dull sensibility.

The failure of Autolycus' art is not deserving of moral condemnation, any more than the realms of pornotopia, fetishism or obsession are necessarily wicked in themselves. Autolycus' role symbolically shares with those mental places, which we have argued to be often proximate to the emotional settings of the play, a quality of evading frustration by forgoing change, a transaction in favour of certainty and non-dependence. The paradigm of his contract with reality is, ‘Better not to have had thee than thus to want thee’. That is to say, Autolycus possesses a possibly alluring self-sufficiency which offers, beyond survival, total closure. Even as a drifter, and an anxious one, he preserves himself against change. He is not a true risk taker: his deity is Opportunity, not Kairos. And it is only against his temptations that the play's redemptions make sense.

Therefore Autolycus is a contributor to, and silent witness of, the ‘lucky’ recognition of Perdita. But he cannot be a witness to the revelation of meaning in nullity wherein Paulina risks ‘wicked powers’ in order to urge us, and those on stage, to awaken ‘faith’.

The faith in question is faith in the possibility of distilling human meaning from what may seem an endless process. One might be cheerful about the repetitive cycle of ‘blood’, as Autolycus is, or cheerfully wry about it like the Shepherd, but how can one place positive faith in repetition? Writing on the function of time in Shakespeare's plays, G. F. Waller wrote: ‘Human life is meaningless unless the human capacity for regeneration and reconciliation, for creatively taking time's chances and opportunities, is recreated and reenacted in each generation.’

We may ask why reconciliation and regeneration must be necessary again and again in ‘each generation’. The answer The Winter's Table offers is that ‘the darker side of human nature’ as personally experienced and acknowledged, not just as ‘known about’, must always play a crucial part in creativity and growth. Thus the play tacitly conveys the sense of one of the paradoxes a short while later articulated by Pascal, that knowledge of human wretchedness and human greatness are wholly interdependent.

In The Winter's Tale, the proximity of human wretchedness and greatness is seen not only in explicit confrontations of sin and forgiveness but more largely through a highly self-referential treatment of the necessary ‘knife edge’ impulses of art. With regard to this treatment, at least, I agree with Sukanta Chaudhuri that Shakespeare himself practises art of a ‘rare’ kind:

Only in the greatest painters of the Renaissance—Leonardo or Michelangelo—do we find the same tormented yet unquenchable vitality [as in Shakespeare]. There too the perception of evil and weakness in man does not act as a simple limitation, but is mysteriously made the basis of greater strength and nobility.

In order to represent the process of transmutation of the humanly squalid to the noble, The Winter's Tale is not modishly but necessarily unconventional in form and content. Indeed it is so highly mannered as to be theatrically and intellectually precarious. By exposing the play itself to chanciness, Shakespeare allows us to feel that his dramatic speaking statues are animated by the extremely hazardous forces that alone can make psychic change possible.

Notes

1. This range will be exemplified presently. It is interesting that such discrepancy has not, as far as I know, received much analysis. An exception is Nevo, 1987, which in a condensed way mentions that his role ‘has defeated most attempts at interpretation’ (p. 95), proposes him as a bearer of the ‘pleasure principle’ (p. 123), and mentions some other critics' alternatives (p. 124).
2. The phrase is used in Collins, 1982, p. 55, which interestingly approaches the function of ‘the darker side’ in the play. Gourlay, 1975, p. 394, concludes that the dark side of the play is exemplified in Paulina’s magic, which ‘is also that of Venus, of femaleness itself’. But this ignores the fact that ‘Julio’ is male, and certainly Leontes’ misogyny is evidence of dark impulses in the play. Shakespeare did not uniformly assign specific gender to human darkness in either behaviour or symbolism.

3. Collins, 1982, pp. 56-7, reviews a range of interpretations of how ‘the familiar elements of tragedy’ appear beneath the ‘comedic façade’ of The Winter’s Tale in particular. Many writers, such as Tillyard, 1938; Siegel, 1950; Frye, 1968, have traced specific connections of The Winter’s Tale with Shakespearian tragedy. Tillyard, 1938, pp. 40-8, discusses a ‘Tragic Pattern’ and finishes by declaring Autolycus ‘organic to the country scene’. For a critique of views of the play as tragic see Mowat, 1976, pp. 8-20.

4. In my view, Shakespeare makes the incestuous undertones between Leontes and Perdita far briefer but more powerful than their originals in Pandosto, while wholly suppressing the overtones. I have called this sort of minimalism ‘homoeopathic’ in Sokol, 1993c, p. 199.

5. Neely, 1978, p. 190. Neely, 1985, p. 205, revises this to claim that Leontes ‘when jolted by Paulina … explicitly acknowledges and renounces the incestuous component of his desires’ for Perdita, but still offers no dynamic of feeling behind this. The later book is filled with intriguing perceptions, as, pp. 174-5, ‘Paulina is the only mother in the romances who does not undergo a real or apparent death’, but often neglects to relate a pattern it detects, and, at one point calls the ‘stereotype’ (p. 178), to a flow of human emotions that can theatrically produced or perceived.


7. The phrase comes from an interesting discussion in Harding, 1979, p. 59.

8. Although it has been done in Cox, 1969, especially pp. 292-8. For the usual contrary view made emphatic see Bieman, 1990, p. 83: ‘[Autolycus?] envy at “the blossoms of [the Clown and Shepherd’s] fortune” … undercuts the credibility of his promise that he will seriously mend his ways. After all, any hope of further gains from this fortunate pair will depend on the trust the rascal hopes to promote by his promise of transformation.’ See Brown, 1966, pp. 115-16, on the stage tradition beginning with Garrick’s version of The Winter’s Tale that Autolycus carries on with a ‘renewed picking of pockets’ at the end of V.ii.

9. There is a better case for Caliban, who will ‘seek for grace’ hereafter. Frey, 1980, p. 158, has Autolycus like Caliban and Parolles ‘chastened … not really converted, but tamed’, but then oddly goes on to call his chastening a cause for ‘wonder’.

10. After Leontes’, Autolycus’ are the most frequent uses of the word ‘honest[ly]’. The word is applied to himself twice by Camillo.


12. I cannot agree with Holland, Norman N., 1989, that our own reflections are virtually all we can hope to find in the mirror-land of the hermeneutic. Long ago, as such thinking goes, Girard, 1977, pp. 131-3, offered a brilliant critique of doctrines promulgating ‘the inexistence of the individual subject’ and ‘a most scholarly burial of scholarship itself’ based on a wholly relativistic ‘current view of language’.

13. His non-mention of Hermione’s faked re-animation may prove only that use of ‘magic’ for purposes of ‘Pollicie’ was more mundane to him than new twists of coney catching. It will not serve to prove that the play was altered post 1611, as held in Bergeron, 1978, p. 126.

14. Orgel, 1991, p. 437, referring to the ‘radical indeterminacy’ of Renaissance ‘symbolic imagery’ and the opacity of some of Shakespeare’s dramatic language. But of course original audiences had the advantage of Shakespeare’s company’s dramatic interpretations.

15. It has been very prominent in more modern ones described by Brown, 1966, pp. 116-18, which argues the theatrical importance of Autolycus. Frey, 1980, p. 11, judges from Forman’s account that ‘it is clear that Autolycus was, from the first, mightily impressive and quite capable of stealing the show’ but then continues, oddly, ‘at least to the didactically minded’.

781
A wide variety of readings need not confirm Valéry, 1958, p. 152, that ‘a text is like an apparatus that anyone may use as he will’, and that ‘it is not certain that the one who constructed [the apparatus/machine] can use it better than another’. This argues from the lack of ‘author's authority’ that ‘there is no true meaning to a text’, a fallacy shown up by Coleridge's observation (in a letter: Coleridge, 1980, vol. 2, p. 187) that authors cannot know as well as others the crucial overall ‘effect’ made by a work of their own, simply because they know too well irrelevant matters such as the process of its creation. The false liberality of allowing wide-open interpretation invites sentimentalism, ‘swoon readings’, ‘stock responses’, and even such tragicomic horrors as in Lionel Trilling's short story ‘Of This Time, Of That Place’ in which a student belligerently defends an essay claiming that The Ancient Mariner ‘transports us to a honey-sweet world … [in which] we can relax and enjoy ourselves’ (Trilling, 1981, pp. 102-3).

The plethora of contradictory critical interpretations speaks to the first point. For the second we have the authority of so exacting a critic as Samuel Johnson, who held Autolycus' characterisation to be ‘very naturally conceived and strongly represented’—this remark is considered in its context in Felperin, 1972, pp. 269-70.


See Ewbank, 1983, p. 71, which is wholly convincing about the truth ‘beyond words’ of Paulina's words on the statue of Hermione.

Brown, 1966, pp. 118-19, argues: ‘Some implications of his role can be appreciated through particular points of contact with the rest of the play … But Autolycus' contribution to the play is greatest at its most general. The last exit for Autolycus in Act V, with its climactic and possibly silent humour, is an important device to relax the critical attention of the audience immediately before Hermione is revealed as a painted statue.’

Livingston, 1969, pp. 345-51, makes an extended case for the perverse, manipulative, unnatural, even castrating in his 'art', arguing its 'inverse relationship' with the statue's art.


For typical instances of this common earlier view see Quiller-Couch's introduction to Wilson, John Dover & Quiller-Couch, 1931, pp. xxiv-xxvi or Pettet, 1949a, p. 178.

Stauffer, 1968, p. 76. Typical older readings make him a ‘delightful rogue’ (Wilson, John Dover & Quiller-Couch, 1931, p. xx), ‘spring incarnate; carefree, unmoral, happy’ (Knight, 1985, p. 100), or at worst ‘a charming but disreputable confidence trickster’ (Muir, 1968, p. 16).

For example: Kermode, 1971, p. 243, repeats an earlier view of Kermode, but perhaps with a twinkle, in ‘Autolycus, with his courtly pretences, is the blackest rogue available’. He is ‘a human predator whose comic caperings cannot conceal the vicious thief and liar behind the pedlar's songs’ in Wickham, 1969b, p. 263, which goes on to compare the rural Bohemia he infects with ‘the Garden of Eden’; in Brissenden, 1981, p. 90, he brings ‘a whiff of corruption’ and ‘the crude coarseness of [his] songs’ to a rural scene of ‘joyful, ordered dance’ and ‘purity’; in Blake, 1983, p. 131, he is ‘Shakespeare's only duper who is a professional swindler’ showing ‘Shakespeare's final criticism of such basic qualities of duping as its heartlessness and the supreme value it puts on wit’.


This is in terms of word counting; he first appears at approximately 48 per cent of the way through the text in Wells & Taylor, 1989, counted using a special program WCHASH, available from me.

Approximately: Leontes, 5013; Autolycus, 2459; Paulina, 2439; Camillo, 2151; Polixenes, 2007; Clown, 1675; Hermione, 1607; Florizel, 1415; Shepherd, 1123; Perdita, 914. These figures are derived from Wells & Taylor, 1989, measured by the program WCSPEAK, available as above.
30. The matter of Autolycus saying that he was ‘littered under Mercury’ will be considered in its mythological contexts slightly later. But it also may relate very complexly to his confusing mention of a springtime rising of ‘red blood’ just before the start of a late summer festival (we have made some botanical comment on that same seasonal confusion in ‘Perdita's Tale’). The connection between Mercury and seasons is very complex. Its modern discussion hinges on a problem in the interpretation of Botticelli's *Primavera*. (Just these problems are described as exemplary of methodological enigmas in Gombrich, 1945.) Botticelli's spring-allegory painting has seven principal figures: (probably) the three Graces, Flora, Chloris, Zephyr and Mercury. The importance of one peculiarity of the composition is emphasised in Wind, 1968, pp. 121-4, which states, p. 121, ‘the crux of any interpretation of the *Primavera* is to explain the part played by Mercury’ in his ‘disengaged—not to say indifferent’ attitude to the Graces who share the scene with him. Panofsky, 1970, p. 194, identifies the same problem. Mercury in this painting is equally indifferent to Flora and her companions—a peculiarity matched, we might remark by the almost total disengagement in *The Winter's Tale* IV, iv between littered-under-Mercury Autolycus and Flora/Perdita, at least in terms of their speaking parts. A ‘solution’ to the *Primavera* enigma is proposed in Dempsey, 1992, pp. 37-8. This explains that Mercury is present because according to an old ‘rustic or farmer's calendar’ he was a god of May or spring, together with Flora. This calendrical connection is said to have been ‘obscured’ from scholars by the ‘Julian reform’. I do not know if this is correct, but if so it is hard to suppose that Shakespeare could have known more of classical mythology than Panofsky or Wind. Another source of some doubt about the following complex conjectures is the fact that almost all of Shakespeare's numerous mentions of Mercury present him simply as a swift messenger. However there is an exception to this in the very last line of *Love's Labour's Lost*, spoken by Don Armado: ‘The words of Mercury are harsh after the songs of Apollo’. There are problems with the status of this line, but if it is actually Shakespeare's it seems likely that it comments on the two immediately preceding songs. Armado would then be identifying Mercury with winter, and opposing him to Apollo and spring. This identification could be a final comic malapropism of the ridiculous Armado; because rural calendars have an oblique link with *Love's Labour's Lost*, as shown in Sokol, 1991b, it is not impossible that Shakespeare intended a sly reference to the pre-Julian significance of Mercury, a connection which Armado gets all wrong. Putting all this together with the mixed signs of the season in the fourth act of *The Winter's Tale*, we may speculate that (to a very few in his audiences) Shakespeare presented a deliberate confusion of two calendars operative at once, a rural and ‘sophisticated’ one. We may further speculate that through the image of charlatan Autolycus' instinctual response to a red-blooded season he connected the anomaly of mixed seasons with Perdita's mixed feelings about art, time, sex and nature discussed above in ‘Perdita's Tale’.

31. The count, using the Arden Edition lineation, is 121 lines; similar lines of Leontes are impossible to count because of his semi-asides spoken to Mamillius and others, noted above, but he has far fewer lines of distinct aside or soliloquy.

32. For instance as a ‘foil’ for good Camillo, as in Peterson, 1973, or as a challenge to good art as in Livingston, 1969.


35. Written c. 1580, translated by Arthur Waley, 1944.


37. The son of Mercury and the mortal Chione, he is an archetypal master thief, getting away with daring exploits thanks to transformative gifts given by his father. Pafford, 1966, p. 165 and Wilson, John Dover & Quiller-Couch, 1931, pp. xxi and 162, discuss Shakespeare's possible sources of the name in Plutarch, Lucian, Ovid and Homer.

38. Hermes is also a patron of the highway, music, assemblies and merchants, but practises trick wrestling, while Shakespeare's Autolycus professes himself a physical coward. A more obscure connection of Hermes with *The Winter's Tale* is suggested in Gasper & Williams, 1986, which derives
the name ‘Hermione’ from obituaries and statues of saints called ‘herms’, a term originally related to phallic pillar statues of Hermes.

39. The relevant passage in Chapman’s translation, Homer, 1906, vol. 2, p. 157, reads: ‘Autolycus; who th’ art / Of theft and swearing (not out of the heart, / But by equivocation) first adorn’d / Your witty man withall, and was suborn’d / By Jove’s descent, ingenious Mercury, / Who did bestow it, since so many a thigh / Of lambs and kids he had on him bestow’d / In sacred flames; who therefore when he vow’d / Was ever with him’. The quality of this passage, which constitutes a leisurely interruption of the ‘recognition scene’ of the Odyssey, is brilliantly discussed in Auerbach, 1957, pp. 1-3.

40. IV,iii,28-9; Autolycus studiously avoids physical danger, unlike Falstaff, who at least fights longer than his companions at Gads Hill. An opposite view of their relative bravery is asserted without proof in White, 1939, p. 165.

41. Of which Weinsten, 1971, p. 105, says rather finely: ‘Florizel attains his heroism and makes his mistake at one and the same moment.’

42. The quotation is from Colie, 1974, p. 272. A similar idea is taken further in Studing, 1987, p. 144, which presses the notion of The Winter’s Tale as an antipastoral and Autolycus as a corrupt ‘linking character between court and country’.

43. Empson, 1986, is a semi-serious essay claiming, p. 237, that self-deluded critics do not see the late Shakespeare’s ‘glaring eye … through the mask’ and conjecturing, pp. 237-8, that Shakespeare tired by writing great tragedies first fobbed off his public with his crude last plays, but then began to enjoy their money-spinning success.

44. Nevo, 1987, p. 124, uses this phrase to link his ballads and Leontes’ ‘fancies’.

45. Bradley, 1990, in combination with Wells & Taylor, 1989, shows 37 instances of ‘hand[s]’, 8 spoken by the clown and 7 by Paulina, with a heavy frequency bias in the festival and statue scenes.


47. See Slater, 1982, pp. 49-62 and especially pp. 52 and 54, on The Winter’s Tale, where ‘Talking by the Hand’ is found to be ‘a gesture of relationship’.

48. This theory from Paracelsus is discussed in relation to German wood carving in Baxandall, 1980, pp. 160-3.


51. Not the hands but the entire static bearing of Hermione’s statue might well be imitated from the stance of the main figure in this portrait of Isabella d’Este.

60. Garber, 1981, p. 158. His influence over courting couples (but not his boasted behaviour with ‘aunts’) accords with our previous distinctions between bawdry and sexual energy, pornotopia and passion. Hartwig, 1978, p. 103, concludes on a tangent to this that ‘with Autolycus … we can consider “behind-door-work” as normal and tolerable human behavior’.


63. See especially Klein, 1986c. Very astute on the theme of creativity and malice is Pascal, 1966, p. 47: ‘The children of Port Royal who are not spurred on by envy and glory become indifferent’.

64. Waller, 1976, p. 162.

65. Pascal, 1966, p. 59: ‘Man's greatness comes from knowing he is wretched: a tree does not know it is wretched.’


Bibliography


Trilling, Lionel. *Of This Time, Of That Place and Other Stories.* Oxford, 1981.


Criticism: Character Studies: Travis Curtright (essay date September 2002)


[In the following essay, Curtright challenges the critical position that Leontes displays characteristics of a tragic hero, arguing instead that Shakespeare envisioned him as a melodramatic villain who would evoke laughter from a Jacobean audience.]

If Hamlet is Shakespeare's most enigmatic depiction of a tragic character's confused motivations, then Leontes might be his comedic counterpart. As audiences are mystified why Hamlet does not act, they are equally perplexed why Leontes does. Like Mona Lisa's smile, Leontes's sudden jealousy, murder attempt, and rage invite speculation, which on reflection seems inadequate; such is the history of criticism on Leontes as well. Some commentators attempt to pinpoint the moment of his jealousy with the hope of explaining it in terms of early modern ideas of melancholy or, more recently, in light of "mimetic desire;" another group believes he must have been jealous before the action of the play begins; still others ignore the exact moment in which jealousy emerges, but argue that his jealousy is well founded. With all of these criticisms, however, the assumption is the same: Leontes is a tragi-comic hero whose actions account for the tragedy within The Winter's Tale. In this essay I argue that Leontes lacks the nobility and grandeur of a tragic hero, and, as a result, the play's first three acts are less tragic than critics believe. Instead of tragic intensity, I suggest that Robert Heilman's "world of melodrama" is at work in the early Leontes. Heilman writes in explanation of melodrama's difference from tragedy: "The issue here is not the reordering of the self, but the reordering of one's relations with others, with the world of people or things; not the knowledge of self but the maintenance of self, in its assumption of wholeness, until conflicts are won or lost." I think that Leontes is more of a melodramatic villain than a tragic hero, but a villain whose emotional extremes Shakespeare lightly satirizes throughout the play. By exploring Leontes's character in the context of villainy exaggerated for the sake of laughter, I hope to correct previous interpretations that emphasize the tragic tone of Leontes's jealousy in the first three acts of the play. To the contrary of evoking pity and fear, I believe that Shakespeare intends his audience to laugh at Leontes's brand of villainy and the disasters it causes from the beginning so that even death may be laughed away, which The Winter's Tale emphasizes by Hermione's return. After examining Leontes's character as comic villain in the first three acts, I turn to the play's ending so that Leontes may be understood in light of Shakespeare's overall treatment of death in the play.

In his emendations on The Winter's Tale, Samuel Johnson includes a commentary on Leontes's sudden conversion at the end of act three. He writes: “This vehement retraction of Leontes, accompanied with the confession of more crimes than he was suspected of, is agreeable to our daily experience of the vicissitudes of violent tempers …” For Johnson, the jealousy and its retraction is no cause for investigation; it is an ordinary symptom of a man enslaved to violent, sudden moods. Johnson understood Leontes as significantly less complex than recent critics have considered him. As "violent tempers" quickly turn admiration to disdain, Leontes can love Polixenes in one moment and despise him in the next. The characters closest to Leontes, I believe, share Johnson's understanding of him. Given the relationship of Leontes as king to his surrounding
subjects, such a low opinion results in an unexpected—comic—incongruity: Everyone finds the king ridiculous whom all should admire. By documenting how Shakespeare presents Leontes in juxtaposition to other characters, and by noting how other characters assess Leontes, a comic portrait of his character is discovered, which all the critical focus on the word “affection” has missed.  

Leontes is seen on stage for the first time with his wife, Hermione. They both invite Polixenes to remain in Sicily, and in their contrasting invitations, Leontes's inaptitude is unintentionally illustrated by Hermione's excellent wit. In asking Polixenes to remain, Leontes is brief, blunt, and unrefined. “One sev'nnight longer” is the climax of his appeal. In comparison to Hermione, Leontes looks strikingly inferior. For the sake of illustrating what Leontes should have said, Shakespeare details Hermione's appeal to Polixenes. Hermione first relieves Polixenes's worries over the affairs in Bohemia: “All in Bohemia's well; this satisfaction / The by-gone day proclaim'd” (I. i. 31-32). By mentioning the recent messages about Bohemia's state, she eliminates Polixenes's excuse to return home out of duty. Hermione next addresses Polixenes's concern to be with his son by giving assurances that the affection felt for him in Sicily recompenses for the affection lost in being away from family (I. ii. 34-444). After assuaging Polixenes's genuine concerns, she playfully threatens him to stay either as her guest or as her prisoner (I. ii. 51-53). Hermione's appeal shows perspicuous insight, tact, and playful audacity; in short, it is everything Leontes's appeal should have been, but was not. Although Shakespeare does not yet present a hilarious or dangerous Leontes, he begins by revealing an obtuse man, who childishly begs when he should be artful: Leontes is a character whose natural gifts are ill suited for his position.  

Leontes's defects are highlighted by Hermione's virtues, but this contrast is the means by which the elements of a situational comedy, one in which an oaf is placed in command of refined individuals, is set in motion. The tension between such a leader and group of subjects is manifested immediately when Leontes orders Camillo to murder Polixenes. Leontes possesses none of the awe surrounding an Othello in giving his commands: One could imagine Cassio obeying Othello's order of execution, but for Leontes even the respectful Camillo will refuse. The two banter back and forth like Wodehouse's Wooster and Jeeves rather than admired king and obedient servant. As Leontes questions in panic—“Is whispering nothing? / Is leaning cheek to cheek? is meeting noses?” (I. ii. 284-285)—Camillo remains stoic, “Good my lord, be cur'd / Of this diseas'd opinion” (I. ii. 296-297). In an unusual rebuke for a servant to give his master, Camillo hints that Leontes has thrown such unbecoming tantrums before, but that this one is the worst: “You never spoke what did become you less / Than this” (I. ii. 282-283). In the quick exchanges between Leontes and Camillo, Shakespeare presents a feverish Leontes; he exclaims his questions in short indignant words in the face of Camillo's dry statements of fact. “Ha?” questions Leontes; “Ay, but why?” he continues; “Satisfy? Th'entreaties of your mistress? Satisfy?” Leontes concludes (I. ii. 230-235). The ironic mania comes to a point when an emotional Leontes implores his servant to insult his wife by admitting she is a “hobby-horse.”
This interchange should be played with a screaming Leontes, who continually pulls back to justify his paranoia before lashing out again, in front of an unflappable Camillo; a Leontes who begins by lightly satirizing Paul's famous “eye hath not seen nor ear heard” exhortation with glee before he concludes remorsefully, realizing he has confounded himself, with vulgarities like “hobby-horse,” and “flax-wench.”

A man who confuses his figures of speech by misapplying scripture's sacred tone to billingsgate, but does so unwittingly, is one of Shakespeare's signs of buffoonery, and the actor should suit his performance with Leontes's mistakes in mind. In this interchange with Camillo, Leontes uses parenthetical remarks three times so that his suspicions might seem justifiable, but, ironically, in so doing he only obfuscates the evidence of adultery—Camillo's wonder over such an accusation only increases with Leontes's speech. Leontes argues in a series of disjunctives that translate into either agreement with him or the impossible. Camillo must see the adulterous affair or he is a cuckold himself; Camillo must hear of the affair because the readily apparent cannot be missed by rumor; Camillo must think there is an affair because man possesses the capacity for reason. Antithetically playing with Paul's description of heaven, Leontes substitutes his version of the obvious for Paul's vision of supernatural bliss: eyes, ears, and thought must recognize the evil things in store for Leontes. The greatest absurdity is the passion with which Leontes urges the very thing he hopes against, Hermione's adultery. Like the audience, Camillo is appropriately flabbergasted by the imperative, “say't and justify't.” If Hermione introduces a situational comedy by showing Leontes inferiority, then Camillo shows that this inferiority is such that it descends into Leontes's relationships with his servants.

We should also observe that in Leontes's tantrum none of the inner dividedness of a tragic hero is displayed. Hamlet, Macbeth, or Othello exhibit a self-consciousness with respect to their actions (either just or unjust) and their changing emotional states, but for Leontes there is never an inner crisis of choice, nor a soliloquy that agonizes over his moral or political decisions, nor moments in which he fluctuates from anger to serenity, violence to philosophy. Leontes is monopathic in his convictions that Hermione is disloyal, and that his subjects have betrayed him. Observing the psychological differences between a tragic character and a melodramatic villain, Heilman writes:

The pathological extreme of the tragic condition is schizophrenia, where normal divideness is magnified into a split that is sheer illness. The pathological extreme of the melodramatic condition is paranoia—in one phase, the sense of one's own grandeur and, implicitly, of the downfall of others; in another phase, the sense of a hostile “they” who are conspiring to make one their victim.

The pathological divide that wed's a tragic hero's excellence to his fault is missing in Leontes; he is wholly evil in his persecutions (acts 2 and 3), but wholly good in his penance (act 5). The co-existence of contrary thoughts and feelings at climactic moments of choice in heroes such as Hamlet is absent from Leontes; more than that, the excellence of thought (Hamlet), or courage (Macbeth), or magnanimity (Othello) does not exist in Leontes either when he plays the villain or the penitent. But if Leontes lacks the sheer terror created by a jealous Othello pursuing vengeance, he does manifest the melodramatic villain's “paranoia” that assumes his own grandeur and the downfall of any who oppose him. The difficulty that Shakespeare presents with Leontes's paranoia is that it expands into comical extremes; indeed, Leontes's dictum that “All's true that is mistrusted” becomes the touchstone by which his servants fail to take his commands seriously. As Leontes moves from his conflicts with Camillo to Paulina, his sense of paranoia transforms into laughable villainy; he becomes a man who instigates snickering in place of fear for the audience. Instead of depicting a tragic hero, Shakespeare shows a melodramatic villain, but a villain whose emotional extremes occasion comedy.

Subjects patronizing Leontes begins with Camillo, but it is perfected with Paulina. When Paulina presents Hermione's child to Leontes, she takes liberties in speech that are unimaginable if used against a more noble character than Leontes. Emilia may repeat “My husband?” with incredulity at Desdemona's death, but she may not chastise Othello to the same degree as Paulina does Leontes; the Moor is too great a soul. Paulina begins by emphasizing her deputation from Leontes's “good queen”: “Good queen, my lord, good queen, I say
good queen, / And would by combat make her good, so were I / A man, the worst about you” (II. iii. 60-62).

Her repetition becomes comic: “The good queen / (For she is good) hath brought you forth a daughter” (II. iii. 65-66). As Gratiano thanked Shylock for the proclamation of “another Daniel” so that he might use it against him, Paulina borrows Leontes's questioning of Hermione's goodness for abuse. The scene escalates as Paulina's accusations become more intense and Leontes's anger waxes. During this time, Antigonus and the other lords are conspicuously lethargic in obeying their king. Leontes proposes that Antigonus's disobedience comes from fear of his wife; Paulina screams that Leontes is a slanderer enslaved by visions of his own fancy; meanwhile Antigonus replies to Leontes's accusations with curses on all husbands, and Leontes threatens that Paulina will be burnt (II. iii. 75-120). In this chorus of accusations, Leontes's threats to Paulina are suddenly dissolved by her suggestion that he might be behaving tyrannically. By Paulina's magnificent comic understatement the accusing section ends, incredibly enough, with Leontes's switching to the defensive in an equal passion, “Were I tyrant / Where were her life? She durst not call me so” (II. ii. 122-123). Ignoring Paulina for the moment, Leontes is here appealing to the opinion of the same lords whom he cursed for disobedience just an instant before. Never does Shakespeare present a monarch so dependent on the opinion of his servants, nor is there a monarch as insecure.

Paulina's appeal to Leontes includes the comic elements of the bizarre and topsy-turvy: a servant's abuse of a king initiates a triangle of accusations in which the lords, standing with Paulina outside the king's chamber, are condemned; then a pause ensues with Paulina's consideration of whether Leontes is a tyrant; next the accusations are replaced by defenses, and the lords upgraded to judges. Paulina, Leontes, and Antigonus's role reversals and abuse work perfectly with their accusation and denials' manic pace and strange turns. In all of this, Shakespeare gives an example of Bakhtin's carnival. The “peculiar logic” of the carnival is at work in the “continual shifting from top to bottom, from front to rear, of numerous parodies and travesties, humiliations, profanations, comic crowning and uncrowning.” Leontes, Paulina, and Antigonus illustrate the carnival's “world inside out” in their hyper-banter.

Shakespeare sets the scene for Paulina's abuse of Leontes by indicating how an audience should respond to it. An audience, Shakespeare seems to suggest, should join Leontes's servants, who are already laughing at him. When Leontes discovers the flight of Camillo, he imprisons his wife; no sooner than she is jailed, however, Leontes is pre-occupied by the suspicion that people are bemused with his absurd behavior. Leontes reflects in private: “Camillo and Polixenes / Laugh at me; make their pastime at my sorrow” (II.ii. 23-24). He is concerned that there are others laughing as well. Leontes reproaches his lords for not believing him about Hermione, and, in an effort to silence the snickering, he sends Cleomines and Dion to Delphi. Leontes says: “Though I am satisfied, and need no more / Than what I know, yet shall the oracle / Give rest to th' minds of others—such as he [Antigonus], / Whose ignorant credulity will not / Come up to the truth” (II. i. 189-193). Leontes's accusation is not only highly ironic—he accuses Antigonus when his own opinion is the one unable to “come up to the truth”—but it is also representative of the lords' opinion about the kind of king Leontes is: He is a man whose moods must be tolerated on account of his position, but also ridiculed. Leontes must always justify himself to his servants because they find him to be absurd; to some extent, the servants understand Leontes's tantrums as bizarre spectacle. After mentioning the oracle, Leontes vows to make Hermione's trial public in hopes of raising popular indignation at her. At this, Antigonus speculates on Leontes effecting a different public reaction: “[Raising the people] To laughter, as I take it / If the good truth were known” (II. i. 199). Like the other lords and servants, Antigonus is no revolutionary; he is master of ceremonies in an underworld of justifiably impertinent chuckles. Whether from his wife, his lords, his personal servants, or even his wife's friends, Leontes receives smirks and badgering questions in response to his orders and ideas; those surrounding Leontes cannot take his commands seriously.

Secondary characters that challenge Leontes, like Paulina and Antigonus, reveal a paradigm for the audience's sympathies; we are sure that if others think Leontes insane to the point of carnival, then his orders will not stand. As a result of Paulina's furious play with Leontes, the audience feels nothing like the suspense experienced in tragedy—the suspense caused by foretelling the demise of a sympathetic hero before showing it in action—but joins in the servants' antipathies and abuse toward Leontes. The play cannot maintain both
hope and terror around the same Leontes. Either the audience senses that the character is on a collision course with catastrophe as in tragedy, or they happily recognize his villainy will be corrected. Once Shakespeare winks in the direction of a happy ending, the formula for tragic characters is abrogated. Critics misread Leontes by searching for a tragic fault, or a cause for the tragic portion of the play: As a result, they miss the humor associated with Leontes's villainy, which his servants' disobedience indicates as a subject for ridicule. As the play moves towards resolution, Paulina expands her carnival not only with respect to the authority of Leontes, but even in regard to the authority of death. Turning to the restoration of Hermione, death is playfully overcome even as the villain whose orders initiate death is subdued; two villains, therefore, act in Leontes and in death. Both are considered with humor as they fuse into comedy's formula for happy endings.

After Hermione's trial and ostensible demise, Leontes is absent from the stage for an entire act. At the beginning of act 5, Leontes's counselors are attempting to persuade him to remarry; they argue that he has suffered enough and that the kingdom is in need of an heir (V.i. 27-29). Leontes obeys Paulina, however, following her command to refrain from marriage. Just as Paulina earlier manipulated Leontes's moods by suggesting his tyranny, she now cajoles Leontes now by triggering the emotions that overwhelm him. Before it was Leontes's desire for good opinion, now it is grief (V.i. 12-16; 34-35). In either case, Paulina realizes the swinging emotional extremes of Leontes should be monitored.

Shakespeare delays little in illustrating that although Leontes is penitent for his crimes he is still Sicily's clown; in this respect, Leontes is unchanged. Leontes quickly moves from the sorrow inspired by grief to the elation felt because of Perdita's beauty. On Florizel and Perdita's arrival, Leontes acknowledges Florizel's position—that social class is no impediment to marriage—before he mentions the possibility of marrying Perdita himself (V.i. 220-231). Once again, Leontes and Paulina resume their comic banter of earlier acts: Paulina's accusation that Leontes's "eye hath too much youth in it" receives Leontes's half-honest excuses that Perdita reminds him of Hermione (V.i. 225-229). The accusations and defenses between Paulina and Leontes are lighter than previous ones because Leontes returns to the model of a king subordinated to his subjects, which may have been his behavior before the jealous tantrum. Whether in jealousy or in love, however, the joke is still caused by Leontes. In loving Perdita he loves his own daughter.

After greeting Florizel and Perdita, next for Leontes is the restoration scene. In the restoration of Hermione, Shakespeare revisits the beginning of his play. Just as Leontes's reactions to Hermione and Camillo catalyzed the drama in the first part, his reactions to the waking statue are central now. In the first act, Leontes's belief that Hermione is false initiates the play's action, whereas in the last act Leontes's belief that Hermione's statue is life-like enough to be alive reveals the play's resolution. With a perfect symmetry, then, Shakespeare may conclude the significance of Leontes's actions by showing how comedy renders impotent both villainy and the deaths it causes.

When the statue is unveiled, Leontes is amazed, but, like a buffoon, he first notices the awkward details of the piece: "Her natural posture!" he exclaims insignificantly; "but yet, Paulina, Hermione was not so much wrinkled" Leontes criticizes with Perdita's youthful beauty in mind, rather than in gratitude for seeing the image of his queen once more (V.iii. 23; 27-28). Paulina explains that the statue is supposed to look as Hermione would look if she were alive today and Leontes is satisfied. As he expresses wonder and affection, however, he continues to be Shakespeare's unwitting ironist. In praising the life-like qualities of the statue, Leontes says: "The fixture of her has motion in't, / As we are mock'd with art" (V.iii. 67-68). Although the art is Shakespeare's here, the statue is not the art of Julio Romano. The statue is a living Hermione; she may move at any time, which means Leontes is truly being mocked when he gapes at her as if she were stone. Without the slightest suspicion that the statue is alive, Leontes exhibits a concern for being laughed at once again. Ever the man of insecurities and emotions, Leontes is overwhelmed by the likeness to Hermione and he resolves to kiss the statue—as long as no man mocks him for it. “What fine chisel / Could ever yet cut breath? / Let no man mock me, / For I will kiss her” (V.iii. 78-79). In these lines Leontes is still the same character of emotional extremes; still, however, Shakespeare uses Leontes's insecurities for his most poignant comments.
on the power of comedy. As Leontes is “mock'd by art,” so, too, is death mocked by Shakespeare's comedy. The “fine chisel” which may “cut breath” is Shakespeare's own art, which brings Hermione back from the dead for Leontes. As Hermione awakes and is returned to her family, we no longer laugh at Leontes the villain, but we laugh at that with which his antics are associated—death. Just as Leontes's antics and tantrums are exaggerated to the extent that even his servants fail to take their king seriously, so, too, is death's power and scope lightly removed by Paulina. Like two melodramatic villains, Leontes and death are extreme in their persecutions, but are rendered innocuous by those characters that refuse to take their commands and claims seriously.

It may be objected that Mamillius's death and Hermione's apparent demise are too dark to uphold such a reading of Leontes; to laugh at Leontes and the death he causes, after all, renders the division of the play into tragic and comic parts an error. Yet I think that laughing at death through Leontes's buffoonery is precisely the reading of The Winter's Tale Shakespeare indicates, and that this interpretation is echoed in other parts of the play. After Leontes causes Mamillius's death, for example, Shakespeare adds the deaths of Antigonus and his crew, only to follow it with the clown coaxing the audience into laughing at it. Antigonus's death is achieved by the wild stage direction—“Exit pursued by a bear”—before the clown further instructs the audience to consider death comically. He comments very cheerily to his father on the demise of Antigonus by land, and Antigonus's men by sea:

O, the most piteous cry of the poor souls! Sometimes to see 'em, and not see 'em; now the ship boring the moon with her mainmast, and anon swallow'd with yest and froth, and you'd thrust a cork into a hogshead. And then for the land service, to see how the bear tore out his shoulder-bone, how he cried to me for help, and said his name was Antigonus, a nobleman. But to make end of the ship, to see how the sea flap-dragon'd it; but, first, how the poor souls roar'd, the sea mock'd them; and how the poor gentleman roar'd, and the bear mock'd him, both roaring louder than the sea or weather.

(III. iii. 90-102)

In the clown's repetition of the same words and those words' uniform brevity, his clauses achieve a parallelism which playfully mimic the ebb and flow of the waves he witnesses on the sea: “Sometimes to see 'em, and not to see 'em.” In his choice of subject matter, however, the clown uses the ebb and flow melody to alternate between scenes of death; the effect is a fearless fascination and excitement with death, which is refreshing and funny. The clown moves from one scene of death to another without empathy, but with thrills. He may hardly contain himself by the end: “but, first, how the poor souls roar'd, and the sea mock'd them; and how the poor gentleman roar'd, and the bear mock'd him, both roaring louder than the sea or weather.” The clown ends his parallelism with the roar of a bear, a symbol of death's power, which is now comically conceived. When the shepherd responds to the clown, he captures the significance for the audience of a comic posture with respect to death: “Now bless thyself: thou met'st with / things dying, I with things new-born” (III. iii. 113-114). The change indicated by the shepherd's words is not merely from Antigonus and his crew's death to new found life in Perdita, but in the new found comic perspective by which death may be considered. What once was characteristically feared and abhorred is now newborn as comedy. David Bergeron argues that Shakespeare writes his Winter's Tale under the influence of a civic pageant in which a figure called Time resurrects the dead, and, if his historical speculation is accurate, then the “things new-born” might have been recognized by Shakespeare's audience as a joyful conclusion to a comic overcoming of death. Whatever might have influenced Shakespeare, however, he punctuates his victory over death in restoring Hermione by the play's end. The “new-born” joys spoken of by the shepherd are fully realized when Leontes is made merry with the
restoration—an authentic resurrection to Leontes's eyes—of Hermione from the dead. The restoration of Hermione and its appearance as a resurrection to Leontes marks a Baroque-like triumph over death. Like Leontes's villainy, death is treated after the manner of exaggerated spectacles found in fairy tale and melodrama but re-made into Shakespearean comedy.

Notes

1. By defining the words “affection” and “intention” in terms of Timothy Bright's *A Treatise on Melancholy* (1586) and the vocabulary of Thomas Aquinas, Wright believes that a jealous seizure overcomes Leontes's capacity for reason. Wright argues that since Leontes's “rational faculty” is swept away by paranoia, then he cannot be a tragic figure. The “tragic-comic disruption,” Wright argues, occurs when Leontes's intellect succumbs to his mental illusions. I agree with Wright that Leontes is not a tragic character, but I think that such disqualification renders the entire tragi-comedy formula suspect. Leontes's “paranoia,” I suggest, places him in the context of a melodramatic villain, who emerges as a more laughable than fearful foe. See Laurence Wright, “Where Does The Tragi-Comic Disruption Start?: *The Winter's Tale* and Leontes 'Affection.'” *English Studies* 70.3 (1989): 225-32.


3. Norman Nathan takes a position between the view that Leontes is jealous before the play's action begins and the view that Leontes's jealousy is sudden and inexplicable: He thinks Leontes is jealous suddenly and with reason. The question of whether the jealousy is well founded or not, however, emerges only with the assumption that Leontes's jealousy should be justifiable. I suggest that Shakespeare meant his Leontes to be irrational in his accusations, as death strikes us as irrational and unnecessary; that we would be unable to laugh at Leontes were we to take his accusations seriously. See Norman Nathan, “Leontes' Provocation,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 19 (1968): 19-24.


8. All citations from Shakespeare's plays are from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, Ed. G. Blakemore Evans. 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997); hereafter, they are internally noted by line.


10. Jennifer Richards points out that Leontes falls into further vulgarities during his first confrontation with Hermione. In order to avoid indecorous puns upon the word “quean” and “queen,” Leontes simply accuses Hermione of being a whore by attributing to her the “bold'st titles” that common people might give such a “bed-swerver” (II.i. 91-94). Ironically, Leontes's concern for linguistic manners about the use of puns leads him to further mar his speech with allusions to foul epithets. Richards writes: “Yet, Leontes' rantings, I suggest, should be taken seriously, because they draw attention to the linguistic transgression so characteristic of this and other late plays.” By comparing Leontes's frustrated language to manuals of decorous speaking published during the early modern period, Richards concludes that neo-classical tastes in languages—those very tastes supposed to
distinguish aristocrats—are unable to distinguish classes at all. Ultimately, Richards thinks the *Winter's Tale* disproves any notion of social rank other than that rank produced by mere convention. I agree that Leontes's use of language marks ironic irregularity, but I argue that it functions as another sign that Leontes is misplaced, and we are not to take his orders seriously but as another sign that Leontes is a villain full of buffoonery. See Jennifer Richards, “Social Decorum in *The Winter's Tale.*” *Shakespeare's Late Plays: New Readings,* ed. Jennifer Richards and James Knowles. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1999) 75-91.

11. For example, Bottom mixes up the same Pauline passage in *Midsummer Night's Dream* (V. i. 210-214).


13. Emilia repeats “My husband?” three times to Othello (*Othello,* V. ii. 140-48). Although she reproves Othello further, her abuse is momentary and, in part, directed at Iago.

14. See *Merchant of Venice,* IV. i. 333; 340-341.

15. Leontes's fear of being thought a tyrant emerges again at Hermione's trial when he says: “Let us be clear'd / Of being tyrannous …” (III. ii. 4-5).


17. For example, Mary Nichols probes how Shakespeare reconciles the apparent opposites of tragedy and comedy in one play. Carefully dividing the play into two parts—acts 1-3 constitute the tragedy, whereas acts 4-5 are comedy—Nichols analyzes the characters according to Aristotelian virtues and vices for an answer. She concludes that the comedic portion of the play triumphs because of the harmonious blending together of the characters' virtues and vices; for example, boldness and moderation are linked with the marriage of Paulina and Camillo. Nichols's essay provides excellent character analysis at times, but she should have given greater attention to why the various characters—with their separate, yet compatible, virtues and vices—did not interact successfully from the play's start; her explanation that “unity” is as natural as “disunity” did not answer satisfactorily the question to my mind. I argue that the secondary characters, such as Paulina and Camillo, show the ineptitude of Leontes from the play's very beginning; indeed, their virtues are illustrated by opposing Leontes. Because of their opposition, however, the audience knows that Leontes should not be taken seriously, and, as a result, there is no “tragedy” at work in the early acts of the *Winter's Tale.* See Mary Nichols, “*The Winter's Tale:* The Triumph of Comedy over Tragedy.” *Interpretation* 9: 2-3 (1981): 169-90.

18. Northrop Frye observes the humor of Leontes and Paulina's interactions in this scene as well. He writes: “There is a quite funny scene where Paulina sweeps in, Leontes orders her out, a swarm of male courtiers make futile efforts at pushing her, and Paulina brushes them off like insects while Leontes blusters. We realize that as soon as he gets rid of his obsession he'll be quite a decent person again, though one doesn't go through such things unmarked.” See Northrop Frye, *Northrop Frye on Shakespeare* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1986) 163.


Cristina León Alfar (essay date 2003)


[In the following essay, Alfar discusses Leontes as the embodiment of the tyranny of masculinist absolute rule and the commoditization of women. By challenging Leontes's patrilineal sovereignty, the critics avers, Hermione and Paulina represent “fantasies of female evil” who threaten the very underpinnings of the patriarchal order through their perceived adultery and rebellion. Alfar concludes that Shakespeare rejected “monarchical and conjugal tyranny” through the generic transformation of The Winter's Tale from a potentially violent and destructive tragedy to a romance that points to an optimistic future of reconciliation.]

At the end of The Winter's Tale, Hermione, believed by her husband to have died sixteen years before, miraculously transforms from a statue to a living woman. Many critics are disturbed by Shakespeare's metamorphosis of Hermione to stone and perhaps even more so by her reanimation from statue to seemingly forgiving and silent wife. Valerie Traub sees Hermione's metaphoric death as “reversed only when another symbolic form of stasis and control is imposed: Hermione's transformation into a statue. … ’[W]arm but not hot’ … Hermione is chastened (made chaste), her erotic power severely curtailed.”¹ Gayle Kern Paster argues that “Hermione is visibly altered and diminished by her experience of patriarchal discipline, as may be suggested by the silence in which she embraces Leontes. Indeed, as a living statue she is herself the subject of an evidently successful, self-imposed discipline of shame.”² And Mary Beth Rose suggests that the shift from tragedy to comedy is enabled by “the removal of Hermione,” who can return only “when she is beyond the age of fertility, rendering [her] unthreatening.”³ Rose reads the play as reinscribing “maternal desire [as a] threat to the life of the king/hero and to the society he rules.”⁴ But if we read Hermione's momentary immobilization as containment of feminine erotic power and her silence as, in Traub's view, “bespeak[ing] a submissiveness most unlike her previous animation,”⁵ we ignore the emancipatory act that precedes this moment of stasis. Hermione rejects Leontes when, in his tyranny, he disregards the oracle's pronouncement of his wife's innocence. It is she who departs from the play's action, independent of any patriarchal judgement; and it is she who returns, deliberately, when her daughter is found living. Hermione's return, in this regard, is voluntary and signals the play's investment in her desire above that of Leontes, whose violent and paranoid fantasies of marital betrayal forced Hermione's flight from his court. Rather than freezing his heroine in stone as an effacement of her maternal or erotic power, Shakespeare takes advantage of the generic traditions of romance to camouflage her homecoming as the miraculous reward to a reformed monarch. Whether this moment is read as magical is irrelevant, then, because the generic conventions of romance enable it to be played as such.

Of course, Hermione's return is engineered by Paulina. The two women form a crucial bond in their stand against Leontes' tyranny. While Hermione “dies,” Paulina remains at court in a seemingly official capacity, keeping the memory of the “dead” queen and his responsibility for her death fresh in Leontes' mind. But the bond these two women form is also one that unites them in fantasies of female evil; both Hermione and Paulina are accused of evil by Leontes, one for supposed adultery and the other for questioning his power as king to dispose of his “traitorous” wife and her “illegitimate” child as he sees fit. Paulina's challenge of Leontes' absolute belief that Hermione has made him a cuckold makes her, in his estimation, a “mankind witch” (2.3.68) and “most intelligencing bawd” (69), “[a] callat / Of boundless tongue” (91-92), and a “gross hag” (108) he threatens to burn at the stake (114).⁶ Thus The Winter's Tale is a play in which a male character, here the monarch, identifies two women as sources of evil because they both pose a threat to his masculinist sovereignty. But the play clearly does not proceed from his view. For by the end of act 3, Paulina becomes Leontes’ trusted source of truth, the one to oversee his daily act of contrition at the
chapel where Hermione and Mamilius are buried. I argue that to assume that female power is effaced in *The Winter's Tale* is to discount the power of Paulina, who challenges Leontes' accusations against Hermione, gives a name to his tyranny, and becomes—at his contrition—his foremost advisor, keeper of his celibacy, and enforcer of his daily exercise of repentance.

The play radically and unequivocally, and therefore dangerously, traces fictions of female good and evil to the tyranny of the male monarch, to his investments in patrilineal systems of blood, inheritance, and power. If, in *King Lear* and *Macbeth*, Shakespeare interrogates the tyranny of patrilineal structures of power, in part, through women's participation in violent political acts, in *The Winter's Tale* he takes a new approach. Rather than dramatizing Hermione and Paulina's adoption of tyrannical modes of rule, he turns Leontes' tyranny as king and husband against them and stages the consequences of their refusal to confirm his power and to succumb to his brutality. In more overt and deliberate ways than in prior tragedies, female evil is unmasked as a masculinist fantasy. Shakespeare illustrates the paranoia at the heart of a patrilineal economic structure dependent on phantasmatic constructions of femininity for its stability.

I will argue that the genre of romance, with its basis in fantasy and magic, allows Shakespeare to mask the danger his play potentially poses to absolute monarchy and to put pressure on material concerns with women's socioeconomic position as phantasmatic guarantees of patrilineal succession. The patrilineal economy that conjures women into property is magnified by the monarchical setting, making the necessary purity of Hermione's body the guarantor of the state's patriarchal line. Because a royal line of succession is in question, the accusation of adultery Leontes brings against Hermione is conflated with treason, so that the rebellion he fears is born of a female power to threaten male sovereignty. Leontes' accusations, then, are weighted by the need for a royal heir whose blood descends from kings sanctified by God, so that the kingdom's honor is at stake.

Thus in its generic shift, *The Winter's Tale* provides a kind of staged commentary for the examination of gender and power I have traced in *Romeo and Juliet*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, and *Antony and Cleopatra*. Shakespeare revises the violence staged in these plays and rejects the political and domestic tyranny seemingly demanded by the genre of tragedy, so that the ruthlessness that marked male and female participation in the masculinist competitions for power is disavowed. Because the play insists on Hermione's innocence, the rebellion Leontes fears comes only when Hermione feigns death and Paulina, in her rejection of Leontes' right to condemn his queen, becomes the moral and political voice of the play. Thus *The Winter's Tale* brings to the surface masculinist anxieties about female power and comes close to installing a female form of power over the monarch/husband's natural position of authority. But the play stops short of this radical reversal when female rebellion against the tyranny of the monarch/husband is camouflaged as the hero's quest for moral and political exculpation, a quest that earns Paulina's magical reanimation of Hermione as a reward to the reformed hero/husband/monarch. Thus patriarchal power is reinstated at the end, but a shift in forms of power is salvaged. When Leontes is cured of his paranoid delusions, Florizel's new order figures the future for both the kingdoms of Bohemia and Sicilia; as a part of the play's pastoral shift to romance, Florizel opposes himself to Leontes' violent control, modeling himself after Paulina's vision by valuing regeneration and procreation. The play's reworking of marriage and monarchy is mirrored in its use of two genres—tragedy and romance, so that the shift at the end of act 3 is deliberate and revisionary.

Thus the fantastical basis for romance makes the play a forum for both replicating and interrogating masculinist fantasies about female sexuality and desire, so that Hermione's and Paulina's disruption of the patrilineal structure's control over the female body is both deployed and disguised. Shakespeare underscores the vulnerability of the female body to masculinist anxieties, which, through Paulina, he names “disease.” The evil of which the women I have examined thus far are accused by their male counterparts is replicated and systematically disavowed in *The Winter's Tale* when Leontes' paranoia, his fantasy of cuckoldry and drive toward violence are transformed by Paulina into a feminized form of rule based on reconciliation rather than on violent competitions. Leontes' performance of repentance and reconciliation and his apparent recovery
from paranoid fantasies conjuring Hermione's and Paulina's "evil," make him worthy of his wife's return, worthy of his power as husband and king. Thus the play stages a revised patrilineal order that embraces the procreative opportunity of the feminine rather than fearing it as chaotic and dangerous.

I read Leontes' anxiety as paranoia in Jean-Joseph Goux's terms. Goux theorizes what he calls the "neurotic subject," who is constituted by five major socioeconomic modes of production (primitive, Asiatic, ancient, feudal, and capitalist). These modes "produce a dominant symbolic coherence that correspond to the neurotic syndromes. … Hysterical, obsessional, and paranoid structures go back to positions in the symbolic stratifications which correspond to modes (dominant or vestigial) of production and exchange. … Thus the living, socialized subject is installed in a layered symbolic topography that constitutes it as a pole, a subject of exchange, through a specific process of substitutions—whence various neurotic types, various forms of neurosis." In this light, Leontes' paranoia is the logical result of a system of relations based on emerging capitalist formations of sexual bonds in marriage. As the economic necessity for pure lines of descent increases, the female body is rendered phantasmatic. As definitions of virtue, the general equivalent for women's value, become overdetermined, the neurosis accompanying such material concerns is paranoia. Leontes' "disease," in Shakespeare's terms, is not a biological imperative but a production associated with a specific socioeconomic, cultural process in the early modern period when the transition from a feudal, multiruler economy to an emerging mono-monarchical and capitalist mode of production generates new marital and parental structures of power relations. As is illustrated by conduct manuals such as Vives's The Instruction of A Christian Woman, those relations produce the suspicion and brutal enforcement of authority as the basis for women's commodification. As Goux puts it: "in this rift or drop [denoting the division of man from woman through reproduction] is the outline of the ontogenetic lurch by which the male subject attains a position of vehemently denying the genetic generosity of the primitive mother, good or bad, by masculinizing the life standard, with the result that the new, neutralized mother, moving from genetrix to mater, is condemned to signify negation, evil, sickness, and death." Leontes' suspicions about Hermione's loyalty reflect the radical denial Goux describes. Her pregnancy stimulates anxieties in him about her generative power and threatens his power both as husband and king. She comes to embody, in his imagination, evil, sickness, and death and is violently negated—even abjected (in Kristeva's terms)—by Leontes. For if, as Kristeva argues, the abject is present in anything transgressing the moralized sanctions of society, but especially in blood, pus, urine, excrement, and sweat—in the excretions of the body—then it is clear that Hermione, in the depths of her uncontrollable and pregnant body, represents the limits and limitlessness of the abject.

But as I have argued throughout this study, the abject is located not within a feminine chaos but rather in the masculinist competition for property and domination that builds on a hierarchical and ruthless exploitation of the female body. As Kristeva's sense of the abject suggests, woman's mutability, the challenge to dominion and restraint that the indeterminacy of her body's secretions, rhythms, and expulsions pose is exacerbated by the failure of the masculinist order to contain her fluidity, her inconstancy, making her a demonized threat. While male power is definitive of honor, female power figures a danger. As Luce Irigaray notes: "The womb is never thought of as the primal place in which we become body. Therefore for many men it is variously phantasized as a devouring mouth, as a sewer in which anal and urethral waste is poured, as a threat to the phallus or, at best, as a reproductive organ. And the womb is mistaken for all the female sexual organs since no valid representations of female sexuality exist. The only words we have for women's sexuality are filthy, mutilating words. Consequently, the feelings associated with women's sexuality will be anxiety, phobia, disgust, and the haunting fear of castration." Repeatedly, Hermione is identified by her husband as a symbol of excess. As I will argue below, her pregnant body becomes a site of terror, for his inability to control her womb leaves Leontes vulnerable to theft. She is both a fertile land open to invasion and an unruly subject whose betrayal threatens his sovereignty. The threat her body poses for him conjures realms of decay and death. Leontes' paranoia dramatizes masculinist failures to identify, grasp, and restrain woman's corporeality, making woman that which must be tamed. That no ordering project succeeds at such mastering aggravates masculinist fears and sends into motion the juridically inscribed constraints played out in tracts on women's
nature.

Leontes' paranoia exhibits itself as an overflow of images of Hermione's body, as a source of venom (the spider in the cup) for which he lacks the antidote. The symbolic economy on which he draws for his understanding of Hermione's pregnant body functions as Irigaray describes: as a demarcation between pure and impure bodies that enables the masculinist order a way of guaranteeing itself. As Leontes' mania in the courtroom scene demonstrates, his power can be secured only through Hermione's social, physical, and symbolic annihilation. But Shakespeare challenges this violent impulse in *The Winter's Tale* when he stages Leontes' suspicions as paranoia, so that he uncovers the masculinist tendency to enforce a self-interested universe of language and symbols and rejects the violence of that imposition by bringing Hermione back to life. By making the male monarch the penitent confessor of his play, Shakespeare assigns responsibility for women's oppression to masculinist tyranny, so that tyranny, rather than the body of the woman, becomes the greatest threat to a monarchical state.

Critics have attempted repeatedly to find the motive for Leontes' jealousy in act 1, scene 2. Some conclude that Hermione's playful and assertive talk stimulates his anxieties. Indeed, Hermione's speech pretending shock at Leontes' praise, her pose of incredulity that she could “have … twice said well,” fairly prances with glee (1.2.90). She wheedles Leontes, teases him about his meager praise, and begs good-naturedly for more. Hermione's playfulness reveals that she does not fear her husband, that, in fact, she feels free to express herself and confident in her relationship with him. Not even the conventions of courtly love, which license playful banter, can account for her unrestrained behavior with Leontes and Polixenes in this scene. Her speech is devoid of fear, reserve, or formality, which suggests that she is entirely unequipped for the accusations Leontes hurls at her in the next scene. Her behavior precludes the possibility that any such drama has entered their married lives before. Thus her speech alone seems unlikely to provoke the violence of his reaction. As another motive, Adelman argues that Hermione's pregnant body becomes the “site of longing and terror, its very presence disruptive of male bonds and male identity.” Yet the pregnancy, while crucial, cannot be the only motive for Leontes' paranoia because Hermione has been with child before, seemingly without similar crises.

I want to suggest that Hermione's freedom with her words merges with her pregnancy to become the singular catalyst for Leontes' suspicions. A specific moment in the conversation conjoins with the anxieties provoked by her swollen body to produce Leontes' imaginings. At the end of her speech playfully mocking her husband, Hermione makes the mistake of equating her husband and his friend as her reward for speaking well:

'Tis grace indeed.
Why, lo you now! I have spoke to th' purpose twice:  
The one for ever earn'd a royal husband;  
Th' other for some while a friend.  
[Give her hand to Polixenes.]

(1.2.105-8)

Leontes, of course, had demonstrated his own playfulness in response to that of his wife when he answered Hermione's wheedling with:

Why, that was when  
Three crabb'd months had sour'd themselves to death,  
Ere I could make thee open thy white hand,  
[And] clap thyself my love; then didst thou utter,  
"I am yours forever."

(1.2.101-5)
Playfully, Leontes exaggerates the agony of courtship he experienced as a result of her delayed fulfillment of his desire. His description of that time is significant because he juxtaposes Hermione's verbal utterance with the physical act of giving him her hand. When she subsequently takes Polixenes as her friend and gives him her hand, she reenacts the moment when she accepted her husband's love and gave herself to him. Both her words and the act of giving her hand to Polixenes fuel her husband's jealousy. That she uses the term “friend” for Polixenes, with all its sexual connotations in the period, is less interesting, less compelling than the redramatization of a moment that, by his own loving mockery, Leontes has revealed was meaningful to him. However, her use of “friend” for Polixenes also conjures images of adultery, so that word and act merge in Leontes’ fantasies of cuckoldry. This moment is followed by Leontes' first spoken suspicion. When the king describes Hermione's and Polixenes' conduct as “paddling palms and pinching fingers, / As now they are” (1.2.115-16), he describes this moment; it haunts him and recurs throughout his paranoid hysteria until it expands to the fantastical whispering, leaning cheek-to-cheek, meeting noses, and kissing with the inside lip that he later describes to Camillo (1.2.284-86). The phantasmatic nature of Leontes' accusations become clear when Hermione's friendship with Polixenes fuses in Leontes' mind with the word and act that made Hermione his wife.28

It is, then, after this moment that Hermione's visibly sexual body becomes suspect, leading Leontes immediately to question his son's paternity. “Mamillius, / Art thou my boy?” he asks the child at his side (1.2.110-20). He accepts the boy's “Ay, my good lord” (120) for only six lines before he must ask again, “How now, you wanton calf, / Art thou my calf?” (126-27). His question is predictable. Hermione's “adultery” threatens Leontes and the necessary transmission of the Crown through pure bloodlines. Leontes must accept only on faith the legitimacy of his children, a faith that is never secure.29 The fragility of his faith renders female desire, the female body, always suspect, and Hermione's body is conspicuously heavy with child. Leontes' questions about his son's paternity reveal his anxieties about the paternity of the child Hermione carries.30 As other critics have noted, Leontes' maniacal ravings make of his wife a great gaping hole.31

Inch-thick, knee-deep, o'er head and ears a fork'd one!
Go play, boy, play. Thy mother plays, and I
Play too, but so disgrac'd a part, whose issue
Will hiss me to my grave: contempt and clamor
Will be my knell. Go Play, boy, play. There have been
(Or I am much deceiv'd) cuckold's ere now,
And many a man there is (even at this present,
Now, while I speak this) holds his wife by th' arm
That little thinks she has been sluic'd in 's absence
And his pond fish'd by the next neighbor—by
Sir Smile, his neighbor. Nay, there's comfort in't,
While other men have gates, and those gates open'd,
As mine, against their will. Should all despair
That have revolted wives, the tenth of mankind
Would hang themselves. Physic for't there's none.
It is a bawdy planet, that will strike
Where 'tis predominant; and 'tis pow'ful—think it—
From east, west, north, and south. Be it concluded,
No barricado for a belly. Know't,
It will let in and out the enemy,
With bag and baggage. Many thousand on's
have the disease, and feel't not.

(1.2.186-207)

Leontes makes his wife's body not just a sexual object but a piece of property. Her body is vulnerable to entry, vulnerable to exploitation by others, and he is powerless to stop it. Her belly has no barricade, which makes enemies of other men and his unborn child. He is the innocent victim of theft. But he is also the cuckold whose reputation will never be recovered, not even in death. Leontes fantasizes woman's body as dark and
unknown depths of infinitely penetrable matter that men can never know or contain. Such unpredictability makes wives into rebels, unruly subjects who, by threatening the purity and stability of patrilineal power, become guilty of treason, guilty of making otherwise sovereign lands vulnerable to invasion. Leontes' vision of female infidelity, then, is grounded in material concerns, in anxieties about loss of absolute ownership, of property rights. The disease he identifies as that from which he and untold numbers of other men suffer is dispossession. His deprivation implies as well a loss of honor, since honor is bound to ownership. Moreover, the indeterminacy and capriciousness of women's nature make men powerless dupes. Leontes' self-identification with cuckolds becomes a source of both comfort, therefore, and of violence, for it is his escalating sense of dishonor that provokes his reckless abandonment of wife and children. Leontes' fears are produced both by the vision of his wife's swollen body and by the freedom with which she gives her hand to Polixenes in friendship, an act that fuses in Leontes' mind with a loss of sovereignty over that which is his. He becomes, in this light, a weak, sickly victim of women's faithlessness and mutability.

Images of disease and contagion haunt the first three acts; several characters invoke the female body as infection and Leontes as the victim of disease. While Shakespeare's use of such imagery might suggest a misogynist agenda, that is not the case. For Leontes himself reveals that the disease in question is phantasmatic, a brain sickness causing paranoid fantasies of marital and political betrayal:

In my just censure! in my true opinion!
Alack for lesser knowledge! how accurs'd
In being so blest! There may be in the cup
A spider steep'd, and one may drink; depart,
And yet partake no venom (for his knowledge
Is not infected), but if one present
Th' abhor'red ingredient to his eye, make known
How he hath drunk, he cracks his gorge, his sides,
With violent hefts. I have drunk, and seen the spider.
Camillo was his help in this, his pandar.
There is a plot against my life, my crown.

(2.1.36-47)

That Leontes' suspicions leap from the illegitimacy of his son to the perceived threat against his life and crown is no accident. Son, life, and Crown conjoin to form the blood and interest inherent in and requisite to a patrilineal economy. Like Othello in regard to Desdemona's supposed adultery, Leontes laments his knowledge of Hermione's "sin" and invokes ignorance as the peace for which he longs. His image of the spider's venom repeats infection as the trope for the evil of female sexuality. His "knowledge" of his wife's contagion assumes that he contracts the disease from her. However, Leontes has invented, fabricated that illness. Because Hermione's evil is Leontes' phantasmatic construction, the disease is figured as emanating from Leontes rather than his wife.

Because Leontes' pathological fantasies necessarily reach out to envelop those he perceives as having betrayed him, Camillo, informing the Bohemian king of Leontes' accusations, tells Polixenes that he "cannot name the disease, and it is caught / Of you that are yet well" (1.2.386-87). Innocent of adultery, yet judged guilty, Polixenes swears that were he Leontes' deceiver, then "my best blood turn / To an infected jelly … and my approach be shunn'd, / Nay, hated too, worse than the great'st infection / That e'er was heard or read” (417-18, 422-24). Were he guilty of such betrayal, Polixenes wishes upon himself a masculinist nightmare: the infection of his blood, a fallen reputation, and ostracism from society and honor. But disease is not an image raised solely by the men. Paulina, taking it upon herself to defend the wronged Hermione, curses these "dangerous, unsafe lunes i' th' King” (2.2.28). The disease running through the kingdom becomes located in Leontes' mind. Paulina approaches Leontes, as she says, “with words medicinal as true, / Honest as either, to purge him of that humor / That presses him from sleep” (2.3.37-39). She is his "physician" (54), coming to
cure the fantastic disease of his mind.\textsuperscript{36} Thus Shakespeare relentlessly underscores the phantasmatics of fears of cuckoldry, of the masculinist order's construction of feminine betrayal and chaos. But he also indictes the process whereby the female body is commodified in a patrilineal system, so that Shakespeare defines the fears producing a spectralization of feminine good and evil as pathology. The masculinist economy that depends on the purity of woman's body is infected with a sickness that leads, in The Winter's Tale, to the destruction of the monarchical line. By the end of the third act, the deaths of Hermione, Mamillius, and the loss of Perdita signify the end of Leontes' line as he knows it. And as act 5 opens, he takes a vow of chastity, in essence, by promising never to marry except by Paulina's approval. She is indeed, then, his physician, and by association, physician to a structure of relations that depends on binaries of female identity for its stability and perpetuation.\textsuperscript{37}

When Leontes confronts Hermione with his accusations, Shakespeare begins the process of naming that ruthlessness. Like his use of “disease” for masculinist anxieties about feminine nature, Shakespeare uses “tyranny” to describe Leontes' treatment of his wife and newborn daughter.\textsuperscript{38} When Hermione denies his accusations, Leontes exercises his power to condemn her:

\begin{quote}
I have said
She is an adult'ress, I have said with whom:
More—she's a traitor, and Camillo is
A federary with her, and one that knows
What she should shame to know herself,
But with her most vild principal—that she's
A bed-swerver, even as bad as those
That vulgars give bold'st titles; ay and privy
To this their late escape.
.....                              Away with her to prison!
He who shall speak for her is afar off guilty
But that he speaks.
\end{quote}

(2.1.87-95, 103-5)

Like other male characters who threaten and curse women in early modern tragedy, Leontes' condemnation and denunciation of Hermione encompass not just adultery but treason to the Crown. As king, he fears both the impurity of his line and threats against his life. He conflates Hermione's sexual misdemeanor with a political conspiracy against him. Consequently, he perceives himself as using his power as king to quash an insurrection. When his advisors attempt to dissuade him, he asserts that “Our prerogative / Calls not your counsels, but our natural goodness / Imparts this; which if you … cannot, or will not, / Relish a truth like us, inform yourselves / We need no more of your advice”(2.1.163-65, 166-68). By rejecting the counsel of those men whose function it is to advise him in matters political, Leontes proves himself a tyrant.\textsuperscript{39} Secure in his absolute authority, he denies the wisdom of others and of the law. Disregarding the passionate defenses of his wife made by Antigonus and the First Lord, he rushes to bring official charges against her for treason and adultery. His power over her life, over the lives of his children and advisors, hangs over the heads of everyone on stage, so that their objections to his behavior dwindle and then stop. The futility of their words against Leontes' absolute authority underscores Hermione's, her children's, and the court's total subjection to his will. That he admits to having called upon spiritual counsel from Apollo comforts Antigonus but fails to mitigate Leontes' tyranny.

Leontes' suspicions about Hermione's infidelity are revealed by the oracle as false. Shakespeare's device is significant because it suggests that women's fidelity can only be known through divine intervention.\textsuperscript{40} While such a statement could testify to his reinscription of masculinist fears, as Mary Beth Rose contends, I argue that Shakespeare uncovers those fears as a product of the fragility of patrilineal control. He highlights women's physical and economic dependence on the patriarchal word, on masculinist confirmation of their virtue; while female virtue stabilizes the masculinist order, women remain dependent on that order's public
recognition and valuation of their virtue. That Leontes refuses to accept Apollo's word on Hermione's innocence demonstrates that when it comes to female sexuality, fantasy is more powerful than reality. Thus Shakespeare both discloses the spectrality of early modern formulations of feminine identity and exorcises their haunting power. The Winter's Tale, as King Lear and Macbeth do not, conceptualizes an order in which a violent and tyrannical political system fails to control women's desire and must be modified to satisfy the regenerative needs of a culture in the peaceful transmission of property.

In this instance as well, Paulina serves as the agent of liberty, as the physician of the court and of the king, curing the kingdom of Leontes' despotism. When Hermione “dies” upon the news of her son's death, Paulina's anger and grief move her to call the king a tyrant:

What studied torments, tyrant, hast for me?  
In leads or oils? What old or new torture  
Must I receive, whose every word deserves  
To taste of thy most worst? Thy tyranny  
Together with the working of thy jealousies  
(Fancies too weak for boys, too green and idle  
For girls of nine), O, think what they have done,  
And then run mad indeed—stark mad! for all  
Thy by-gone fooleries were but spices of it.

(3.2.175-84)

Leontes' tyranny coincides, in Paulina's account, with his jealous paranoia. She also identifies his jealousies as fancies, so that his suspicions regarding Hermione's virtue are explicitly defined as phantasmatically imbued. But by fancies, Paulina also means his suspicions about the threat against his crown and his life. So while Shakespeare distinguishes the intersections between masculinist investments in blood, Crown, and life, he also marks Leontes' perception of the threat against all three as fantastic. Faced with the destruction of his royal line, Leontes internalizes Paulina's indictment and determines to spend the rest of his life in repentance: “Once a day I'll visit / The chapel where they lie, and tears shed there / Shall be my recreation. So long as nature / Will bear up with this exercise, so long / I daily vow to use it” (3.2.238-42). While he has indicated doubt as to his “own suspicion” prior to Paulina's lecture on tyranny, the veracity of her castigation and the physical loss of Hermione provoke Leontes' contrition. His refusal to silence Paulina because “Thou canst not speak too much, I have deserv'd / All tongues to talk their bitt'rest” (215-16) reverses the early modern tragic paradigm demanding female repentance for sexual chaos. Hermione's “death,” like that of Hero, testifies to her innocence and underscores his own brutality. His pose of absolute authority collapses in the face of his line's annihilation, for it is that authority that is responsible for its ruin. Thus Paulina can say with impunity that Leontes has been condemned to an ignominy that even the gods will not heed should he attempt repentance on “A thousand knees, / Ten thousand years together, naked, fasting, / Upon a barren mountain, and still winter / In storm perpetual” (210-13). That it is indeed to such a fate that Leontes has been exiled becomes only too apparent.

That is, of course, only the end of act 3, scene 2. Act 3, scene 3, portrays Antigonus's death following his abandonment of Perdita and the Shepherd's and Clown's discovery of her. The two events mark the end of one genre and the beginning of the other. The play's shift from the infertility of Leontes' kingdom to the fertility of the pastoral landscape enables a revision of forms of power. Shakespeare abandons the winter of Leontes' country for the spring of Polixenes'. The generic shift in the middle of the play signals Shakespeare's rejection of forms of monarchical and conjugal tyranny. The sheep-sheering festival and the feast celebrate everything earthy, abundant, and fertile. Everything feared and vilified by Leontes is glorified. Florizel, son of Polixenes and heir to the throne of Bohemia, pays tribute to Perdita's affinity not just with nature, but with corporeal procreation:
These your unusual weeds to each part of you
Does give a life; no shepherdess, but Flora
Peering in April's front. This your sheep-shearing
Is as a meeting of the petty-gods,
And you the queen on't.

(4.4.1-5)

Florizel revels in Perdita's likeness to the goddess of the flowers, rejoices at the life force he sees in her, making her the queen of a festival associated with the fecund earth. In contrast to Leontes' manic anxiety in the face of Hermione's visible fertility, Florizel's embrace of everything procreative signifies a breakdown in the patrilineal dread of the unknowable, uncontrollable Feminine. Thus, Goux's masculinist paranoia is absent, making Florizel capable, when Perdita expresses misgivings about his father's reaction to their love, of confidently asserting,

I'll be thine, my fair,
Or not my father's; for I cannot be
Mine own, nor any thing to any, if
I be not thine. To this I am most constant,
Though destiny say no.

(4.4.42-46; emphasis mine)

Florizel rejects the filial duty that compels him to fulfill his father's desire and not his own. Radically, Florizel equates the giving of himself to Perdita with a sovereignty over the self. The capacity for giving himself to another appears integral to his idea of self-determination, for Florizel suggests that this ability provides him with access to a prior, more authentic self. His refusal of his father's hold upon him, a refusal that implies a loss of power, suggests that Florizel's subjection to the patrilineal competition for place and preferment underwriting Leontes' kingdom is limited. Florizel allies himself with the male/female bond above that of the male/male bond. In opposition to the bonds between men in Romeo and Juliet and Antony and Cleopatra, which remain primary to the detriment of women involved, the prince of Bohemia privileges his relationship with Perdita, with the feminine.

The primacy of Florizel's bond with Perdita remains unbroken even in the face of his father's wrath. Polixenes' anger at his son for refusing to consult with him before negotiating a marriage with the shepherdess resembles both that of Lear in the face of Cordelia's "nothing" and that of Leontes in the face of Paulina's chiding.44

Mark your divorce, young sir.
Whom son I dare not call. Thou art too base
To be [acknowledg'd]. Thou, a scepter's heir,
That thus affects a sheep-hook!
... And thou, fresh piece
Of excellent witchcraft, whom of force must know
The royal fool thou cop'st with—
..... I'll have thy beauty scratch'd with briers and made
More homely than thy state. For thee fond boy
If I may ever know thou dost but sigh
That thou no more shalt see this knack (as never
I mean thou shalt), we'll bare thee from succession,
Not hold thee of our blood, no, not our kin,
Farre than Deucalition off.

(4.4.417-20, 422-24, 425-31)
Polixenes makes clear, as does Lear, that Florizel's inheritance depends on his privileging of the father-child bond. Like Leontes, he functions within a masculinist order definitive of tragedy. Florizel's place in the patrilineal order depends on his subordination of the male/female tie. But Florizel disavows such a hierarchy, and upon his father's exit, he informs Perdita, her shepherd father, and Camillo that he is "but sorry, not afeard; delay'd, / But nothing alter'd. What I was, I am: / More straining on for plucking back, not following / My leash unwillingly" (463-66). His earlier declaration of self-determination against duty to father and crown remains fixed. The threat to Florizel's interests that Polixenes attempts to locate in Perdita fails to associate her with specters of femininity, fails to make her, in Florizel's eyes, less valuable, less desirable. Florizel's loyalty to his shepherdess demonstrates more than his amiability and romanticism. The play's generic shift, which encompasses time, space, and character, deliberately deconstructs the brutal confirmation of male honor through female virtue. It separates the female body from chaotic, indeterminate, and therefore fearsome materiality and embraces its corporeality. Thus Florizel's rejection of traditional early modern configurations of filial gratitude and obedience—of, in fact, the system by which masculine honor and value is assessed—acts as a direct challenge to the authority of that system.

What becomes clear, then, is that by dramatizing a generic shift within this play, which revises male/female ties, Shakespeare rejects an economic and political order in which women embody, for men, a utilitarian, socioeconomic advantage over other men. The male/male bonds that in tragedy separate those between men and women create a basis for competition, constructing a hierarchy that makes some men more powerful than others, underwrite women's exploitation. Female virtue, in this regard, is figured in the early modern period as reflecting directly on male honor and power. But Florizel's utter lack of concern for his socioeconomic interests suggests that he resists the kind of investment in female virtue to which Leontes conforms. I do not argue that he seeks to overturn Polixenes' right to a throne, but that he challenges the basis of his authority. He revises the criteria by which male honor is defined, so that it is no longer based on specters of feminine identity. Florizel's conception of Perdita as infinitely valuable in and of herself goes against all contemporary philosophies on marriage. So while a patrilineal form of authority remains in place, Florizel's reconfiguration of the definitions of his own honor acts as a deconstructive move. Thus Neely's claim, that because "Florizel remains faithful to his vows, to Perdita, and to himself[,] ... Leontes' reduction of the world to his dreams cannot be repeated by Polixenes in Act IV," expresses the revisionary ambition of Shakespeare's play.

That Florizel is written as a revision of Leontes becomes clear when madness, formerly "disease" through act 3, is redefined by Florizel in response to Camillo:

FLO.

From my succession wipe me, father, I
Am heir to my affection.

CAM.

Be advis'd.

FLO.

I am—and by my fancy. If my reason
Will thereto be obedient, I have reason;
If not, my senses, better pleas'd with madness
Do bid it welcome.
In contrast to Leontes, Florizel admits that his emotions may be devoid of reason. His madness is embraced and not feared as a threat to logic and power. It becomes a movement away from the masculinist order that denies and fears the indeterminate. If such madness is constituted by his love for a woman, then such madness is welcomed. Thus Florizel moves toward, without dread, a life of uncertainty and mutability formerly defined by feminine chaos, but now defined by independence from the ghostly conjurations of a patrilineal order. Florizel's autonomy is striking in contrast to Leontes' agonized reliance on Hermione's virtue to confirm his power as husband and as king and in contrast to the fear that the feminine provokes in him. While Leontes' paranoia can be understood, in Goux's terms, as an identification of the feminine with “an amorphous negativity devoid of its own laws, a lesser being associated with pain, corruption, contingency, and death,” Florizel's perspective on women rejects the moralized binary between man and woman, a binary that depends on a denial of woman's “genetic generosity.” When Polixenes attempts to conjure a threat in Perdita, he fails because Florizel does not rely on patrilineal definitions of her value to confirm his own. The revelation of Perdita's identity as the daughter and heir of Sicilia, making Florizel future king not just of Bohemia but of Sicilia as well, signals the potential for a revision in the monarchy's conception of female nature. While their crowning might be read as a reward of goodness, Florizel's flight from his father into the bosom of his father's greatest enemy can hardly be called "goodness" in any traditional, patrilineal sense. Moreover, Florizel's placement of woman above power and Crown, above filial duty, enacts a gross betrayal of patrilineal morality. But that form of morality is precisely what Shakespeare is disavowing. Florizel's repudiation of the ruthlessness of patrilineal power, loyalty to which both Leontes and Polixenes owe the loss of their progeny, suggests that he embodies a procreative reformation in masculinist strategies of authority.

Such a revision in the political structure is possible, I argue, because Paulina and Hermione determine that it must occur. Thus it is important to return to the first three acts of the play and the role of Paulina in the play's revision of monarchical practices. For Paulina acts as a kind of counterpart to Hermione, refusing to accommodate Leontes' expectations for obedience on the part of his subjects, especially on the part of his female subjects. While Hermione is unequivocally innocent of the accusations made by her husband, Paulina is certainly guilty of disobedience to and rebellion against her king. His rage in act 2, scene 3, is provoked by the threat to his sovereignty she poses when she refuses to be silenced, speaking her mind even when Leontes rages "I'll ha' thee burnt:"

It is an heretic that makes the fire,

I care not.
Not she who burns in't. I'll not call you tyrant;
But this most cruel usage of your queen
(Not able to produce more accusation
Than your own weak-hing'd fancy) something savors
Of tyranny, and will ignoble make you,
Yea scandalous to the world.

(2.3.114-21)

Paulina's refusal to obey her king, to echo his accusations as an obedient subject, makes her, as is expected, a traitor. And I have already cataloged the list of derogatory names Leontes calls her throughout the scene. Paulina's rejection of silence not only as the proper response of a loyal subject but of a woman makes her an unnatural woman in Leontes' eyes. Her evil, then, in contrast to that of Hermione, derives not from her abundant and uncontrollable fertility, but from the power she attempts to wield over him as the bearer of truth, a truth that ought (under early modern conceptions of monarchy) to reside only with him. Paulina usurps his power as monarch, then, placing his sovereignty as king in jeopardy and becoming a different source of evil from that of Hermione. For she threatens his entire view of himself as a monarch and as a man. Until Leontes faces the irrevocable evidence of his wrong, Paulina indeed represents for him the evil of the rebellious
subject. Thus, it is clearly Paulina who poses the greatest threat to his monarchical authority, not just in this scene but also throughout the rest of the play. For while Leontes' authority is never under serious danger of being overthrown, Paulina is the catalyst for fundamental changes in the way that Leontes should and will rule.

But Paulina's changes cannot be implemented until Leontes understands his error, and this occurs in the scene of Hermione's “death.” When the king refuses to see his wrong, the women's total rejection of Leontes' tyranny becomes the only mode of survival for Hermione. The words of the oracle proclaim the truth: “Hermione is chaste, Polixenes blameless, Camillo a true subject, Leontes a jealous tyrant, his innocent babe truly begotten, and the king shall live without an heir, if that which is lost be not found” (3.2.132-36). The truth, decreed by Apollo and spoken by his messengers, should set Hermione free and absolve those Leontes accused of plotting treason. But Leontes responds, “There is no truth at all i' th' oracle. / The sessions shall proceed; this is mere falsehood” (140-41). When Hermione swoons at news of her son's death, she is taken offstage by Paulina and the ladies. When Paulina returns, she gives Leontes the news of his wife's death. I have already quoted much of her speech, but I want to note once more the emphasis that Paulina places on Leontes' tyranny. Up to this point, Paulina only hinted at the king's despotism, at an infection she takes it upon herself to cure in him. But once she returns from Hermione's side, she no longer minces words. Perhaps she is licensed by the oracle. Perhaps her grief at Mamillius's death, compounded by the loss of Perdita and Antigonus, motivates her words. However, Hermione's death does not, for Hermione lives.

Perhaps no one today ever entertains the notion that Hermione might actually have died, so that her reanimation in act 5 presents no surprise, except insofar as it signals her return to a despotic husband. But the fact is that Shakespeare seemed interested in making his audience believe in her death. News of Mamillius's death comes directly upon the oracle's prophecy, so Hermione's death acts as its further fulfillment. Antigonus is haunted by her ghost, and Paulina poses Hermione's transformation from stone to flesh and blood woman as magic, as a “spell” (5.3.105) she casts. The generic conventions of romance enable Shakespeare to conjure the possibility of supernatural causes for Hermione's return as a cloak for what is really an interrogation of marital, economic, and monarchical tyranny. Juxtaposed with the fantastical aspects of the scene are material signs of aging that Leontes takes note of in the “statue” of his wife. Hermione also explains that, as she tells Perdita, “I / Knowing by Paulina that the oracle / Gave hope thou wast in being, have preserv'd / Myself to see the issue” (125-28). She makes clear that her “death” was a deception, and I am suggesting that it responded directly to the violence Leontes' legal proceedings potentially demand. Because she wished to see her daughter once more, Hermione lived, but she lived apart from her husband. It is clear that upon Leontes' rejection of the oracle's pronouncement, Hermione determined that Leontes' madness made him a man with whom she no longer wished to share her life. In response, Paulina and Hermione hit upon a plan that allowed Hermione, in essence, to divorce her husband. Hermione's sixteen-year separation from her husband comes to an end, then, only when Leontes' sincere atonement invites her return.51 When Leontes proves himself impervious to the divine power proclaiming her innocence, Hermione's choice to make her collapse evidence of death joins her voice to that of Paulina's in disavowing a power structure whose phantasmatic constructions tyrannize women's lives. Sensing the king's self-doubt, both women take advantage of the ominousness of the oracle's proclamation to take a stand. Hermione refuses to live by her husband's side any longer until, with Paulina's help, she can live there safely. And Paulina, in her place, becomes an advisor and a physician, to fight for justice and to cure once and for all the king's madness.

I want to emphasize that Paulina's and Hermione's deception is not designed nor do I see it as an overturning of male rule. There is no exchange of Leontes' reign for that of Hermione or Paulina. He remains king and they his subjects. Rather, the women enforce a period of penitence for Leontes that seeks a monarchical restructuring informed by values other than suspicion, paranoia, and absolutism. The socioeconomic privilege that underwrites political structures and women's physical and economic dependence on masculinist formulations of feminine ontology is repudiated by Hermione's “death” and challenged by Paulina's diatribe against her king. That Leontes' brutality as monarch has caused the breakdown of his own line suggests that a
new method of rule, founded on a revision of women's roles in a patrilineal state and of their “nature” as women, is imperative to the continuation of the state. Hermione's “death” and Paulina's defense of her queen work as deconstructive moves designed to revise Leontes' ruthless enforcement of women's function as property, though not to topple his rule. It is the materialist basis of masculinist rule, then, that is under revision and not male rule itself.

Thus their rebellion corrects and transforms the masculinist order so that male/female relations can be reclaimed. When Paulina succeeds in eliciting from Leontes the liberty to “Go on, go on; / Thou canst not speak too much, I have deserv'd / All tongues to talk their bitt'rest” (3.2.214-16), she begins to work a re-visionary agenda. What I propose, therefore, is not a simple reversal in a hierarchical order. Rather, the order that Paulina, and Hermione behind the scenes, install seeks not to punish with violence or tyranny Leontes' transgression against his wife, but to enlighten and instruct him, to redefine political power, to eliminate phantasmatic constructions of feminine identity and socioeconomic investments in those fantasies. When Shakespeare rejects the masculinist conventions of tragedy, a new economy emerges in which a shepherdess who wants to marry a prince can seek and obtain protection from a king. Though Perdita turns out to be a princess, Leontes' protection of her is won before his knowledge of that fact. Shakespeare's turn toward romance, enabling Perdita's acceptance in Leontes' kingdom despite her “common” paternity, signals a rejection of the tragic mandate that would have ostracized and vilified her. A revised economy is, in part, made possible by sixteen years of enforced atonement on Leontes' part, so that he pays tribute to a structure of relations against which he has transgressed.

As many critics have noted, however, Leontes' pose of penitence is mitigated by the authoritative and essentially cavalier attitude he displays once Hermione and his daughter are restored to him. In response to Paulina's lament that she “Will wing me to some wither'd bough, and there / My mate (that's never to be found again) / Lament till I am lost” (5.3.133-35), Leontes exclaims,

O, peace, Paulina!
Thou shouldst a husband take by my consent,
As I by thine a wife: this is a match,
And made between 's by vows. Thou hast found mine,
But how, is to be question'd; for I saw her
(As I thought) dead; and have (in vain) said many
A prayer upon her grave. I'll not seek far
(For him, partly I know his mind) to find thee
An honorable husband.
.....Good Paulina,
Lead us from hence, where we may leisurely
Each one demand, and answer to his part
Perform'd in this wide gap of time, since first
We were dissever'd. Hastily lead away.

(135-43, 151-55)

In this speech, Leontes recuperates kingly authoritativeness and imperiousness. Not only is he finished listening to Paulina talk, but he overturns their power reversal to bring her into an unlooked-for marriage with Camillo. He also speaks of questioning Paulina and Hermione about his wife's disappearance in terms that are threatening; his parenthetical references to having been deceived hint at some displeasure whose expression may only be deferred. While he begs of Hermione and Polixenes a pardon, his speech is marked by one command after another, signifying Leontes' return to a sense of himself as king. I would argue, in this light, that Shakespeare's revision of patrilineal structures of power is not embodied in his characterization of Leontes. Like Lear, Leontes ultimately cannot transcend a structure of relations that he has heretofore ruled with some ruthlessness. As Lear looks forward to his period of imprisonment with Cordelia as an interval during which he owns his daughter completely and thus achieves the desires that motivated his division of the
kingdom, so Leontes reappropriates enthusiastically his position as sovereign once his culpability is mitigated by Hermione's and Perdita's return to him.

I do not, however, propose that Shakespeare's reformation of the masculinist order fails, for Paulina's passionate rebellion against Leontes' tyranny has demonstrated the necessity for a change. The play's revision of orthodox notions of gender and power is embodied in Florizel and Perdita as the future rulers of two countries. In contrast to Edgar and Malcolm, whose acquisitions of their respective thrones is accomplished through violence rather than reconciliation, the future rulers of Sicilia and Bohemia embody an optimistic revision in absolutist and tyrannical power. Such a revision makes way for alternate forms of political power and male/female relations and is enabled by Shakespeare's turn away from the traditional generic conventions of tragedy toward romance. Florizel, as the future monarch of both kingdoms, rejects the economic fantasies of female ontology. Thus while in The Winter's Tale male rule remains solidly in place, the play ends—in contrast to Romeo and Juliet, King Lear, Macbeth, and Antony and Cleopatra—with a hopeful vision of a new form of rule independent of the hierarchical division between man and woman. The human destruction left on stage at the ends of tragedies, we have seen, results from the uninterrupted, unmodified strategies of command. So long as violent competition stands as the modus operandi of male bonds and absolute monarchy, tyranny reigns as do fears of female desire. Tragedy, Shakespeare seems to suggest, ends in a nonregenerative and infertile mandate. Not only are the Lear and Macbeth lines wiped out at their plays' ends, not only does male competition win out at the end of Antony and Cleopatra, but the hope for an alternate approach to unlimited and uncompromising monarchical power emanating from the heirs to and colonizers of the thrones dissipates in the violence of their victories. As if to reject the destructive relations between men and women that are implicated in his tragedies, Shakespeare writes The Winter's Tale. He imagines a new order in which neither monarchical rule nor male/female bonds need be defined by tyranny. Female power no longer equals female evil; rather it becomes requisite to the a balance of power, literally, among men and women.

Notes

4. Ibid., 306.
6. The Winter's Tale, Evans, G. Blakemore (editor), The Riverside Shakespeare, Copyright © 1974 by Houghton Mifflin Company. All quotations from and references to The Winter's Tale are used by
permission and cited parenthetically in the text.


8. “[T]ypical of the sophisticated Greek Romances of love and adventure,” Barbara A. Mowat writes, is a “complex—indeed contorted—structure, dependent on surprise, suspense, numerous *dei ex machina*; filled with dream-visions and oracles and magic; much emphasis on chastity, a miraculous happy ending, and a realization on the part of characters that they are pawns in the hands of fate,” in *The Dramaturgy of Shakespeare's Romances* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1976), 129. Mowat points out that Shakespeare's romances seem to offer us visions of a “real” world, but that he introduces distortions that interfere with such a reading (63); her suggestion is made to explore the effects of these disjunctions, and I would like to extend her analysis to my examination of material conditions of the play that put pressure on women's economic roles in the early modern period. See also Howard Felperin, *Shakespearean Romance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), especially 3-54 and 211-45.

9. For a comparison of Leontes' tyranny to that of Henry VIII and his accusations against Anne Boleyn, see M. Lindsay Kaplan and Katherine Eggert. They see *The Winter's Tale* as “taking a feminist stance in relation to early modern law,” in “Good queen, my lord, good queen”: Sexual Slander and the Trials of Female Authority in *The Winter's Tale*, *Renaissance Drama* 25 (1994): 110. In addition to emphasizing the materiality of the play's generic shift, my reading adds to Kaplan and Eggert's analysis a claim that the false accusations against which Hermione is made to stand give her the right to refuse the continuance of her husband's legal right to and authority over her body. Early modern tracts such as T. E.'s *The Law's Resolutions of Women's Rights* (in Daughters, Wives, and Widows: *Writings by Men about Women and Marriage in England, 1500-1640*, ed. Joan Larsen Klein [Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992], 27-61) clearly state that a woman has no such rights, making Shakespeare's play a radical revision of women's rights in the period. See also David M. Bergeron's analysis of the play as drawing on conflicts between James I and his son Henry in *Shakespeare's Romances and the Royal Family* (Lawrence: Kansas University Press, 1985); and Richard Wilson, “Observations on English Bodies: Licensing Maternity in Shakespeare's Late Plays,” in *Enclosure Acts: Sexuality, Property, and Culture in Early Modern England*, ed. Richard Burt and John Michael Archer (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1994), 121-50.

10. See Jean-Joseph Goux's analysis of paternity as “an ideological position or, better, interposition—that is, as a power in another sort of reproduction. … The attested father is not only the genitor, he is at once witness and control, like the constant point of comparison used in scientific experiment” (218, 219). Shakespeare stages his interrogation of mystifications of feminine identity through Leontes' socio-economic investment in the paternity of his children and, therefore, in the ownership of his wife. Reprinted from Jean-Joseph Goux: *Symbolic Economies: After Marx and Freud*, trans. Jennifer Curtiss Gage (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990). Used by permission of the publisher, Cornell University Press.


15. Ibid., 81-82, 98-99.

16. This is a very long process that can be traced from the formal organization of agrarian industries and protocapitalism, making women vital sites of exchange among men for the perpetuation and accumulation of wealth and property.

17. As I discussed in chapter 1, Juan Luis Vives's *Instruction of a Christian Woman*, trans. Richard Hyrde, in *Daughters, Wives, and Widows: Writings by Men about Women and Marriage in England, 1500-1640*, ed. Joan Larsen Klein (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 97-122, is a frighteningly graphic example of the value placed upon the female body, upon its nonviolation (105-6). Shakespeare's play and manuals such as Vives's are dissonant products of the same cultural moment, then, so that a gradual process of women's commodification, in response to their sexual threat, emerges in the early modern period.


22. Anne M. Haselkorn argues that Jacobean adulteresses' penitent confessions reassert "patriarchal values … [and] encode patriarchy's need for its own survival,” in “Sin and the Politics of Penitence: Three Jacobean Adulteresses,” in *The Renaissance Englishwoman in Print: Counterbalancing the Canon*, ed. Anne M. Haselkorn and Betty S. Travitsky (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1990), 130. Shakespeare's characterization of Leontes as the play's confessor points to a revision of such values.


24. See also Hunter, “Shakespeare and the Comedy of Forgiveness,” 159.

25. That Hermione's spirited speaking transgresses her gender role is confirmed by Vives's injunction that "if [a woman] be good, it were better … in company to hold her tongue demurely, and let few see her, and none at all hear her” (*Instruction*, 102). Lynn Enterline's "'You speak a language that I understand not': The Rhetoric of Animation in *The Winter's Tale*,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 48, no. 1 (1997): 17-44, brings new life to the complexities embedded in Hermione's verbal power and to the differences between speech and silence.

27. Enterline writes, “If … the spectacle of Hermione's pregnancy troubles the play's language from the start …, this spectacle works together with her potent tongue to spark her husband's suspicions” (25). I have extended Enterline's emphasis on Hermione's verbal power to the economically motivated fantasies that the conjunction of her verbal and fertile power produces in Leontes' mind. See “‘You speak a language that I understand not,’” 17-44.

28. I do not believe, as Kenneth C. Bennett does, that it is necessary to ask whether Leontes has actually seen what he describes in this scene. It is enough to note that the hand Hermione offers Polixenes in friendship becomes the paddling palms, and that he fantasizes the rest. As I will show throughout this reading, the language of fantasy, tyranny, and sickness with which the king is described not only by Paulina, but by Camillo and other advisors, all point to the phantasmatic nature of Leontes' accusations. See “Reconstructing *The Winter's Tale,*” *Shakespeare Survey* 46 (1993): 81-90.


32. Danson's analysis in “The catastrophe is a nuptial” is instructive in this regard. See also Cohen, “Patriarchy and Jealousy.”

33. In *The Doctrine of Superiority and Subjection* (London, 1609), Robert Pricke elaborately affirms the hierarchy making women their husband's subjects by invoking the fifth commandment as that which “upholdeth … all those estates, degrees, and orders, whereby society, or fellowship of man, is as it were, by certain joints and sinews, joined and knit together, and without which it would by a certain pernicious confusion, be clean dissolved, and utterly perish” (I have modernized and regularized Pricke's spelling). Pricke argues the familiar early modern paradigm wherein the husband is the head of the wife as the king is the head of the nation and Christ is the head of the church. Leontes' anxiety about Hermione as an unruly subject is, therefore, embedded in this trope. See also William Whately's *A Bride-bush, or A Wedding Sermon* (London, 1617) in which the first duty of a woman is, as I noted in chapter 1, to “acknowledge her inferiority” (36).

34. As I demonstrated in chapter 1, in his *The Excellency of Good Women* (London, 1613), Barnabe Rych argues that women's sexual virtue must be hoarded, like gold, to increase men's honor. Thus Leontes' anxieties about cuckoldry are entrenched in early modern conceptions of women as guarantor of patrilineal power, so that they embody economic stability and become comparable to market goods. See also Thomas Becon's *The Book of Matrimony*, in *Renaissance Women: Constructions of Femininity in England*, ed. Kate Aughterson (New York: Routledge, 1995), 111-13. Like Pricke, Whately, Rych, and Vives, Becon locates the stability of patrilineal succession in woman's subjection to her husband, in her silence, chaste behavior, and frugality as a housewife.

the paranoia of Jacobean patriarchy, and he vomits a litany of misogynistic stereotypes in his conflation of witch, scold, and unruly woman” (131).


41. See Kaplan and Eggert who argue that “sexual slander … performed a valuable patriarchal function: the threat of public humiliation and rejection, or even disciplinary prosecution for the imputed behavior, served as a deterrent against sexual misbehavior both for victims of slander themselves and for either chaste or promiscuous bystanders” (93). The circularity, or mutual dependence, of male and female honor illustrates the vexed nature of early modern gender ideologies; see “‘Good queen’,” 89-118.

42. Hunter (“Shakespeare and the Comedy of Forgiveness”) sees Antigonus as a “victim of the gods' unalterable design for Leontes” (165), but I argue he is more immediately and personally culpable. Antigonus's death is staged as a punishment for his loyalty to Leontes above his own doubts about Hermione's guilt. For he, unlike anyone else in the play, accepts Leontes' fantasies as fact. Antigonus's death seems to result from his judgment against Hermione, then. As the last proponent of Leontes' psychotic order, Antigonus dies in obedience to it.

43. Several critics have noted the shift in The Winter's Tale from tragedy to romance, and I extend their observations to the material conditions producing Leontes' paranoia. See especially Adelman, Suffocating Mothers, 193-238; Gourley, “‘O, my most sacred lady,’” 258-79; Sara Hanna, “Voices against Tyranny: Greek Sources of The Winter's Tale,” Classical and Modern Studies: A Quarterly 14, no. 4 (1994): 335-44; Morse, “Metacriticism and Materiality,” 283-304; and Ronk, “Recasting Jealousy,” 50-77. Hartwig argues that the play's tragicomic force lies throughout the play and not as “critics mistakenly … assume [in] acts IV and V [as] the comic performance of the first three acts” (“The Tragicomic Perspective,” 183).


48. Ibid., 227.
49. See Pricke's *Doctrine* for the duties children owe to parents.
52. For opposite readings of this scene, see Joyce Wexler, “A Wife Lost or Found,” *The Upstart Crow* 8 (1988): 106-17; and Dreher, *Dominance and Defiance*.
53. While Erickson reads the play less optimistically, I would note that he does not account for the future structure that the Florizel-Perdita union promises. See Erickson, “Patriarchal Structures in *The Winter's Tale*,” 827.
54. Morse also engages the play's “demystification of authority,” but his purpose is not, as mine is, to explore that demystification as a critique of male/female material relations (“Metacriticism and Materiality,” 283-304).

I invoke Catherine Belsey's *The Subject of Tragedy: Identity and Difference in Renaissance Drama* (London: Methuen, 1985; New York: Routledge, 1993) in my title both playfully and to acknowledge her influence on this study as a project examining the play's, Leontes', and Hermione's locations in culture, which are subject to the splittings and disjunctions Belsey highlights in her text.

**Criticism: Production Reviews: Vincent Canby (review date 2 June 1995)**


[In the following review, Canby praises Ingmar Bergman's 1995 staging of *The Winter's Tale* at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, New York, for its lucid artistic vision that succeeded with minimal theatrical affectation.]

If you have any doubt about Ingmar Bergman's premier place in the international theater, you can't afford to miss his fine, quintessentially Bergman interpretation of *The Winter's Tale*, one of the last and strangest of Shakespeare's romantic comedies.

You haven't much time, though. The production, which opened at the Brooklyn Academy of Music on Wednesday night, is available for only two more performances, today and tomorrow at 8 P.M. It will be followed on Wednesday by the Bergman production of *Madame de Sade*, also part of the current citywide Bergman tribute.

*The Winter's Tale* fits gracefully into the Bergman canon, where devastating marital discord, the theme of so many of his films, tends to be far more convincing than the accommodations that lead to reconciliation. The production also resolutely avoids the current impulse, especially ubiquitous in London, to impose contemporary meanings on texts nearly 400 years old.

Mr. Bergman does outfit his tale with such anachronisms as a pistol, a motorcycle and costumes that suggest any of several centuries. But he doesn't otherwise tamper with Shakespeare in unruly ways. The production is set in the early 19th century, and opens and closes with a young woman's birthday celebration in a Swedish manor house. The play we see is *The Winter's Tale* as it is being put on by the guests as part of the festivities. That's about as far as he goes to bend the original.
There are no revolving platforms in this production. Avoided, too, are all stage tricks intended to beguile the eye and convince the audience that it's watching some lesser form of cinema. This Winter's Tale is simply and purely theatrical, a celebration of the art of the stage, beautifully acted by the members of the Royal Dramatic Theater of Sweden, where the production was initially staged.

Among other things, the production has not one but two bears, one brown, the other white. They aren't to be accepted as anything except actors wearing bear suits, which look as if they had been too long in an attic trunk. The brown bear is a comic interpolation. The white bear is the beast that figures in Shakespeare's best-known stage direction: “Exit, pursued by a bear.”

This bear, being polar, also more or less locates Mr. Bergman's vision of Shakespeare's settings of Sicily and Bohemia. They're now far closer to the chill of the Arctic Circle than to the reviving warmth of the Mediterranean sun. This may be why the play's dark first half, which usually stretches credulity, now has such emotional impact that the lighthearted conclusion seems more of a dream than Shakespeare possibly intended.

Mr. Bergman's Winter's Tale ends not with the promise of spring but with the forebodings of autumn. And no wonder.

At the start of the play, when Leontes, the king of Sicily, accuses his beloved Hermione of being unfaithful with Polixenes, the king of Bohemia, the charges seem the delusion of a madman. For the play to proceed, however, the director, the actors and the audience must accept as rational Leontes's horrific decision to be rid of his wife and newborn daughter.

In most productions, these scenes are played with a kind of dutiful obedience to the greater good of the entire play. That is, without the emotional conviction that could dangerously undermine the gaiety of all that comes later, when the emphasis is on romantic young love, rural comedy and country pageantry. Mr. Bergman takes his chances.

In this production, there is a furious, typically Bergman honesty when Leontes makes his accusations against Hermione, when she is put on trial and when their infant daughter Perdita is banished. In fact, there's so much honesty that the rest of the performance, which comes after intermission, seems to be marking time until the great, final recognition scene.

The play's comedy scenes, though enthusiastically performed, are not terribly funny. The attempts at updated rube humor (“‘What's up?’ said the man as he sat on a sword”) sound as if they had been stolen from an old production of Die Fledermaus. This sort of verbal horsing around is not helped if, as I did, you have to listen to the rather perfunctory English translation of the Swedish text through earphones.

It's the drama that carries this comedy, especially in the disciplined intensity of the performances by Pernilla August (you probably saw her in Fanny and Alexander) as Hermione, Borje Ahlstedt as Leontes and the beautiful, authoritative Bibi Andersson as Paulina, the faithful attendant to Hermione.

Mr. Bergman's staging is masterfully direct, plain and unfancified. It falters only in the recognition scene, which, as he directs it, seems to be an effort to avoid the way it has been played in every other production you have ever seen. His decisions are otherwise without fault.

Changes in location are indicated by one or two props, sometimes by screens. The trial scene is played entirely around, or on, a long wooden table, which is presided over by a judge in robes of orangey-scarlet color. This color, in its most pure shade, is also the color of Hermione's gowns, the rest of the costumes and décor being browns, olives and dark blue-greens.
When Mr. Bergman goes all out, as in the storm on the seacoast of Bohemia, he uses a few khaki-colored backdrops, a model of a tempest-tossed sailing ship, four people dressed to look like kelp-laden waves, and a man onstage who earnestly works a wind machine by hand. As Mr. Bergman rediscovers the dramatic heft in *The Winter's Tale*, he also reminds us of the satisfactions of theatrical artifice when it's kept small.

In this way, too, he allows the imagination to soar.

**Criticism: Production Reviews: Robert Brustein (review date 17 July 1995)**


[In the following review, Brustein provides a favorable notice of Ingmar Bergman's 1995 Brooklyn Academy of Music, New York, production of *The Winter's Tale*.]

Ingmar Bergman's production of *The Winter's Tale* recently played at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in repertory with his inspired *Madame de Sade* (which I reviewed during its last American appearance). Possibly reflecting the imbalances of the play, it is not one of Bergman's most brilliant productions, but nothing created by this master is ever less than compelling. Set around the turn of the century in a Swedish country home, *The Winter's Tale* is treated as one of the entertainments (another being a musical concert written by an expatriate Scandinavian composer) performed during the wedding celebration of the daughter of the house. This sets the action in the ballroom of a country estate and features considerable domestic horseplay in the mode of *Smiles of a Summer Night*—servants and masters flirting and cavorting, children posing with masks, a capella choruses, grouse shooting—somewhat at the expense of the focus of Shakespeare's text. Still, there is much that is freshly seen in Bergman's reading. For one thing, Leontes's insane jealousy over Hermione—which has always seemed like a pathological version of Othello's abuse of Desdemona—is now provided with some credible motivation. Hermione's graciousness toward Polixenes stops just short of coquetry, while he, in turn, can't keep his eyes or hands off her. Bergman mirrors the king's internal tumult in nature. An orange glow lights the sky as Leontes expresses his spastic rage toward his wife. Performed by Bergman's favorite actor, the heavyset Borje Ahlstedt, who played the goatish Claudius in *Hamlet* and a lubricious Peer Gynt, this Leontes roars like a maddened bull, mauling and shaking Camillo in his rage, then goring a court lady in full view of the court. (Ahlstedt's brutish Claudius also preferred to have sexual relations in public.) The rustic scenes between the clowns and Autolycus, padded with considerable comic interpolation, have an appealing Nordic heaviness to them, and Bergman does not underplay the erotic side of the Midsummer rituals. Unlike Stoppard, Bergman recognizes that humans possess animal appetites as well as intellectual curiosity. This knowledge makes for robust comedy, powerful drama and superior art.

**Criticism: Production Reviews: David Jays (review date 15 January 1999)**


[In the following review, Jays asserts that Gregory 1999 Doran's Royal Shakespeare Company rendering of *The Winter's Tale* was a “supremely intelligent production, lucid in every detail” and notes that Antony Sher gave a powerful performance as Leontes.]

If actors can be auteurs, then Antony Sher, along with Fiona Shaw, is the supreme example in British theatre, encouraging productions prisms through his interpretation. In Gregory Doran's absorbing RSC production of *The Winter's Tale*, Sher helps us stare through the weak-hinged mind of King Leontes, who suspects his wife
and friend of adultery. There is no cause, no cause, but we see the walls close in on him, hear amplified whispers of prurient imaginings. Sher uses his curious quality of distant amiability, an intimacy that refuses to catch fire, to drag us through the precipitous adversity of the play's first [half].

Sher's gift has been to embody metaphor—Richard III's dazzling spider, Tamburlaine's pumped-up hubris—but has often sounded bland, as if cowed by received pronunciation. Not here, where his pinched voice trembles on the high-wire. Rather than playing distraction, he is all explanation, sharing with us the clotted syntax and barbed knots of verse from which spars of piercing clarity emerge—"I am a feather for each wind that blows"; "I have drunk and seen the spider". The stiff, uncomfortable statesman squeezes frenzy in his barrel chest, and when his poise shatters he shakes his head like a tormented lion. He grasps Hermione by the throat, snarls at his "bed-swerver".

There is no explanation (although Sher diagnoses a condition called "morbid jealousy"), but the production provides voluptuous tokens of innocence on which his raven mind can swoop. Wife and friend share a gentle waltz to a tune (by Ilona Sekacz) so dreamy and thoughtless that it becomes unbearable, until the king scratches at the gramophone. Alexandra Gilbreath's lustrous and staggeringly pregnant Queen Hermione has the most entrancing soft voice, but Leontes prickles at its velvet brush of intimacy. He rejects the maternal blanketing she offers—indeed, he recoils from touch.

Sher makes Leontes' insanity primly rational: he searches through Hermione's reticule, sniffs her scarf for evidence. Later, sicker, he wanders the court unkempt and dressing-gowned, hands paddling the air and clutching at transparency. The king convinced by shadows shrinks to a blot on the floor. Only when told his wife and son are dead do his sore red eyes finally downfall tears, he retches with grief and is led off like an infant.

The production is set early this century, at the dwindling of a dynasty—Hapsburg, perhaps, or Romanov—who have inbred into infirmity; Leontes' sallow son and heir is a sickly waif, confined to a wheelchair. Robert Jones designs sharply receding walls (exit-crammed for disconcerting disappearance), ceilings swagged with stifling silks, furniture heavy in silver and plush. This is a court that stands on ceremony, flunkeys frozen in waxwork obeisance as Leontes rages around them.

Even in airless interiority, clouds wheel across the set. Ominous with thunder, they also prefigure circling time as the action leaps 16 years and turns to ripe summer. Antigonus has, famously, exited pursued by a bear while abandoning the infant princess Perdita, and the shepherd who discovers her—"Thou met'st with things dying, I with things new-born"—most beautifully marks the cusp. Antigonus (Jeffrey Wickham) emerges from the silk that engulfed him to propel us forward, and Emily Bruni, who sickened as the invalid prince, is reborn as a forceful, tumbling Perdita.

This aptness typifies Doran's supremely intelligent production, lucid in every detail. The evening brims with tenderness and distress, utterly involving. Despite a hostile press that has decided the RSC needs stars (the National's calamitous Antony and Cleopatra might warn them off), more important is an alert ensemble, and The Winter's Tale assembles a strong company, including Estelle Kohler's sleek and fierce Paulina, Christopher Brand's charming dunderhead and Myra McFadyen's stroppy shepherdess. Like Adrian Noble's magical version of The Tempest, now at the Barbican, this is far from radical Shakespeare—Doran ignores the dark potential of the first world war looming from his setting—but is beautifully achieved.

The cast uncoils into sheep-shearing festivities, no scrubbed Arcadians but mucky and sweaty among their piled-up bales and pulleys. Back at Leontes' court, we find the king a Tolstoyan penitent, squatting over his Bible. He has given away all the furniture—dust and paper crumple across bare floors. Sher's ice-splintered voice is warmer, furred with regret and wonder and, though it would be too tempting to conflate his journey with Leontes' (a cold virtuoso redeemed by heartfelt humility), he grows into his most generous performance
yet.

**Criticism: Production Reviews: Susannah Clapp (review date 27 May 2001)**


*In the following excerpt, Clapp admires Nicholas Hytner's 2001 modern-dress staging of *The Winter's Tale* at London's National Theatre. According to the critic, Hytner's contemporary interpretation was underscored by a striking thematic contrast between the monochrome, bureaucratic Sicilian court and the anti-establishment Bohemia.*

Nicholas Hytner has been widely talked of as a contender for the directorship of the National Theatre. His production of *The Winter's Tale* should boost his chances. It's a dashing, illuminating occasion which deals boldly with the play's swoops from misery to merriment. It's enough to give modern-dress Shakespeare a good name.

*The Winter's Tale* used to be considered a ‘problem’ play, but that hasn't deterred recent directors: Hytner's is the fifth production I've seen in four years. Consciousness of the millennium may have given lustre to this account of a new golden era being bred out of a frozen past, but it hasn't dissolved the play's difficulties: it's hard to picture with equal vividness the bilious jealousy of old Sicily and the springiness of young Bohemia.

Hytner's solution is to treat the play with beady realism. His contrasting versions of contemporary life suggest Establishment and drop-out, old order and New Age, Windsor and Spencer. In Ashley Martin-Davis's expressive design, the Sicilian court—a sleek, monochrome box—is peopled by sycophants in grey suits, something like mafiosi, something like public schoolboys. The abandoning of Perdita is unusually upsetting. On the point of leaving her (whimpering in her basket) in the wild, Geoffrey Beevers's Antigonus tests the temperature of the milk in her bottle. As Paulina, Deborah Findlay croons and clucks to the infant as if she were standing on the pavement looking into a pram. She does so without once losing the beat of the verse. Findlay, always subtle and always substantial, gives the outstanding performance of the production: she's never merely a shrew or simply a visionary.

Hytner's Bohemia is an explosion of colour: Glastonbury-cum-Woodstock, with no morris-dance romping or unfunny clowns, no yokels and no wenches. In front of lush hills and bright tents, a bloke does tai chi, and a child with her face painted like a cat scampers. The stage is wreathed in smoke. The general amiability has more to do with dope than with simplicity: no damage is done to Shakespeare's verse when your 'unusual weeds’ can be taken to refer not only to Perdita's Bo-Peep costume but also to the huge spliff on which her partner is drawing. The character of Autolycus is vibrantly projected by Phil Daniels as a magnetic musician and rapper who looks like Keith Richards on a particularly wizened morning.

Of course, there are peculiarities in the updating. Why would the jealous Leontes wait days for his messengers to bring news about his wife's fidelity from Delphi when he could surely have paged the Oracle? And there are deficiencies which may right themselves. The young lovers are wooden principal boy and girl figures. Though Alex Jennings's Leontes is compelling as he tumbles from disquiet to disfiguring rage (he really seems to thicken his features, to grow ugly in anger), he doesn't as yet rely sufficiently on his effortless skill in conveying the restrained cool and telling gesture.

But there are no imperfections in the wonderful last scene—in which the statue of Hermione comes to life. Rick Fisher's lighting makes Claire Skinner's ethereal queen look totally marmoreal; pinking her up, he breathes blood into her. And the final moment is perfectly judged: mother and daughter are left wrapped
Criticism: Production Reviews: Judith Flanders (review date 8 June 2001)


In the following review, Flanders presents a mixed review of Nicholas Hytner's 2001 production of *The Winter's Tale* at London's National Theatre. While Hytner's vision of a menacing, corporate Sicilia convincingly accentuated Leontes's paranoia, Flanders avers, the director lost control of his production with his free-wheeling interpretation of the Bohemia episodes.

Nicholas Hytner has brought *The Winter's Tale* into the arctic wastes of the Olivier Theatre, and he fills it, and us, with warmth. With him is a cast of exceptional authority: Alex Jennings as Leontes, Claire Skinner as Hermione and, most sensationally, Deborah Findlay as Paulina.

As the play opens, we are tumbled directly into the action via some rather unnecessary cutting and reorganization; instead of two Lords of Bohemia and Sicilia setting the scene for us, Mamillius, dressed as Time, recites for his parents' friends at their penthouse drinks party. Leontes, it would appear, is the super-rich head of a high-tech corporation. The designer Ashley Martin-Davis has created a world that is grey and stark, sleek and groomed. Minimalist screens slide smoothly across the stage to create boxes in which the characters are imprisoned. Against them, Alex Jennings's ordinariness, his lack of lurking menace or obsessive compulsion makes his freefall into madness all the more horrifying. Leontes is the only Shakespearean creation to have no outside goad; his Iago is inside himself, and Jennings's sudden, roaring paranoia makes the maggots crawling in his soul shockingly visible.

Hermione faces a grey-toned Stalinist show trial, where her accuser is her judge. Leontes's two apparatchiks return from Delphos with the judgment of the oracle which is solemnly read out—oddly, as it had, in an earlier scene, apparently been faxed on ahead. That no one doubts the truth of the oracle in this ultra-modern world is one of the small incongruities that Hytner's modernization creates. Repression breeds deceit. After Hermione's collapse, her friend Paulina returns to announce her dead. In this contemporary production, there is little ambiguity, no question of a purely magical resurrection, despite Antigonus' later vision of Hermione's ghost. But with two actors of the calibre of Antigonus (Geoffrey Beevers) and Paulina, this is not a worry for long. Beevers carries off his now unfashionably dutiful role with dignity and weight; in this Gordon Gekko world he could easily have appeared a fool, and that he is genuinely mourned even after his tragicomic death is a tribute to the sincerity of the performance. Deborah Findlay deserves a review to herself. Her Paulina is sassy at the beginning, threatening as tragedy looms, and, finally, matures into the personification of an austere reproach, the conscience to a king.

This is not a winter's tale, but the winter's tale: the desolation of slate grey that Leontes creates around him. Bohemia is the obverse, that arcadia which Leontes' madness has destroyed, and Hytner is less secure in its summer sun. The Old Shepherd (movingly played by John Normington) is dressed to be ready, should a sudden episode of One Man and His Dog break out on stage; the sheep-shearing festival, that bucolic episode of joyous hospitality, is, depressingly, the raucous setting of Glastonbury, particularly late in the festival. Polixenes, looking for his son, is disguised as Prince Michael of Kent, and Autolycus (Phil Daniels) is a mix of Jimmy Savile and a used-car salesman. Any one of these ideas might have worked; all of them together are just a mess.
The busy-ness, the constant shift of view in particular, means that the energy usually brought to the pastoral by Autolycus is entirely subsumed. He is only one more eccentric in a land apparently teeming with oddities. And this is a shame, for Phil Daniels has much to give—had he less to do, had everything around him been simplified, he might have been remembered as one of the best Autolycuses of modern times. But he has a Bob Dylan impression, a rap number, a “Brush Up Your Shakespeare” variant, a preppy incarnation, a shell-suited persona. … One can only assume, sadly, that Hytner didn't trust his material.

And if you can't trust The Winter's Tale, what can you trust? The two halves, of destruction and redemption, of jealousy and penance, of winter and spring, encompass all that is worst, and best, in ourselves. Time turns over the hour-glass at the beginning of Act Four, reassuring us that we can undo what is done, and begin again.

**Criticism: Production Reviews: Alastair Macaulay (review date 16 April 2002)**


*[In the following review, Macaulay derides Matthew Warchus's 2002 Royal Shakespeare Company production of The Winter's Tale for its unnecessary length and for the English actors' distracting use of American accents.]*

The RSC is starting a London regime at the Roundhouse, and I wish it well there. This is an exciting, unpretentious space. But it has acquired steep, stiff new seating for its RSC season, with entrances so circuitous that, on press night, the opening production had to start more than 20 minutes late while many of us were still queueing to reach our seats. The circumstances are irritating. And the production is unimportant, eccentric, unnecessary.

The RSC needs a production that will make the simplicity and immediacy of the Roundhouse bring out its best virtues. It doesn't need a Winter's Tale that (not counting the late start) runs at way over three-and-a-half hours; a production set in mid-20th-century gangster America (with accents to match); a production featuring an elaborate double staircase and an 8ft chandelier, a production which begins with a five-minute silent conjuring trick that only has bearing on the play for those who already know what will happen (20 years later) in Act Five; a production that depends on the cumbersome method of shooing a “promenade” minority of the audience around (sit here for this scene; sit there for that; stand up for the trial; sit down for Bohemia). Matthew Warchus's staging does have its merits, but you have to remind yourself of what they are.

I take Warchus's point that American accents can unlock several aspects of Shakespeare's English, but this doesn't work well enough in practice with British actors. You're perfectly aware that most of these accents aren't the real thing long before Myra Lucretia Taylor (whose is) comes on as Paulina. Meanwhile the gangsterland glitz unlocks nothing. Warchus's production, with its country-and-western Bohemia and its deafness to Shakespeare's besetting fascination with issues of royalty, is not the Winter's Tale that I need any more than the RSC does.

Too bad: amid this generally extraneous production, there are fine features. Shaven-headed as a dangerous, violent, unpredictable Mafioso Leontes, Douglas Hodge does most to make the production succeed, and sometimes leads one clean through the American surface into the play's wracked heart. Lines of jealous fury such as “It is a bawdy planet”, “My wife is slippery”, and—above all—the lines that climax in “I have drunk, and seen the spider” all strike savagely home. Still, one feels that Warchus's production has only added to Hodge's problems in this notoriously taxing role. As his wronged wife Hermione, Anastasia Hille over-indulges the nervous energy that can make her an interesting actor and neglects such basic theatrical
points as fully supported diction. Myra Lucretia Taylor (Paulina) gives the most completely convincing performance of all. But it's a long evening, and feels longer.

**Criticism: Themes: Jennifer Richards (essay date 1999)**


[In the following essay, Richards maintains that a principal motivating factor in Leontes's paranoid jealousy is his anxiety about social status. The critic examines a number of Renaissance courtesy treatises to show that Shakespeare adroitly recreated a dialectical Jacobean relationship between courtly and common attitudes in *The Winter's Tale*.]

One of the most difficult problems facing critics of *The Winter's Tale* is the source of Leontes' jealousy. At one moment in I, ii, Leontes is encouraging his wife, Hermione, to persuade Polixenes to extend his visit (“Tongue-tied, our queen? Speak you”, I, ii, 28); a few minutes later, he is plunged into passionate doubts (“To mingle friendship far is mingling bloods”, I, ii, 108). So unexpected is his rage that the search for motivation becomes tempting, even preoccupying. Critics alert to the dangers of character criticism either ignore this temptation, advising us to read his jealousy as a theatrical effect, or avoid the pitfalls of a psychological reading by focusing on the play's interest in the mediacy of language, and the ambiguity of Hermione's words and gestures.1 In a contribution to this debate, I would like to use the search for motivation as a means to address a more recently identified area of neglect in current criticism: the play's concern with social distinction.2 Leontes' rage is motivated by a sensitivity not just to the mediacy of language but to its inability to represent adequately distinctions in rank; and from the moment at which he descends into passionate tyranny, the play forces us to confront his unwavering belief that social distinction exists 'in nature'.

Leontes' concern with social, as well as sexual, transgression is indicated in his depiction of Hermione as ‘As rank as any flax-wench that puts to / Before her troth-plight’ (I, i, 274-5). As Leontes' pun on ‘rank’ suggests, Hermione's imagined infidelity is socially demeaning. She has forgotten her place in the social order, and has behaved little better than an undisciplined country-girl. But Leontes is not just concerned with Hermione's manners. He also calls attention to the dangers of linguistic familiarity. ‘O thou thing’, he scornfully addresses Hermione:

> Which I'll not call a creature of thy place  
> Lest barbarism, making me the precedent,  
> Should a like language use to all degrees,  
> And mannerly distinguishment leave out  
> Betwixt the prince and beggar.

(II, i, 82-7)

Leontes' sensitivity to linguistic familiarity is twofold. On the one hand, he intuits his own contribution to the collapse of ‘mannerly distinguishment’ through a careless use of language. To name Hermione a ‘whore’, to attribute to her the ‘bold'st titles’ proffered by ‘vulgars’, is to commit *cæcuphaton* or *Scurra*, the rhetorical figure which George Puttenham translates in *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589) as ‘foule speache’ and advises the ‘courtly maker’ to ‘shunne’ at all costs if he is to speak decorously, that is, in keeping with his social station.3 On the other hand, though, Leontes is alert to the ambivalence of one linguistic marker of social distinction: he cannot call Hermione a ‘creature of [her] place’—or queen—because to do so is to acknowledge immediately that she is indeed a ‘quean’ or whore.4 In this respect, he identifies a new problem, that a term designating high status, rather than confidently denoting its social exclusiveness, alludes to its
demeaned opposite. And he prompts a different kind of question in a play often too narrowly defined as ‘courtly’ or ‘aristocratic’: not ‘how can one secure “mannerly distinction”?’, but rather, ‘can it be secured at all?’.

Leontes' suppressed punning on the term ‘queen’, and his paranoid interpretation of Hermione's ‘entertainment’ of Polixenes, will probably strike us as evidence first and foremost of the self-feeding and obsessive character of his anxiety. After all, it is Leontes, not Hermione, who is ultimately ‘guilty’ of speaking vulgarly. Yet, Leontes' rantings, I suggest, should be taken seriously, because they draw attention to the linguistic transgression so characteristic of this and other late plays. Indeed, it is perhaps useful to think of Leontes as a character who has been cast into the wrong play. His commitment to neoclassical standards of decorum—to the suiting of speech to character and status—and to the related ‘moralisation of status terms’ seem curiously out of place in The Winter's Tale, which displays its disrespect for the kind of ‘mannerly distinction’ he craves.

Yet, Leontes' rantings, I suggest, should be taken seriously, because they draw attention to the linguistic transgression so characteristic of this and other late plays. Indeed, it is perhaps useful to think of Leontes as a character who has been cast into the wrong play. His commitment to neoclassical standards of decorum—to the suiting of speech to character and status—and to the related ‘moralisation of status terms’ seem curiously out of place in The Winter's Tale, which displays its disrespect for the kind of ‘mannerly distinction’ he craves. ‘Never a man who paid much attention to the requirements of neoclassical decorum when constructing character’, writes Anne Barton, ‘the Shakespeare of the late plays seems to have abandoned even the basic convention by which, earlier, his servants and lower-class characters generally expressed themselves in homely, colloquial, if vivid, prose.’ In The Winter's Tale itself, the rustic characters of its pastoral world ‘dodge in and out of their status-defined, comic roles in ways for which there are no real parallels in earlier plays’. From the other side, Autolycus, a demoted court malcontent, slips as easily into beggar's weeds and words as he does into the aristocratic costume and ‘court-contempt’ of his erstwhile master, Prince Florizel (IV, iv, 729). Leontes' anxiety may seem to come from nowhere, but it can be explained through Hermione's ambiguous ‘courtly’ display, and even through the action of the play, which consistently confounds his neoclassical tastes.

Of course, to observe merely that Shakespeare transgresses neoclassical standards of decorum in one of his late plays is hardly new, as Anne Barton's work suggests. In fact, Shakespeare's indecorum is a topic well covered in two book-length studies: T. McAlindon's Shakespeare and Decorum (1973) and John D. Cox's Shakespeare and the Dramaturgy of Power (1989). These critics may disagree over the intentions of Shakespeare's distaste for decorous hierarchies, but they share a belief that Shakespeare departs from the neoclassical standards set up in the sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century courtesy handbooks. As I will argue, though, these texts are helpful in interpreting the play's sensitivity to the limits of linguistic and social decorum, and also for accounting for its courtly tone. Usually understood to offer a defence of the privileges of the established aristocracy, these ‘elitist’ texts also appeal to a broader audience, and engage in a search not just for a narrow definition of nobility, but for an understanding of a shared ‘humanity’.

Courtesy treatises understand that courtly display is already potentially transgressive, indebted as it is to the low, not the high, style of classical decorum. Against these texts, we will be able to see more clearly that The Winter's Tale affirms a dialectical, rather than a fixed, relationship between the ‘low’ and the ‘high’: it explores how the ‘low’ is implicated in the ‘high’ (just as Hermione's courteous actions can simultaneously be read as ‘common’ and ‘queanish’), and also how the ‘low’ and the ‘high’ can grow into one another (just as a ‘queen’ can become a ‘quean’, or conversely, a ‘queen of curds and cream’ can be noble indeed (IV, iv, 161).

Such a claim for The Winter's Tale might seem odd in view of the fact that, for many of its critics, it aims only to restore the natural superiority of the aristocracy, and to ‘replicate seventeenth-century notions of hierarchy’. Leontes' refusal to call Hermione ‘a creature of [her] place’, Martin Orkin suggests, depends ‘on a series of implied inscriptions about normative courtly behaviour that distinguishes the courtier from any “barbarous” disregard of hierarchy’, and which are dramatised in the play itself. For example, Perdita's desire ‘to tell’ the snobbish Polixenes ‘plainly’ that ‘The selfsame sun that shines upon his court / Hides not his visage from our cotage’ (IV, iv, 440-2) is received by an audience ‘secure in the knowledge … that she is an aristocrat’. For Rosalie Colie, this ‘conspicuously ill-made’ play never fulfils its offered questioning of the concept of ‘nobility’. In the famous art / nature debate at its heart, we catch a glimpse of a levelling perspective in the
argument put forward by Polixenes (and challenged by Perdita) that ‘we marry / A gentler scion to the wildest stock, / And make conceive a bark of baser kind / By bud of nobler race’ (IV, iv, 92-5). But, because ‘Perdita is in fact royal’, Colie insists, ‘Polixenes’ views about grafting are not in fact relevant to his own son's union; and Perdita's hierarchical conception of rank … is confirmed, not challenged, by the ultimate arrangement of the plot’. In the course of the play, Andrew McRae adds, Perdita merely ‘demonstrates in her growth to maturity’ a motif integral to aristocratic pastoral romance—‘the predominance of regal nature over rustic nurture’—which is intended unambiguously to suppress the social aspirations of the ‘middling’ ranks.11

It is difficult to argue against such a perspective when the play so insistently voices the prejudices of its noble characters, and even allows that the demand for ‘mannerly distinguishment’ should be interpreted as a mark of an aristocratic nature, a naturally refined sensibility. Leontes may figure himself as a betrayed ‘everyman’ once he is convinced of Hermione's infidelity (‘And many a man there is, even at this present, / Now, while I speak this, holds his wife by th'arm, / That little thinks she has been sluiced in's absence’ (I, ii, 190-2)), yet he also imagines his discernment as an example of his own aristocratic temper. In the same scene, Leontes perceives that Camillo shares his suspicions, and praises his conceit as above that of ‘common blocks’: ‘Not noted, is't, he remarks, ‘But of finer natures? By some severals / Of headpiece extraordinary? Lower messes / Perchance are to this business purlblind?’ (I, ii, 222-5). Quite simply, men of lower rank do not share his superior insight. For Leontes, Mamilius' illness is itself a sign of the ‘nobleness’ of his nature, a physical recoiling from ‘the dishonour of his mother’ (II, iii, 13-14).

Of course, Leontes' aristocratic insightfulness may be discredited quite early in the play—after all, what he perceives as Camillo's insight turns out to be merely an expression of bewilderment. Even so, a more sympathetic outlet for such views is offered with the character of Polixenes, king of Bohemia. Sensitive to Leontes' mood swings in Act I, Polixenes seeks insight from Camillo with an appeal to his gentility and education: ‘As you are certainly a gentleman, thereto / Clerk-like experienced, which no less adorns / Our gentry than our parents' noble names’ (I, ii, 386-8). In the later pastoral scenes Polixenes' sensibilities will be (credibly) offended at the sight of his son, ‘a sceptre's heir’, courting a mere ‘knack’, the shepherdess Perdita (IV, iv, 416, 425). Polixenes' and Leontes' shared belief in the simple-mindedness, undiscriminating taste and sexual naiveté of the ‘Lower messes’, moreover, is apparently proven by the court malcontent and disguised peddler, Autolycus: ‘My clown, who wants but something to be a reasonable man’, he reflects on his profitable sale of trifles, ‘grew so in love with the wenches' song that he would not stir his pettittoes till he had both tune and words, which so drew the rest of the herd to me that all their other senses stuck in ears—you might have pinched a placket, it was senseless’ (IV, iv, 601-6). So ‘senseless’ are the rustic ‘herd’, he suggests, that they are susceptible to his (and other disguised courtiers') commercial and sexual exploitation.

Perdita's recovery, discussed in V, ii, seems not only to affirm an essentialist conception of ‘nobility’ but to offer a correct interpretation of gentle manners. In contrast to Leontes, who misreads Hermione's courteously ‘entertainment’ as common and unqueenlike, the Third Gentleman accepts Perdita's ‘affection of nobleness’ as a sign of her innate gentility in spite of her rural appearance (l. 36). Such a reading seems to be reinforced a moment later, through the reference of the newly ennobled Clown to his ‘preposterous estate’ (l. 142), to his new status as a ‘gentleman ‘born’ (l. 130).12 We laugh at his naive assumption that his clothes make him a gentleman: ‘See you these clothes? Say you see them not, and think me still no gentleman born—you were best say these robes are not gentlemen born?’ (ll. 126-9). His short-sightedness appears as a poor and revealing imitation of the displayed ‘court-contempt’ of Autolycus, disguised as Florizel, when he confronts the Shepherd and Clown earlier in the play: ‘I am a courtier. Seest thou not the air of the court in these enfoldings? Hath not my gait the measure of the court? Receives not thy nose court odour from me?’ (IV, iv, 725-9).

The Winter's Tale, then, seems to insist on ‘mannerly distinguishment’ in aesthetic terms; it appeals to the ‘bifurcation’ of audience—which Eduardo Saccone describes as integral to aristocratic culture—into those who ‘belong’ to a courtly ‘club’ because they know how to read its signs, and those who are merely its
admiring ‘victims’.

Shakespeare's sensitivity to the refined tastes of an aristocratic audience is arguably present in earlier comedies, most notably *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Love's Labours Lost*. Such rank-consciousness is marked spatially in the conclusion of *The Winter's Tale*. As Orkin observes, in V, ii, the newly ennobled Clown and Shepherd, and demoted Autolycus, significantly ‘are left outside, when, in the final scene, the courtiers go inside, to the home of Paulina’. ‘[W]hatever the “discoveries” or assertions of maturity attained in the home,’ he adds, ‘these are also hereby presented as implicitly possible only for the aristocratic body’, that is, the appreciation of Hermione's living ‘statue’ as ‘aristocratic, “high”, classical’ art (p. 16). In a world in which courtly status is defined partly by proximity to the body of the monarch, the Clown's and Shepherd's exclusion provocatively undermines their new kinship to Leontes. But they are also ‘outsiders’ in a different sense, for they are too simple-minded to appreciate genteel culture. Their attempt to define themselves as ‘insiders’, as ‘gentlemen-born’, is revealed to be a ‘preposterous’ miscomprehension of the natural order which insinuates their distance from the real nobility.

Even so, it is still important to consider the extent to which Shakespeare presents a glib defence of ‘natural’ nobility in this play. For alongside the self-confidence of the aristocrats, it invites us to question the quality of their insights, and the ease with which they interpret the world around them, suggesting that Alison Thorne's argument in this collection, concerning the hermeneutic complexity of *Cymbeline*, applies equally to *The Winter's Tale*. We are asked, for example, not only to discredit Leontes' superior perspicuity, but to observe the dramatised mistaken readings of other characters (for example, Antigonus' misinterpretation of Hermione in his dream in III, i). The play also cultivates in its audience an awareness of its own susceptibility to misreading. We may be puzzled by Leontes' sudden jealous passion and by the ambiguity of Hermione's playful engagement with Polixenes, and we will probably find ourselves uncomfortably uncertain of the motives of Perdita's suitor, Prince Florizel. In view of such interpretative anxieties, is it not significant that we, like Autolycus (and unlike the Shepherd and Clown), are also excluded from Perdita's discovery towards the play's conclusion? And that though in contrast to the Shepherd, Clown and Autolycus we do make our way into Paulina's home at the end, we find ourselves, like the humiliated Leontes, to be the admiring victims of Paulina's ‘trick’? The only knowledge we do possess with any certainty is that Perdita is nobly born, but this does not mean that she is innately noble. It is significant, as Orkin suggests, that the discovery of Perdita’s royal identity takes place off-stage, but not for the reasons he offers. Rather than having the satisfaction of seeing the characters realise what we already know, we are invited instead to consider their responses to this revelation. How it is possible, for instance, that so self-evident a ‘queen’ could have been earlier dismissed as an ignoble, although beautiful, ‘queen of curds and cream’?

Shakespeare's invocation in *The Winter's Tale* of the experience of being ‘outside’ and ‘inside’ invites us to reflect more carefully on its presumed courtly elitism or exclusivity. Aristocratic culture is usually understood to be ‘exclusive’ in its dependence on ‘mannerly distinction’ between courtiers and clowns, and the gentle and the ungentle. It is also often presumed to be uncritically bound to the ‘hegemonic coherence of the ideology of social rank’ integral to the Elizabethan and Jacobean courts. The task of the modern critic, who is historically ‘outside’ its cultural discourse, then, is to expose a text's elitism, and its concomitant appropriation of theories of natural right. Derek Attridge begins his subtle reading of Puttenham's *Arte*, for example, with a recognition of his own critical short-sightedness and the relinquishment of the ‘illusion’ of ‘standing outside the field that provides the structures to [his] thought and writing’. At the same time, though, he recognises the possibility of reading between the lines—of discovering ‘much more than the writer's conscious intentions’—in an earlier text. In relation to the *Arte*, historical distance allows Attridge to explore the text’s contradictions and to expose Puttenham's restricted and unthinking application of the adjective ‘natural’ to aristocratic taste. As he argues, in the *Arte* ‘Decorum is what comes “naturally” not to all humanity but to an elite; and members of that elite can be identified by their “natural” sense of decorum. What comes naturally to the majority, who are ignorant and inexperienced, is not truly natural’ (p. 269). Yet such an approach in general does not adequately recognise the critical capacity of early modern texts. In the case of the courtesy treatises which are seen to disseminate standards of decorum it is insufficiently attentive to the ways in which they qualify such stock notions as ‘natural’ nobility and ‘mannerly distinction’, or to the
way in which they recognise how the outsider to aristocratic culture—the rustic clown—is, in some sense, already inside. In the case of *The Winter's Tale*, it is insensitive to the way in which it confounds decorous tastes and explores the gap between the language of status and the social mobility which characterised the reality of early modern England. It is also insensitive to the fact that the play already contains its own distancing tactic in its allusion to off-stage action.

II

To understand Shakespeare's exploration of the limits of 'mannerly distinguishment', it is helpful to turn, as McAlindon has suggested, to the ‘so-called courtesy books’, and especially to Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier* (trans. 1561), Stefano Guazzo's *Civile Conversation* (trans. 1581) and James Cleland's *The Institution of a Young Nobleman* (1607) (p. 4). These courtesy treatises, McAlindon argues, inculcate in their readers a sensitivity to ‘class or office’, and to the decorous conception of ‘the relationship between man and name or title’ as it is expressed in speech and dress (p. 9). In Book V of the *Institution*, for example, Cleland advises the young nobleman to ensure that his ‘speech’ is not ‘popular’ since his ‘qualitie [is] above the common’, and he also urges him ‘to put a distinction betweene [his] discourses and a Scythians, a Barbarians or a Gothes’, adding that ‘it is a pitty when a Noble Man is better distinguished from a Clowne by his golden laces, then by his good language’.18 Treatises such as Cleland's, John D. Cox notes, display a revived taste for the stratification of styles according to classical decorum, and also ‘the emergence of a confident English high style’ (p. 57). Alongside the development of English to accommodate Cicero’s ‘magnificent, opulent, stately and ornate’ grand style,19 we find the ‘eloquent dismissal’ of medieval and Protestant plain speech or *sermo humilis* (p. 52). In contrast to Hugh Latimer, who, writing in the 1550s, could proudly identify himself as the son of a 'yeoman', and compare preaching to husbandry, humanist writers in the 1560s such as Thomas Wilson, associated more closely with the centralised Tudor court, distance themselves from their humble backgrounds. In *The Arte of Rhetorique*, for example, Thomas Wilson—the son of a yeoman farmer—places ‘linguistic solecisms … in the mouths of anonymous “country fellows” who blunder about awkwardly in his anecdotes before their social betters’ (p. 52).

But what exactly is ‘courtly speech’? The examples just given imply that it is spoken by members of the aristocracy, and that it is ‘ornate’ and ‘stately’. Such an account, however, is hardly adequate. For instance, Cleland may insist that ‘[s]peech is the image of the minde, and messenger of the heart’, and invite us to imagine that a gentleman's language reflects his innate gentility (sig. Z4r). Yet, in the same treatise, he insists that nobility is a virtue which is ‘husbanded’ through education rather than inherited, so that it is not clear whether courtly speech is spoken naturally by the well born, or whether it is a standard of English acquired artificially, alongside gentility itself, through study and practice. Any decorous understanding of courtly speech, which takes into consideration the rank of the speaker, then, is undermined by the disputed definition of ‘nobility’ in such treatises. In addition, we might note that courtiers were expected to use the full range of available styles, and were restricted partly by context and intent.20

More confusingly, though, courtesy writers are unexpectedly united in their *formal* description of ‘courtly’ speech in the terms of the classical ‘low’ style.21 Cleland's description of a gentleman's language stresses its prosaic rather than stately qualities: it should be ‘plaine and perspicuous, as flowing from a natural fountaine of eloquence’, he explains, so that it can be ‘understood as wel as the common talke of the village, and pearcheth and perswadeth the heart of the hearer besides’ (sig. Aa2r). He echoes the advice of Castiglione in his preface to the *Courtier* to choose words from ‘commune speach’,22 and of Guazzo's Annibale in *Civile Conversation*, ‘to procede in common talke simply and plainly, according as the truth of the matter shall require’.23 The model for gentlemen, I suggest, is not Cicero's grand, but rather his ‘restrained and plain’, orator who follows ‘ordinary usage [consuetudo]’ (*Orator*, xxiii. 76), and who differs from untrained speakers only to the extent that his ‘natural’ style is premeditated, and aims at a ‘careful negligence [neglegentia diligens]’ (*Orator*, xxiii. 78).
Attridge's comments on the aristocratic appropriation of 'naturalness' are best understood in this context. For upwardly mobile Elizabethan and early Jacobean writers were committed to creating in English a classical plain courtly style which would replace the native *sermo humilis*, and provide an elite form of discourse. There is a great difference, for instance, between the native idiom of the mid-Tudor preacher Hugh Latimer and the cultivated plain style of the courtier-poet Philip Sidney. Sidney himself wanted to ensure that we do not forget this distinction. In his pastoral romance *Arcadia* he roughly dismisses the rustic character Dametias, a ‘most arrant doltish clown’, who wins the admiration of the foolish King Basilius because he expresses himself ‘with such rudeness, which he interpreted plainness—though there be a great difference between them’. Sidney might well concur with Attridge's wry comment on Elizabethan decorum that ‘[w]hat comes naturally to the majority, who are ignorant and inexperienced, is not truly natural’ (p. 269), and he might also see the relationship between courtly speech and *sermo humilis* as constitutive of a natural order, led by a hereditary nobility. And yet, that same relationship between courtly speech and the low style also threatens any attempt at 'mannerly distinguishment' and the concomitant creation of a natural order, because it evokes the quite distinct search for a general conception of 'humanity' which finds its roots in natural law. After all, *sermo humilis*, as the idiom of ordinary people, betokens not simply ‘their’ low social degree, but ‘our’ shared innate possession of the ‘seeds of virtue’, the capacity for speech, reason and judgement which distinguishes us from animals, not one another. Even Sidney's *Arcadia* includes two 'cultivated' shepherds, Strephon and Claius, who are ‘beyond the rest by so much as learning doth add to nature’ (p. 83).

The connection between *sermo humilis*, courtly speech and natural law is apparent, for instance, in Guazzo's *Civile Conversation*. It is true that Annibale, its main speaker, insists on the observation of decorum; he recognises, for example, that a gentleman is ‘so much the more esteemed of, by howe muche our Civilitie differeth from the nature and fashions of the vulgar sorte’. Yet, a moment later, when prompted by Guazzo to explain how a gentleman can speak sincerely and eloquently, he advises that ‘a man ought to proceede in common talke simply and plainly’, and proceeds to offer a rather unexpected model:

> if you consider how in Villages, Hamlets, and fields, you shall find many men, who though they leade they life farre distant from the graces and the Muses (as the proverbe is) and come stamping in with their high clouted shooes, yet are of good understanding, whereof they give sufficient testimonie by their wise and discreet talke.

(sig. G8r-v)

> ‘[Y]ou cannot denie’, he adds, ‘but that nature hath given and sowed in us certaine seedes of Rhetorique and Philosophie’, which we need to develop with the help of art or study (sig. G8r). Civility depends on the cultivation of this native gift, just as the tool of the civilised—the art of rhetoric—is a development of effects found in ordinary, unstudied and ‘natural’ speech. Annibale returns to this point a little later, when he recognises that the ‘ornaments and flowers of speache growe by chiefly in the learned, yet you see that nature maketh some of them to flourish even amongst the common sort, unknowing unto them’; ‘you shall see artificers, and others of low estate, to apply fitly to their purpose in due time and place, Sentences, pleasant Jestes, Fables, Allegories, Similitudes, Proverbes, Comptes, and other delightful Speache’ (sig. H3r).

The contribution of the notion of the democratically distributed ‘seeds of virtue’ to the courtesy tradition has long been neglected, no doubt partly out of the need to establish a quotable and certain source for an elitist aesthetics. Its presence, though, often serves to qualify claims of aristocratic natural right, and to anticipate a more inclusive conception of ‘nobility’. In Castiglione's *Courtier*, for example, one interlocutor's commitment to this notion will undermine Count Lewis's carefully constructed defence of the innate nobility of the well born. In response to Lewis's insistence that noble men are predisposed to virtue, Gaspar Pallavicino sharply notes that ‘nature hath not these so subtle distinctions … we se many times in persons of most base degree, most high giftes of nature’ (p. 40). Lewis's response in turn is revealing, for he admits that ‘in men of base degree may regne the very same vertues that are in gentlemen’, but explains that what really matters is the
perception of their social status, and presumed superior virtue: ‘[f]or where there are two in a noble mans house which at the first have given no prove of themselves with woorkes good or bad, asoone as it is known that the one is a gentleman borne, and the other is not, the unnoble shall be muche lesse esteemed with everye manne, then the gentleman’. The difficult discussion in Book I of the Courtier, I suggest, is designed to bring us to an acceptance not so much of the importance of heredity per se, as of its continued impact on the popular imagination. As Lewis explains, ‘howe waightye these imprintinges are every man may easily judge’ (p. 41).

The emphasis on sermo humilis will also help us to recognise a second gesture of ‘inclusiveness’, though, by reminding us that courtesy treatises are indebted not just to neoclassical standards of decorum, but to alternative Christian rhetorical tastes, in which the ‘low’ is valued more than the ‘high’. As Erich Auerbach reminds us in a commentary on Augustine's De doctrina christiana, ‘in the Christian context the highest mysteries of the faith may be set forth in the simple words of the lowly style which everyone can understand’, while Christ ‘the King’ chose ‘voluntary humiliation’ by living ‘on earth in the lowest social class’. Christian humility may appear to have little in common with courtly modesty, and the kind of disguised artfulness or sprezzatura (aptly translated by Thomas Hoby as ‘disgracing’) promted by Castiglione, but its influence is felt more readily in other treatises which are indebted to the Courtier. [T]ruely I knowe many men of meane calling’, offers Guazzo's Annibale, ‘who in Gentlemanlike and curteous conditions, in good bringing up, and in all their talke and behaviour excell many Gentlemen. And contrariwise, I am sure you know many Gentlemen more uncivill than are Clowes themselves’ (Book I, sig. B5v). Such a doctrine informs Guazzo's insistence on courtly familiarity, or civil behaviour towards others. The second interlocutor, William, may insist that ‘everyone [should] keepe that maiestie and state whiche is due to his estate’, but he simultaneously insists that contempt for others is ‘intollerable’:

for that there is no man that thinketh so vilely and abjectly of himselfe, that he deserveth to be scorned … And if it be a fault to floute such as one knoweth, it is a greater fault to deride those he knoweth not, whiche some rash and insolent fellows use to doe, who (as the saying is) judging the horses by the stables and furnitures, consider not that oft times under a clownshe coate is hidden a noble and lively understanding.

(Book II, sigs. K2v-K4v)

Similar advice can be found in Cleland's treatise, in which biblical echoes are glossed in the margins. Noblemen should be ‘lowly and humble to al men’, he declares in a chapter in Book V entitled ‘Of common behaviour towards all sortes of men’ (sigs Yv-Y2v). It ‘is great wisdom for a man to accommodate himselfe and to frame his manners apt and meete for al honest companie, and societie of men’, he explains, and ‘a most rare quality in a Noble man to be common, that maketh him imitate Gods goodnes’ (sigs X4v-Yr). Such advice accords with the early modern law of hospitality, ‘a clearly formulated series of conventions’, Felicity Heal explains, ‘that dictated particular behaviour towards outsiders’, and which derives from the Roman ius hospitii and the Stoic tradition of natural law.

III

Rosalie Colie's somewhat harsh judgement of The Winter's Tale, that it is a play ‘conspicuously ill-made’, is fuelled partly by what she sees as its ‘contradictions and ambivalences’, and partly too by its refusal to pry into motivation (pp. 266, 275). In particular, she observes that in the gillyvor dispute Perdita and Polixenes take views against their own interests: the socially aspiring Perdita argues against intermarriage while the narrow-minded and snobbish Polixenes identifies its virtues. As she adds, no matter how enlightening this debate seems to be, its questioning of social hierarchy ‘is not pursued to its final conclusion’ and it is ‘Perdita's hierarchical conception of rank’ which ‘is confirmed … by the ultimate arrangement of the plot’ (p. 277). I want to suggest, however, that the play does continue its early exploration of social decorum, and that
it endorses the very ‘familiar courtesy’ which Leontes found so disturbing when practised by Hermione, and on two different accounts.

First, the play presents us with one compelling—and easily recognisable—example of ‘familiar courtesy’ in its low pastoral world. ‘Fie daughter,’ the Shepherd reprimands the tardy Perdita, ‘queen’ of the feast, ‘when my old wife lived, upon / This day she was both pantler, butler, cook; / Both dame and servant; welcomed all, served all’, and then in a gesture which makes clear that ‘mannerly distinguishment’ has no place in the practice of proper hospitality, he bids her cease her blushing and introduce their uninvited guests, the disguised Polixenes and Camillo: ‘Pray you bid / These unknown friends to's welcome, for it is / A way to make us better friends, more known’ (IV, iv, 55-66). Secondly, it invites us to pry into motivation, questioning the gap between what we expect from characters, given their social status, and their self-expression, and to inquire into the ideological basis of their assumptions. Rather than affirming the ‘naturalness’ (and rightness) of aristocratic tastes, the play encourages us to explore the impact of perceived status on judgement, and leads us to understand just ‘how waightye [are] these imprintinges’ of social status.

The weight of these ‘imprintinges’ is unexpectedly apparent, I suggest, in The Winter's Tale's troublesome penultimate scene, in which we learn from the conversation of three gentlemen of the Sicilian court that Perdita has been rightly identified as Leontes' lost daughter. ‘That which you hear you'll swear you see, there is such unity in the proofs’, the Third Gentleman begins:

The mantle of Queen Hermione's; her jewel about her neck of it; the letters of Antigonus found with it, which they know to be his character; the majesty of the creature in resemblance of the mother; the affection of nobleness which nature shows above her breeding; and many other evidences proclaim her with all certainty to be the King's daughter.

(V, ii, 31-9)

Most critics seem to ‘see’ what they ‘hear’, concurring in the ‘unity’ of these proofs which confirm not just Perdita's identity, but the natural right of the nobly born. Thus, in this scene we seem to share the characters' attainment of the knowledge we already possess: that Perdita is a princess. But, in contrast to both Pericles and Cymbeline, the long-awaited family reunion takes places off-stage, so that what we are actually experiencing is not the moment of acknowledgement itself, but only its telling. In fact, we do not ‘see’ at all, and this distance from the action should prompt us to reflect on the attitudes of the gentlemen, and, indeed, on our own unwavering perception of Perdita's nobility. The question I want to raise here is not whether Perdita is nobly born, but rather whether she is always apparently innately noble, or whether her innate nobility only becomes apparent once her true status is known. Quite simply, I want to question the basis on which the Third Gentleman is convinced of Perdita's status. For there is something undiscriminating in the parity he assumes between quite distinct kinds of proof, the external witnesses—the mantle, the jewels and the letters—and his impression of her disposition to nobleness. Perdita's ‘nobility’, I suggest, is only fully apparent (or fully registered) once the fact of her royal birth has been uncovered. In effect, the Third Gentleman is akin to the blinkered nobleman Belarius in Cymbeline, whose recognition of the ‘invisible instinct’ which ‘frame[s]’ the two ‘lost’ princes ‘To royalty unlearn'd’ is juxtaposed to his respect for the vicious but high ranking Cloten (IV, ii, 177-9).

The elevation of Perdita, a 'queen of curds and cream', to the status of a queen, should recall, rather than resolve, the problems of decorum we first associated with Leontes' suppressed pun on queen / quean. In I, ii, Leontes' fastidiousness alerts us to the threat posed to ‘mannerly distinguishment’, and to the integrity of noble families, by Hermione's familiar bearing. In a sense, though, Leontes misunderstands the nature of ‘courtly’ entertainment, which, as the Shepherd demonstrates, depends on a degree of ‘familiar courtesy’. In V, ii, his misreading appears to be set right when Perdita is made ‘familiar’, and reintegrated into the royal family. In this instance, her native nobility is recognised in spite of her lowly appearance. Such a reading,
however, assumes that Perdita's birthright is consonant with an innate nobility when the play does not clearly affirm this relationship. It may be possible to establish that Perdita is Leontes' daughter from the external witnesses, and even—at a push—from her physical traits, which recall those of Hermione (V, i, 225-6), but this does not establish her innate nobility. As the example of the courteous Shepherd suggests, Perdita may seem noble to the Third Gentleman because of—not in spite of—her lowly demeanour. I suggest that the Third Gentleman is no less prejudiced than Leontes; it is just that the consequences of his ‘reading’ contribute to the comic resolution of the play.

Ultimately, it is the courtly ‘outsiders’, the preposterous Clown and Shepherd, who are the real insiders at the end of the play. Their exclusion from Paulina's home in V, iii, has been seen to imply their outsider status. But it is possible, too, that they do not need to share in ‘our’ final humiliation at the hands of Paulina. Rather than being excluded from an appreciation of Hermione's living statue as ‘aristocratic, “high”, classical’ art, they leave us with an insight into the unreadability of the ‘artificial’ signs of nobleness. In V, ii, when asked by Autolycus to act as his patron at court, and to give a ‘good report’ of him ‘to the prince my master’ (l. 145), the Clown promises to ‘swear … thou art as honest a true fellow as any is in Bohemia’ (l. 152). And then in response to the insistence of his father, who now understands Autolycus’ dishonesty, that ‘You may say it, but not swear it’, the Clown offers his newly acquired insight into courtly speech: ‘If it be ne'er so false, a true gentleman may swear it in the behalf of his friend.’ ‘I'll swear to the prince thou art a tall fellow of thy hands, and that thou wilt not be drunk—but I know thou art no tall fellow of thy hands, and that thou wilt be drunk’ (V, ii, 153-61). In contrast to their first, awe-inspired response to Autolycus, their final naiveté indicates rather that they have become ‘insiders’. For they understand that a courtier is also a natural ‘outsider’, one whose outward show is unlikely to be (in Cleland's words) the ‘messenger’ of his ‘heart’.

Notes

4. See also Henry VIII, II, iii, 24, and Foakes's discussion in his introduction to this edition, pp. xlviii-xlix. Commented on by Briggs in this collection, p. 217.
7. On the ‘moralisation of status terms’ see Lewis, Studies in Words, pp. 21-3. Hall's description of ‘decorum’ as ‘a class concept’ is useful here: ‘a king should speak as a king is expected to, while a commoner should use idioms common to the people.’ (Hall, Renaissance Literary Criticism, pp. 181-2).
8. Barton, ‘Leontes and the spider’, pp. 140-1. (For instances of social mobility see IV, ii, 38-40; IV, iii, 13-14; IV, iv, 9-10; IV, iv, 21-2, 415-17.)
9. McAlindon, Shakespeare and Decorum, p. 16; Cox, Dramaturgy of Power, esp. preface, Ch. 3, and Ch. 10. Cox has an excellent discussion of the ‘popular dramaturgy’ of The Winter's Tale, pp. 207-21. For more recent attention to Shakespeare's indecorum see Palfrey, Late Shakespeare, esp. pp. 14ff.
10. See Whigham, Ambition and Privilege, esp. Ch. 1. For Whigham, courtesy treatises are intended for an elite audience, but are often appropriated by the upwardly mobile. See also Javitch, Poetry and Courtliness.
17. Patterson, *Reading Between the Lines*, p. 6; cf. Morse, ‘Metacriticism and materiality’. Shakespeare was himself an ‘outsider’. On his aspirations to gentle status see Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare*, Ch. 13, and on his low status as a ‘player’ see Barroll, *Politics, Plague*, Ch. 1.
20. I am grateful to Alison Thorne for reminding me of this point. See Puttenham's discussion of Andrew Flamock's experiments in decorum, *Arte*, pp. 268-9.
25. See Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, III, i, 2: ‘The seeds of virtue are inborn in our dispositions and, if they were allowed to ripen, nature's own hand would lead us to happiness of life [Sunt enim ingeniis nostris semina innata virtutum …]’. This idea governs Cicero's attitude to rhetoric and civil society: see esp. *De Re Publica, De Legibus*, I, xxv, 40; II, iii, 8; II, xlii 69. See White, *Natural Law*, and McCabe, *Incest, Drama and Nature's Law*.

I am aware that such an emphasis might be seen by post-structuralist and new historicist critics to imply an essentialist conception of human ‘nature’ (see esp. Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy*). In response, I would suggest that this criticism springs from a misguided perception of the close association between a nineteenth-century Christian idealism and early modern humanism. For an alternative perspective see Norbrook on ‘the strong critical element’ of ‘rationalistic theories of natural law’: ‘[a] sceptical relativism about claims to an unproblematic “human nature” is placed against a searching, universalizing quest for a more general notion of humanity’ (Norbrook, “‘What cares these roarers for the name of king?’”, pp. 124-5). The place of natural law in the courtesy tradition is discussed in my forthcoming monograph, ‘Courtliness and Rhetoric in Early Modern Writing’.
28. I have borrowed the term ‘familiar courtesy’ from Greene's *Pandosto*; see n. 5 above.
29. See also *Cymbeline*, IV, ii, 245-52.

Bibliography

Primary


Cleland, James, *The Institution of a Young Noble Man* (Oxford, 1607)


Secondary


Crane, Mary Thomas, ‘Linguistic change, theatrical practice, and the ideologies of status in *As You Like It*’, *English Literary Renaissance*, 27 (1997), 361-92


Evans, Maurice, ‘Elizabethan spoken English’, *Cambridge Journal*, 4 (1950-1), 401-14


Neely, Carol Thomas, ‘*The Winter's Tale*: the triumph of speech’, *Studies in English Language and Literature*, 15 (1975), 321-38


Patterson, Annabel, *Reading Between the Lines* (London: Routledge, 1993)

In the following essay, Rosenfield maintains that The Winter's Tale exploits prevailing Jacobean cultural and ideological attitudes that associated feminine sexuality, maternity, and outspokenness with witchcraft. According to the critic, Shakespeare “reappropriates” these socially destabilizing feminine characteristics and cannily transforms them into a metaphor for the magic of artistic creation and theatrical performance.

When modern readers think of Shakespearean witches, most likely The Winter's Tale is not the first play to come to mind. More likely we think of Macbeth's weird sisters; those aged hags of prophecy and chaos, while never explicitly labelled as such within the text, bear the common traits of the village woman accused of witchcraft in early modern England. In The Winter's Tale, however, the specter of witchcraft haunts the text as eerily as it does in Macbeth. Every primary female character is eventually accused of this specifically female crime. Paulina, the “mankind witch” (2.3.8), falls foul of Leontes on account of her role as midwife and her vociferousness. Hermione's perceived sexual infidelity leads to a spectacle trial and potential burning, a punishment with which Leontes also condemns his daughter Perdita. Perdita is a “fresh piece / of excellent witchcraft” (4.4.424-5), labelled this way because her poverty and her upwardly mobile marriage to Florizel threaten to disrupt social hierarchy. Contemporary witchcraft belief incorporated all these images into the definition of the witch. She was the village beggar, disorderly and cursing; she was the woman outside patriarchal structure, unmarried, widowed, or sexually active; she was the healer or midwife, in contest with the emerging medical profession; she was the storyteller and woman of action. Such belief was pervasive in Shakespeare's England and was complexly constructed from both popular local customs and theological
doctrines of more Continental influence. The witch, whether through malevolent neighbourhood practices or satanic sabbats, possessed the English imagination as the embodiment of disorder and evil, the opposite of all that was godly and good.

*The Winter's Tale*, written during a heightening of public interest in witchcraft, subtly manipulates the cultural and ideological constructions that underlie witchcraft belief. The text identifies female vocality, sexuality, maternity, and midwifery with the witch and then reveals those associations as accusations designed to contain the threat of the transgressing woman. Female menace transforms to an affirmation of patriarchal order during the play, but that order itself is questioned. Witchcraft is realigned with healing, art, rebirth, and the power of theatrical performance, in a formulation that connects femininity to creativity and simultaneously undermines the rhetoric of the anti-theatrical movement. By correlating witchcraft, performance, and spectacle, the play weds the anti-theatrical movement in the early seventeenth century—which accused the theatre of being a form of witchcraft—to ideological constructions of perverted femininity. Shakespeare's re-appropriation of witchcraft as a complex metaphor for artistic creation can be read both as a critique of anti-theatricality and as part of a cultural narrative that links femininity and birthing to art.

Recent readings of Shakespearean witchcraft (primarily dealing with *Macbeth*) rely on a psychoanalytic approach that suggests that the representation of the witch's body is an extension of an anxiety created by mothering. Such anxiety results from the duality of the maternal body, which is necessarily both nurturing and sexual. Janet Adelman, for example, argues that *Macbeth* represents a powerful construction of absolute and destructive maternal power, expressed through the witches and Lady Macbeth's witch-like traits. The play offers the fantasy of escape from that power through a world of masculine generation (Adelman 90-121). Deborah Willis addresses a wider range of texts but uses a similar theoretical lens. This psychoanalytic approach problematically naturalizes hostility toward women by ignoring historical and cultural concerns. Instead, the emphasis on an essentialist ambivalence surrounding the mother's body, correlating construction of the nurturing mother and the nursing witch, insists that the mother must universally be rejected for appropriate psychological development of the child. In her important work on early modern femininity, Karen Newman argues instead for a political reading of maternal ambiguity: the Renaissance construction of the maternal as natural is part of a struggle for male cultural authority in which women, while nurturing, are not representing themselves and therefore are not producing their own cultural authority (65). *The Winter's Tale* sexualizes witchcraft by linking it to voracious sexual appetite, perverted maternity, and breast-feeding but then identifies these linkages as cultural constructions rather than “natural” psycho-social developments, thus undermining a traditional psychoanalytic reading. Male appropriation of the symbols of mothering (pregnancy, birthing, lactation, nursing) in the play attempts to redefine the reproductive process as the production of male cultural authority while eliminating female representational potency. The ideology of maternity that associates mothers with whores and the process of reproduction with witchcraft is exposed as the rhetoric of threatened masculinity, which is similar to the rhetoric that defines women as witches. The play suggests that the conflation of sexuality and maternity with witchcraft is a projection of male anxiety about birth, paternal proof, and the male construction of self. The text haunts fantasies of male reproduction with the impotency of something created from male nothing—that is, words and rumours, as opposed to the children that female “nothing” generates. The metaphor of birthing by the male imagination, symbolized by the word *nothing*, appropriates female reproductive authority, attempting to redefine the reproductive process as the production of male cultural authority. Such appropriation, however, whether through the representation of ideas as a form of male pregnancy, or through the metaphor of children as printed copies of their fathers, are inversions of feminine power. Those inversions, according to *The Winter's Tale*, are as perverted as the inversion of maternity contained within witchcraft belief.

Leontes and Polixenes share a perception that all women are witches, corrupted by the spirit of Eve and their own sexual desire. A similar view is expressed by Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger in *Malleus Maleficarum*; they argue that witchcraft finds its very roots in the nature of the female, a nature that fundamentally desires the betrayal of humankind. The “fall of Man” is rooted in Woman, and Woman is
rooted in evil, proved by the female pact with the devil and, tautologically, by her propensity to witchcraft (47). For Polixenes and Leontes, female desire is the root of male temptation and the source of all evil, and the two men fondly recall their days as “twinned lambs” and “unbreached” youth, when they “dreamed not / The doctrine of ill-doing, nor dreamed / That any did” (1.2.69-71). Sexual passion, however, is the fall from grace, and women, as Hermione points out, “are devils” (1.2.82) for the role they play. For Leontes, dreams and desires fester in disease and distrust:

Affection, thy intention stabs the center.
Thou dost make possible things not so held,
Communicat'st thou with dreams—how can this be?
With what's unreal thou coactive art,
And fellow'st nothing. Then tis very credent
Thou mayst cojoin with something; and I find it,
And that to the infection of my brains
And hardening of my brows.

(1.2.138-45)

He is saying that passion makes the impossible possible and, dreamlike, collaborates with the imaginative. How probable it must be, then, for imagination to latch onto something real. Leontes deconstructs his sense of masculine self with an act of imagination that makes no distinction between reality and fantasy. His fantasies, however, create a perceived reality from the specter of adultery. Creating something out of innocent nothings, he makes the betrayal of humankind an inevitability of female sexuality.

If Hermione shares Eve's guilt, she shares her punishment as well, for Eve's curse for temptation was to bring forth children in pain. Hermione is “something before her time delivered” (2.2.25) and suffers the additional agony of having her infant taken from her breast to its death. The process of birth itself is a creation of “something” from an apparent “nothing,” both in the sense of an absence that becomes the presence of an infant and in the delivery via a woman's "no-thing," which implicates conception from that nothing as well. Birth, therefore, is part of the nexus of Leontes's anxieties: he is haunted by the violation of her no-thing, the loss of his seed, and therefore his certainty, into her nothing, and the unknown something that results. The moment of birth, suggests Jeanne Addison Roberts, confronts the male with clear evidence of female sexuality, provoking anxiety over paternity. In that moment, he must reconcile the dichotomy between the virgin and the whore, reconceptualizing the wife/mother in an acknowledgement that her sexuality creates maternity (124-25). Leontes is unable to negotiate this territory, instead seeing ghosts of the whore's nothing in the something of the mother's parturition.

In contemporary treatises, the witch appears as a model of the monstrous mother: she nurses devils from her breast and dismembers babies for her cauldron. In The Winter's Tale, unnatural reversals of maternity are thrust upon Hermione by Leontes's actions, not self-generated. While she “rounds apace” he “cracks his gorge, his sides with violent hefts” (2.1.44, 45), his anger a form of monstrous birthing that overwhelms her delivery. Their child, described as a “prisoner to the womb” (2.2.58), is born not to freedom but to a prison cell. Denied the privilege of being a nurturing mother, Hermione assumes the role of her opposite, the diseased whore:

And firstfruits of my body, from his presence
I am barred, like one infectious. My third comfort,
Starred most unluckily, is from my breast,
The innocent milk in its most innocent mouth,
Haled out to murder; myself on every post
Proclaimed a strumpet.
Hermione’s allusion to the innocence of breast milk and its life-giving qualities juxtaposes the infant’s murder, opposing natural, nursing maternity with the wickedness of the infectious mother. Contemporary cultural anxiety about the power that women assumed through maternity surfaced in common concerns about ills transmitted through nursing. Colostrum, the new mother’s first milk, was conventionally referred to as “witch’s milk” and thought to convey both disease and female blood to the helpless male infant (Radbill 249). Strengthening the imaginative connection between the nursing woman and the witch was the belief that witches fed their familiars on milk from supernumerary nipples (Henderson and McManus 378). While Hermione undermines this denaturalizing of maternal nurturing, Leontes germinates a vision of her as a witch. He stresses the importance of Mamillius’s freedom from breast-feeding; the child, whose very name suggests his connection with her breast, was not fed from it: “Give me the boy. I am glad you did not nurse him. / Though he does bear some signs of me, yet you / Have too much blood in him” (2.1.56-58). The male child must be protected from the consuming power of the witch-mother’s milk, while the blood of the patriarch must be kept pure, unsullied by the blood of the witch-whore.

Leontes knows that Mamillius bears signs of him, which gives him some security that the boy is his own progeny. But it is impossible for Leontes to know this for certain, and uncertainty plagues him. As he begins to wonder about his wife’s fidelity, he questions his son’s legitimacy: “Mamillius, / Art thou my boy?” he asks (1.2.119-20). Mamillius assures him that he is indeed his boy, and the father sees in him a “copy” of himself. But his doubt persists: “Yet they say we are / Almost as like as eggs. Women say so, / That will say anything” (1.2.129-31). Doubt leads Leontes back to women’s unfaithfulness: they will say anything and likewise do anything, opening their mouths and their genitals with indiscretion. Despite his resemblance to Mamillius (being “as like as eggs”), Leontes cannot physically prove his relationship as father to Mamillius. According to Gail Kern Paster, The Winter’s Tale formulates birth as an activity that the state seeks to control. Women in early modern Europe gave birth under conditions monitored only by other women, therefore childbirth was an inversion of customary gender hierarchies. Pregnancy, birthing, and nursing were instances of temporary but genuine female empowerment. Such power was contained, however, by real and symbolic strategies that were designed to promote an understanding of the maternal body as polluted/polluting and dangerously open (Paster 165). Paster’s argument, unlike those of Adelman and Willis, does not naturalize maternal loathing as part of psycho-social development; rather, it puts it in the context of contested authority. Leontes’s formulation of Hermione as witch/unnatural mother both acknowledges the power of her presence and the threat to his paternal line, and simultaneously reinforces his patriarchal authority by containing her as the accused witch is contained.

For the birthing woman, her midwife assumes the power of representation, voicing the outcome and witnessing an event that excludes the male. She authorizes a moment that questions patriarchal authority through the impossibility of paternal proof. Leontes can banish his wife to give birth in prison, but once she is there, he cannot prevent the prison from becoming the secret chamber of birthing, over which he has no control. Witchcraft has been associated with midwifery since the Middle Ages (Macfarlane 67), a relationship that Leontes maps onto Paulina, referring to her alternately as “a mankind witch” (2.3.68), “a gross hag” (108), and “your midwife there” (168). Antigonus’s “lewd-tongued wife” (172) bears other familiar traits of the hex: wisdom and shrewishness, and in this case the seeming female rebellion of claiming true issue for false generation. According to Elizabeth Harvey, midwives served symbolic as well as practical roles in early modern society because they ascertained virginity, diagnosed pregnancy, certified legitimacy, and ensured that infants were not exchanged. The midwife’s role as a guardian of chastity and purity in patriarchal culture makes her potentially dangerous, and potentially a witch (Harvey 81). When Paulina proclaims Perdita’s legitimacy, she is just one of the women who “will say anything.” Like other midwives, she has the power to lie about the event she has witnessed. Leontes insists she be silenced, her authoritative voice contained with the title of “witch,” while the baby is sentenced to burning, as if it, too, were a witch. It is clear again that Leontes constructs the crimes he perceives and creates something from nothing, reflecting both the ideology
of the criminalized witch and his own crime. As Paulina notes, “It is an heretic that makes the fire, / Not she which burns in’t” (2.3.115-16).

Like the trial that follows, the accusation emphasizes display: “You may my lords, / Look on her, mark her well” (2.1.65-66). The object on display to the male observers is Hermione's sexuality. “Oh thou thing!” proclaims Leontes, effacing the woman and implying her guilt by reducing her to sexual anatomy. Whereas the chaste woman's sexuality is “nothing,” Hermione becomes the “thing” of an adulteress. Haunted by the apparition of nothing, Leontes needs proof:

Is this nothing?
Why, then the world and all that's in't is nothing,
The covering sky is nothing, Bohemia nothing,
My wife is nothing, nor nothing have these nothings
If this be nothing.

(1.2.291-95)

Ironically, he points out the possibility that his own imagination is nothing and that proof is impossible when the evidence is nothing. Only in eradicating her, that is, in returning her to the status of nothing, can he regain his own status, and a sense of peace: “[…] say that she were gone, / Given to the fire, a moiety of my rest / Might come to me again” (2.3.7-9). If he cannot return her to the nothing of virginity, at least he can reduce her to nothing by execution. Like the witch, heretic, or conspirator, she can be burnt at the stake to reinstate his authority.

Both accusation and trial, the public displays of Hermione's infidelity, invoke the format of the witch hunt, displaying then effacing the body of the powerless. Leontes instructs his Lords to “look on” Hermione's exhausted post-partum body and to “mark her well.” *Mark* takes on a double meaning in this context; it is the action of observation, but it also evokes the witch's mark, which had become legal evidence for prosecution and conviction. The suspected mark, modelled after a nipple, could be a mole, a bump, or for the ignorant judge, even a clitoris (Barstow 141). Specifically female body parts were the focus of suspicion, that is, those parts that were indicative of female sexuality, difference, and secrecy. Leontes worries about precisely these areas on Hermione's body. His instruction to mark her well, however, again indicates that he perpetrates the crime, creating a witch with a mark that is meaningless until displayed and labelled.

A witch could be found guilty on the basis of testimony to motive or effect, by marks, or by commonly practised witch tests: burning, pricking of spots, dunking, for example, often rigged in the accuser's favour. Subjects were rarely obvious practitioners; rather, they had to be hunted: extricated from the general public and identified, created from nothing. While Hermione is granted a trial, it is one in which, like the witch, she is guilty simply because she has been accused:

Since what I am to say must be but that
Which contradicts my accusation,
.....it shall scarce boot me
To say "not guilty."

(3.2.22-26)

Newman writes: “The practice of witchcraft is a semiotic activity that depends on acts of reading, systems of differences. A charm, an incantation, or a blemish has no inherent meaning but comes to mean only in relation to a given speaker and a specific set of circumstances” (66). For Hermione, no defense is possible, because she has been “read” by Leontes as sexually corrupt. She “shall be condemned upon surmises” (110) of Leontes's circumstantial evidence and testimony to effect. Additionally, anyone who comes to her defense
will be implicated in the crime: “He who shall speak for her is afar off guilty / But that he speaks” (2.1.105-06). The “just and open trial” (2.1.205) becomes the spectacle of a witch hunt, “played to take spectators” “i' th'open air” (3.2.37, 105).

Because the trial’s verdict is predetermined, disproving Hermione's guilt necessitates the voice of the oracle, a voice so “ear-deafening” it reduces the human being to “nothing” (3.1.9, 11). The all-powerful deity is the only source of authority that can undermine Leontes's agenda of patriarchal power and its perpetuation. In calling upon this authority, the text highlights the misrepresentation enacted by the trial, showing the demonized to be natural and its demonization to be a public construction. When Leontes fails to listen to the prophetic voice, it destroys his legitimate issue, and the paternity that he longed to prove. If the Renaissance imagination conceptualized evil as eating itself up until nothing is left, Leontes takes on the cast of evil, eating himself up by destroying everything around him that he cares for. For sixteen years, Hermione is dead and he is nothing, a scenario that only apparent witchcraft can redeem.

The inversion of the natural and unnatural in cultural constructions recurs in the romance half of the play and is exposed with increasing absurdity. Borne by Polixenes, the infection of courtly ideology brings the haunted memory of Sicilia to the pastoral landscape but is transformed there. Polixenes, the tragic outcast, becomes the comic agon, anti-youth, anti-marriage, and anti-nature. Female demonization seems antithetical to the harvest dance, but Polixenes molds Perdita into the evil witch: “And thou, fresh piece / Of excellent witchcraft, who of force must know / The royal fool thou cop'st with—” (4.4.424-26). Her youthful beauty’s “enchantment” lures Florizel into the witch's den of marriage below his class. Perdita maintains the witch's sin of poverty and from Polixenes's accusing view entraps his son with sexuality for her own gain. He calls upon popular witchcraft belief, painting her as the social-climbing, sexually-deviant, order-threatening female. Perdita, however, is already firmly associated with the natural order; likened to the fertility goddess Proserpina, she presides over the rustic feast. Polixenes's rough accusations of class mobility echo hollowly in this idyll, as does his rupture of public ceremony. In contrast to the distorted public proclamation of adultery in the winter part of the tale, marriage in Bohemia is celebrated as an event naturally secured in public. Polixenes, however, defies this bucolic world with ghosts of Sicilian paternal power and the making public of things private:

**FLORIZEL:**

Mark our contract.

**POLIXENES:**

Mark your divorce, young sir,

Whom son I dare not call. Thou art too base

To be acknowledged. Thou a scepter's heir,

That thus affects a sheephook?

(4.4.419-22)

The “mark” of a contract recalls the mark of a witch and the marking of infidelity by male courtiers, all “marks” of the structures of patriarchy. While paternal proof does not appear to be an issue for Polixenes (we never actually meet his wife, nor even learn her name), transmission of patriarchal power depends on the purity of his hereditary line in generations to come. The female threat, in this case, contains the pollution of class difference, an unnatural disordering that he attempts to contain with a public announcement, or marking, of divorce and an accusation of witchcraft.
Polixenes's tactic, however, is displayed for what it is: a manipulation of power that aligns him with Leontes, whom we left in the solitude of his own construction. Their association with the very evil that they linked to witchcraft is balanced by a reconstruction of the hex's traits. While Leontes refuses Cleomenes's advice to “forget your evil” and “forgive yourself” (5.1.5, 6), Hermione becomes a “sainted spirit” (57), and Perdita inherits the authority of a religious founder:

This is a creature
Would she begin a sect, might quench the zeal
Of all professors else, make proselytes
Of who she but bid follow.

(5.1.106-09)

Paulina’s shrewishness becomes wisdom, and midwifery takes on a magical aura. The language of the shrew is now the language of prophecy, which becomes a language associated with women. Paulina rejects “superstition” and “wicked powers” (5.2.43, 90) but casts “lawful” spells. The witch no longer bears evil and chaos but presides at Hermione's rebirth. Hermione, too, has elements of this new witch, for she, too, prophesies, and the power of the sorceress is the power to foresee the future. As spoken at her accusation, the line “I never wished to see you sorry; now a trust I shall” (2.1.124) proves only too true.

If the fantasy of a world without women seems embedded in the opening scene of the play, the closing act transforms this to a fantasy of male delivery but simultaneously debunks that fantasy. Autolycus and the male informants of Act 5 Scene 2 play on the idea that delivery of information is a form of issue. The first gentleman “heard the old shepherd deliver” the details of finding Perdita but can make only a “broken delivery of the business” (5.2.4, 10). Autolycus longs to “know the issue of it” (5.2.9). Later, Paulina's steward can “deliver […] more” (5.2.27), filling in details “most true, if ever truth were pregnant by circumstance” (5.2.31). In a play concerned with issue, delivery, and pregnancy, it is a potent suggestion that the male can give birth only to words and play midwife only to information. But information itself is subject to miscarriage, and the male deliverer is barren if “report will bear no credit” (5.1.180).

While the male midwife can deliver only “news” that “is so like a tale that the verity of it is in strong suspicion” (5.2.29, 30), the female midwife possesses the power of faith, and perhaps even magic. Proof of paternity, the text suggests, is always “an old wives' tale.” Ocular witness can prove infidelity but not fidelity; only oracular proof has that power. Acting as midwife to Hermione's rebirth, Paulina incants, “It is required / You do awake your faith” (5.3.94-95). David Schalkwyk has written:

The female potency of speech and birth, being indispensable for the continuation of the patriarchal bloodline is, as we have seen, usually reviled as the product of witchcraft. The last scene, presided over by the “mankind witch” Paulina, thus enacts a containment of patriarchal fear and loathing as well as a gradual exorcism of the specter of witchcraft as the unholy power that is supposed to inform all that issues from the female. Leontes is now required to participate in the rebirth of Hermione, and Paulina seeks to annul the prior taint of witchcraft by openly invoking and then dispelling its fear through Leontes's irresistible desire to acquiescence in its practice.

(265)

Witchcraft is transformed in this final act. Like maternity, it is purified in its rebirth. Hermione steps down from her pedestal with actions as “holy” as Paulina's “spell is lawful” (5.3.104, 05). She embraces her husband but speaks only to her recovered daughter:

For thou shalt hear that I,
Knowing by Paulina that the oracle
Gave hope thou wast in being, have preserved
Myself to see the issue.

(5.3.127-30)

Hermione has returned to see her maternal issue, as well as the issue of the oracular prophecy that both proved her fidelity and preserved her issue.

But the transformation of witchcraft in the final scene is not simply a containment of patriarchal fear and loathing, as Schalkwyk suggests. He argues that in *The Winter's Tale* female words are the ground of “phobic patriarchal repression” (240) and that these words are contained by the play's conclusion. “In the final act we witness both the necessity of women’s power and the reappropriation and repression of their power by men” (264). The containment is accomplished by the appropriation of female words by male voices in the last minutes of the play. His argument does not take into account, however, that the continuation of patriarchal lineage is made possible through female prophecy nor that the lineage is passed on through Perdita.

Whereas Hermione and Perdita are exonerated from the accusations of witchcraft as soon as they are uttered, Paulina remains implicated through the play's final scene. Initially associated with shrewishness, her words are uncontrollable with an accusation of witchcraft. She willingly assumes the role that Leontes assigns her, vocalizing the necessity as well as the insolence of her language:

What studied torments, tyrant, hast for me?
.....What old or newer torture
Must I receive, whose every word deserves
To taste of thy most worst?

(3.2.175-79)

She recognizes that to speak is to be tortured as a witch. But speak she will, for she is the only one capable of putting Leontes's crimes into words. Paulina's words associate her with paganism as well as with witchcraft; she conflates images of divinity with pagan worship (3.2.210-14). As his spiritual guide, Paulina leads Leontes to a barren mountain of heirlessness and into the perpetual winter of the play's title. When they emerge sixteen years later, she still acts as spiritual advisor. She also serves as political advisor at this point, participating in decisions of state. Leontes assures her that she has the final say in his choice of spouse. She brings the mark of witchcraft with her through this assignment, for procurement was considered part of the witches' career. Her advice continues to mingle the divine with the demonic as she opposes the language of necromancy and monstrous births with that of an oracle that is simultaneously pagan and divine, speaking of grave-breaking and the dead infant's return (5.1.35-44). We know, however, that the monstrous appearance of the child does occur in the next act, even as the oracle speaks true.

Paulina's words, associated with prophecy, invoke faith in the midwife, faith in the maternal, and, finally, faith in the sorcerer's power to produce life from art. For, although she continues to deny the use of “wicked powers,” she casts her lawful spells to bring Hermione back to life. With “if this be magic, let it be an art / Lawful as eating” (5.3.111-12), Leontes connects her witchcraft to the power of art but separates it from the wickedness and evil of the demonized sorceress that he once accused her of being. Evil still lies with Leontes' accusations and former disbelief, while art has the magical power of displaying the truth:

Does not the stone rebuke me
For being more stone than it? O royal piece!
There's magic in thy majesty, which has
My evils conjured to remembrance [...]

841
Leontes suggests that the statue has more life than those alive, a concept reiterated many times in this final scene:

PAULINA:
Prepare
To see the life as lively mocked as ever
Still sleep mocked death.

LEONTES:
The fixture of her eye has motion in't
As we are mocked with art.

Life is imitated, or “mocked,” by art; it is also “mocked” in the sense of ridiculed and derided. Like Paulina's witchcraft, which produces life from art, art apparently produces life. Paulina claims divinity for her artistry; at Hermione's apparent death she laments:

If you can bring
   Tincture or lustre in her lip, her eye,
   Heat outwardly or breath within, I'll serve you
   As I would the gods.

She herself conjures heat and breath in the final scene. Or does she? We know from the text that Hermione has in fact kept herself alive and hidden and therefore is not revived with witchcraft. Paulina's witchcraft merely imitates/mocks the production of life. Yet her shrewish incantations also seem to ridicule/mock life with something that is both more, and less, lifelike than life itself. Her words call down from a stage upon a stage an actor's body that we believe to be inanimate yet know to be a living body. The character of Hermione parallels that contradiction: she is inanimate and animate, long dead and long preserved. From nothing, the theatre has the power to bring life to the stage with words. Shakespeare argues for the divinity of this power, yet, in the Renaissance imagination, it was demonic. He does not, however, simply transform the inherent evil of witchcraft into inherent good; rather, he manipulates a practice believed to cause material harm to one that is paradoxically purified by eliminating its material effect. In other words, Paulina conjures Hermione, without actually practising necromancy, using the lawful magic of the stage.

As part of the taming of the threat of the witch, Shakespeare also gives Leontes necromantic potential:

LEONTES:
Thou speak'st truth.
No more such wives, therefore no wife. One worse,
And better used, would make her sainted spirit
Again possess her corpse, and on the stage,
Where we're offenders now, appear soul-vexed
And begin, “Why to me?”

(5.1.55-60)

Leontes saves himself from demonism, however, by following Paulina's spiritual guidance. She becomes his companion “on the stage” of his previous offense from which his wife was ejected. The world as a stage is a well-worn Renaissance metaphor, but Leontes's description also refers to the actual theatrical space, and we do see Hermione appear again on the stage. The conjuring power, then, lies in the theatre, where a statue can come to life and an apparently dead woman can speak again. Catherine Belsey has argued that, paradoxically, the trying of witches offered women a place from which to speak in public with an atypical amount of authority. Woman's trials gave them the power of self-representation, which they were usually denied, and the trials themselves increasingly took on a dramatic and performative nature (Belsey 190-91). Hermione's trial gives her a public voice, the ability to represent her fidelity, but it is also a play orchestrated by Leontes, in which her voice will be heard but rejected. At her rebirth, we certainly listen enraptured to her every word. An early modern audience might be reminded of the theatricality of witch trials. The stage, Shakespeare seems to argue, gives witches a voice and then shows that voice silenced, but finally reinvents a voice that both appropriates and purifies the dangerous theatricality of witchcraft.

The text presents the stage as empowering to the female, giving back the words taken from her and legitimizing them through prophecy while authorizing female generativity through rebirth. The barren widow bears the faithful mother, reuniting her with the maiden daughter. Maid, wife, and widow stand in triumvirate, recreating Leontes's lost life and regenerating his future. Their words, both of the past and in the present, become holy prophecy. Of course, women were not present on that stage, only represented by transvestite male actors and therefore their projected empowerment occurred through a male voice. The very fact that the male voice and its corresponding body was dressed up as female, however, implicated the actor in the crime of witchcraft. Anti-theatrical fears that men might become women if they dressed as such belies anxieties about gender transformation and the threat of the female voice, which were both symptoms of witchcraft. The theatre itself creates something from nothing—a female body where none exists or a battlefield on an empty stage. Remember that nothing, or naught, or an *O* are Renaissance metaphors for the stage as well as descriptions of the circle from which witches were believed to conjure. While Paulina pretends to conjure and claims not to use wicked powers, she or he is performing the witchcraft of acting in the magic circle of the stage.

Shakespeare's texts continuously haunt the art of the theatre with the image of witchcraft—in *The Tempest* and *Anthony and Cleopatra*, for example, as well as in *The Winter's Tale*. In doing so, they tie the theatre to the crimes of the witch—treason, perverted sexuality, and demonism. Stephen Greenblatt writes of a “Shakespeare bewitched” by art, “as if he identified the power of theatre itself with the ontological liminality of witchcraft and with his own status as someone who conjured spirits, created storms and wielded the power of life and death” (120). For Shakespeare, Greenblatt writes, “the presence of the theatrical in the demonic, as in every other realm of life, only intensifies the sense of an equivocal betwixt and between, for his theatre is the space where the fantastic and bodily, *energia* and *energeia* touch. To conjure up such a theatre places Shakespeare in the position neither of the witchmonger nor the skeptic. It places him in the position of the witch” (127). The union of the witch and the theatre artist was potentially a dangerous one, suggesting that the demonic was also present in the practice of theatre. Indeed, this accusation was espoused by anti-theatrical campaigners. Puritans accused the theatre of having manipulative magical power, lewd and seductive intent,
and treasonous potential, all of which confirmed its participation in witchcraft. Contemporary anti-theatrical tracts charged that theatrical performance had a dangerous magical power over both the audience and the actor, a notion that was tied to anxiety about sexuality (Orgel 7-30). The counterfeit of the stage was thought to inspire lust, a lust that would inevitably lead to action because of the theatre's sorcery. Simply performing stories, or observing them performed, transformed and seduced the participant. On the executioner's scaffold, performance could be contained—the condemned witch was forced to voice the words of authority and therefore to perpetuate only one system of beliefs. The theatrical scaffold and the actor's body, however, are not so easily controlled. Witchcraft interpreted on stage sets belief and disbelief uncomfortably side by side. The anxieties provoked by witchcraft concern uncontrolled female sexuality and its effect on reproduction, which parallels uncontrolled representation and its effect on ideological reproduction. The accusations against the theatre belie a similar set of anxieties and similarly call on the language of demonized maternity. The fear that theatre is witchcraft is the fear that representations have the power to cause change in the same way that the words of witchcraft have effect without tangible means. Silencing the theatre, like executing a witch, is an attempt to reinstate a single interpretation and therefore to regain authority over the power of representation.

Shakespeare plays on the anxiety surrounding sexuality and the stage in *The Winter's Tale*, conflating ideas of witchcraft belief and female sexual transgression in Leontes's language while the audience witnesses his haunted imagination constructing her character to fit his jealousy: “Go play, boy, play. Thy mother plays, and I / Play too, but so disgraced a part, whose issue / Will hiss me to my grave” (1.2.187-89). “Play” is both the innocence of the child and sexual digression, and Leontes suggests its theatrical definition: he plays a role in the unfolding of the drama of the crime. “Issue” is again at stake, but added to the false issue of adultery is the dangerous issue of performance. In the following scene, we see Mamillius at play, his “wanton” antics discussed side by side with Hermione's pregnancy and impending delivery. Used about the child, “wanton,” meaning both “to play” and “unchaste,” seems to connect the innocence of the child with his mother's issue while alluding to the impending accusation. Mamillius proceeds to tell a sad tale of winter, full of sprites and goblins, and whispered in Hermione's ear. Narrative is a form of play for the child, and his particular narrative shares a theme with this play's title. In *Othello*, narrative is represented as a substitute for witchcraft; in *The Winter's Tale*, it is bound up in a complex of play, sexuality, and theatre, which links it to the witchcraft of art. Mamillius is “powerful” at storytelling; narrative seems to give a self-representative voice to the disempowered child as the stage does to the disempowered woman. Mamillius's narrative is truncated, however, by his father's concept of play.

Given the vitriol and vehemence of anti-theatrical campaigners, and the threat implicit in their alignment of the theatre with witchcraft, the self-conscious appropriation of this alignment appears dangerously subversive. In a world where witches were dramatically executed in scaffold performances, there seems to be little room for Shakespeare's metaphor of theatre practitioner as witch. Within the discourses that he toys with, player and playwright should become objects of the executioner. As Hermione steps down from her pedestal, *The Winter's Tale* conjures the specter of the executioner's scaffold, just as it recreated the witch's prosecution in her trial. The moment of her “rebirth” highlights the distinctions and the similarities between witchcraft and stagecraft and works to dissolve the representational oppositions that sustain ideological power. The executioner's scaffold melts into the stage scaffold, and witchcraft becomes a construction within the contested power of representation. While celebrating conventional romantic unions, which superficially confirm patriarchal authority, *The Winter's Tale* deconstructs the ideology sustaining that authority. The text reproduces a world divided by gender and plagued by the reliance of patriarchy on female generation. Embedded in the fantasy of male generation is the impotency of something created from male nothing, but rumour is all that men deliver in this play. Fear of effeminacy and of women's infidelity leaves the haunted male imagination dangerously struggling to appropriate sites of female authority. That appropriation is an inversion of feminine power, which parallels the inversion of maternity informing witchcraft belief, and which is itself an imagined reality.
The power of maternity in *The Winter's Tale* is reconstructed through its loss and with it the loss of all generative possibility. Barren time takes its toll in the play, with the irrevocable deaths of husband Antigonus and son Mamillius, but the hourglass is ultimately confounded by the rebirth of mother and daughter and their reunion with the father. Patriarchal blood and maternal milk are united in Perdita. The text endeavours to denaturalize a maternal ideology that cannot separate the maternal body, with its implied sexual activities and nursing breasts, from the body of the witch/whore. By appropriating witchcraft, Shakespeare appropriates the right to narrate and to generate and claims the power of prophecy for the theatre. Conversely, Shakespeare's plays turn the convention of witchcraft belief on its head, displaying the artifice with which such belief controls women's roles and the male anxiety that generates that control. Celebrating weddings and motherhood re-naturalizes female sexuality within the confines of marriage and maternity and makes the marital bed safe for the male, while deconstructing the witch de-hexes female wisdom and speech. By linking female sexuality to male jealousy and female generative power to the barrenness of male narrative, the menace of the sexual female diminishes. Similarly, appropriating a feminized voice for the theatre—for which the stage was ardently attacked—allows performance to redefine the boundaries of patriarchal power. “Old wives’ tales” retell the stories of patriarchy and find authority on the stage, while art as sorcery empowers the artist. *The Winter's Tale* hands the power of magic back to the artist, gives voice to the falsely demonized, and reconfigures witchcraft. If theatre is witchcraft, it is the breath of the devil, but, if witchcraft is a construction, anti-theatricality is just hot air.

**Works Cited**


Criticism: Themes: Maurice Hunt (essay date spring 2004)


In the following essay, Hunt examines Shakespeare's use of the term “bear” in The Winter's Tale, associating it with such themes as tyranny, suffering, redemption, and sexual domination.

Hitherto unexplored wordplay in the early acts of The Winter's Tale involving forms of the word “bear” deepens our understanding of the importance for the play's design of a bear's notorious onstage pursuit and reported devouring of Antigonus. On the one hand, the wordplay confirms in a new way previous commentators' assertions that the bear symbolizes Leontes' savage authority over Antigonus and the king's responsibility for the courtier's death. On the other, it suggests that Camillo's transporting Polixenes out of Leontes' court and Florizel's carrying Perdita away from her country home amount to redemptive “bearing[s] hence” that invite comparison with the fatal, literal “bearing hence” of Antigonus. These comparisons generated by wordplay on forms of the word “bear” serve to strengthen playgoers' and readers' impressions of the finally benign nature of Apollo's providence, particularly their predilection to believe that the physical deaths of the play, each an ultimate bearing hence, whether of Mamillius or Antigonus, can be partly rationalized as enabling sacrifices.

The Winter's Tale is preeminently a play of Ovidian metamorphoses, and Dennis Biggins, Michael D. Bristol, and Constance Jordan have argued that Shakespeare transforms Leontes' tyranny over Antigonus into the bear that devours him. Biggins conflates a number of poetic passages within and without The Winter's Tale so as to conclude that the bear is “an embodiment of Leontes' savage cruelty.”1 Citing passages in five other Shakespearean plays, he notes that for Shakespeare bears typify ferocity and remorseless cruelty, a metaphoric equation also found in the writings of contemporaries such as Edmund Spenser and Thomas Nashe.2 In this respect, Biggins references Antigonus's (ironic) judgment when he picks up Perdita to transport her to some strange place, there to abandon her to Fortune:
Some powerful spirit instruct the kites and ravens
To be thy nurses. Wolves and bears, they say,
Casting their savageness aside, have done
Like offices of pity. (3)

Implacably savage, the bear of *The Winter's Tale*, however, never qualifies as Perdita's nurse because Antigonus's fleeing diverts the animal, which attacks and consumes him instead.

Biggins associates literary passages of ursine cruelty with the remark made by the old shepherd's son late in act IV, “though authority be a stubborn bear, yet he is oft led by the nose with gold” (IV.iv.795-6), and claims that it makes the bear emblematically suggestive of Leontes' harsh authority over his subjects, especially Antigonus. As support for his identification of Leontes and the bear, Biggins remarks that the king casts himself as a bear in his pun on bearbaiting. In Leontes' paranoiac view, Paulina is “A callet / Of boundless tongue, who late hath beat her husband / And now baits me” (II.iii.90-2). Biggins's argument becomes more credible once we realize that Leontes is the human authority figure of *The Winter's Tale*, and that it is not simply by his stubborn but also his “bearishly” savage authority that Hermione is judged and convicted of the crime of adultery and Antigonus commanded to become a likely accomplice in murder. And while Leontes is not “led by the nose with gold,” the old shepherd who finds Perdita is. The gold Antigonus includes in the bundle left with the baby causes the shepherd and his clownish son to think the child is “fortunate,” and thus it reinforces their inclination to take her up and care for her. When the shepherd's son compares authority with a stubborn bear, the motivating gold of his metaphor evokes recollection of the compelling gold in the portrayal of Antigonus's death and so further encourages playgoers and readers to apply the values of the latter episode to details of the former scene. Concerning the introduction of bears in European Renaissance tragicomedy, including *The Winter's Tale*, Louise G. Clubb has concluded that “[t]he bear in pastoral seems both more and less terrible than the other wild beasts, because it is humanoid, capable of upright posture.” If the bear of Shakespeare's play assumes this “humanoid” posture as it chases Antigonus offstage, the spectacle reinforces its identification with Leontes.

Bristol, in a comprehensive survey of possible symbolic meanings of the bear in *The Winter's Tale*, also concludes that, for Shakespeare's audiences, “[t]he natural fierceness of the bear is … associated with the violence of secular authority.” As evidence for his claim, Bristol cites this passage from Edward Topsell's *The Historie of Foure-Footed Beastes* (1607): ‘*Vitoldus King of Lituania, kept certaine Beares of purpose, to whom he cast all persons which spoke against his tirannie, putting them first of all into a Beares skinne; whose crueltie was so great, that if he had commaunded anie of them to hang themselves, they would rather obey him then endure the terror of his indignation.*’ Jordan supports Biggins's and Bristol's symbolic equation of bear and tyrannical authority when, concerning the manner of Antigonus's death, she remarks that the book of “Proverbs describes ‘a wicked ruler over the poor people’ as a ‘roaring lion’ or a ‘raging bear’ (28.15); pseudo-Aquinas, commenting on the [biblical] verse, identified such a ruler as a ‘faithless’ (impius) tyrant (*De regimine principum*, 18-9).” One can say that in a sense, Leontes “devours” Antigonus. Biggins notes that Antigonus and Paulina have no counterparts in the source of *The Winter's Tale*, Robert Greene's *Pandosto*: “[these characters] represent moral integrity, which in Paulina resists Leontes and endures to the end, but in Antigonus falters and finally yields to royal tyranny … Antigonus compromises his honor, undertakes to discharge what he knows to be an unjust and cruel commission, and dies falsely believing in Hermione's guilt.” Biggins faults Antigonus a bit harshly for being unwilling to die a martyr and for believing the substance of a powerful dream vision. For to his discredit, while he is in the vision's grip, Antigonus does believe that Hermione and Polixenes have committed adultery and that Apollo would have him deposit the child in the country of her father. In planting this corrupt idea of the queen and Polixenes in his courtier's mind and in ordering him to kill Perdita, Leontes effects the moral death of Antigonus. Thus there is an aptness to Leontes-as-bear physically finishing off Antigonus on the seacoast of Bohemia.
One has to admit that the figurative metamorphosis of Leontes into the Bohemian bear of *The Winter's Tale* is open to question, chiefly because the identification must be made indirectly, composed from scattered passages in the play. After all, Leontes' name refers to the lion, and some of the Shakespearean passages that Biggins cites about the prototypic savagery of bears include the mention of lions as equally ferocious and pitiless. Moreover, Jordan's quotation from Proverbs mentions a “roaring lion” as symbolic of “a wicked ruler.” Though the equation would have been heavy-handed for Shakespeare, the playwright could have named the king of Sicilia “Orsino” (“from the Latin ursus, and more immediately from the Italian ursosino: ursine”), had he wanted the largest number of playgoers to think of the Bohemian bear as a metamorphosed Leontes. Snug's role in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* reminds us that in the mid-1590s Shakespeare's repertory company had a lion's costume available in which one actor could chase another across the stage. What makes Biggins's and Jordan's assertions more plausible is a series of puns in the play that make Leontes bearish. After all, Shakespeare had used the name Orsino for Olivia's sometimes silly suitor in *Twelfth Night*, and he may have been reluctant to recycle the name and give it to a king with profound tragic dimensions to his character.

While M. M. Mahood ranks “bear” twelfth in her list of Shakespeare's most played-upon words, she does not describe this wordplay in her analysis of *The Winter's Tale*. Nevertheless, the following verse from *King Richard III*—“’You mean, to bear me, not to bear with me’” (III.i.128)—that Mahood quotes to illustrate the wordplay authorizes its detection in *The Winter's Tale*. Concerning this line, Mahood judges that, “where [Samuel Johnson] sees an improbable pun on bear the animal—he deserves our thanks for his quick response to Shakespeare's wordplay instead of the blame he sometimes gets for failing to appreciate it.” Actually the pun on “bear” in the quoted verse is not improbable. Its larger context makes that much clearer:

PRINCE Edward.

My lord of York will still be cross in talk.

Uncle [Richard Crookback], Your Grace knows how to bear with him.

YORK.

You mean, to bear me, not to bear with me.

Uncle, my brother mocks both you and me:

Because that I am little, like an ape,

He thinks that you should bear me on your shoulders.

(*Richard III*, III.i.126-31)

David Bevington glosses the final two verses: “At fairs, the bear commonly carried an ape on his back. The speech is doubtless an allusion to Richard's hump and puns triply on bear with, 'put up with,' bear, 'carry,' and bear, 'an animal.'” Bevington might have added that, in this context, one rereads the phrase “bear with me” in York's first line as “to act bearish with me [toward me]”: “You mean to act bearish toward me, not to put up with me.”

Once playgoers and readers associate Leontes with the bear of the play, on reacquaintance with the text they can appreciate certain puns such as Leontes' assertion that, “[t]hough [Mamillius] does bear some signs of me, yet [Hermione] / [Has] too much blood in him” (II.i.57-8), and his command to a lady-in-waiting, “Bear the boy hence; he shall not come about [Hermione]” (II.i.59). Mamillius dies before he shows bearish signs of his father the bear. On this occasion a lady bears Mamillius hence. But death will eventually bear the boy hence,
even as it will Antigonus. But before these events occur, Leontes torments himself with adulterous imaginings—“Nor night nor day no rest. It is but weakness / To bear the matter thus” (II.iii.1-2). Bearing the matter of adultery passively, as chronic insomnia, identifies a weak cuckold in Leontes' opinion. He will later “bear the matter” forcefully when he—as the ultimate authority in Sicilia—viciously prosecutes Hermione, a decision that gets refigured when he, metamorphosed, “bear[s] the matter” fatally against Antigonus.  

Playgoers and readers who detect a bearish Leontes in act II of the play are likely to notice additional details in the scene set on the Bohemian seacoast that associate Leontes with the bear. These associations accrue from the babe Perdita's characterization there. She wears, according to the old shepherd, “a bearing-cloth” (a Jacobean baptismal gown), fit for “a squire's child” (III.iii.111). By this rich garment, Antigonus anachronistically signifies for Perdita's hoped-for discoverer that the infant is a valued Christian. Beyond this meaning, the bearing-cloth by its name implies that she is the offspring of the bear Leontes. In this homonymic context, the repeated word “bairn” in the old shepherd's exclamation and question—“what have we here? Mercy on's, a bairn! A very pretty bairn” (III.iii.67-8)—can be heard not simply as a dialect term for “child” but also in its Jacobean pronunciation as an approximation of the spoken word “bear.” In the authoritative First Folio text of the play, the word appears “Barne,” a form that encourages the detection of additional wordplay involving the phrase “bare 'un.” The old shepherd has found “a princely child and also a naked human being, a 'bare 'un.'” In this instance the pun on “bairn” / “bear” becomes even more apparent, mainly because a virtually perfect homonym is isolated for pronunciation in the initial distinct word of the almost elided two-word phrase “bare 'un.” While Jordan reads the small “bare 'un” as a vulnerable because a naked babe, she also seems to realize that the spoken phrase could make Perdita the cub of the bear Leontes; for her next sentence reads “[t]he misgovernment of Leontes (always leo and now also ursus) is thus inscribed in Bohemia's desert.” Signature Shakespearean wordplay nominates Perdita as the legitimate (albeit nonsavage) daughter of bearish Leontes, despite Antigonus's supposition otherwise.  

With its denotation of baptism, Perdita's bearing-cloth lends a ritualistic dimension to the scene of her preservation and introduction into a new life. The old shepherd's adoption of her, under a sky that “threaten[s] present blusters [rain]” (III.iii.4), can be thought of as a baptism into a country life that will foster homely virtues within her. In this context, Antigonus's death can be regarded as a type of sacrifice, unintentional and yet strangely admirable. Antigonus, when asked earlier by Leontes what he would “adventure / To save this brat's life?” (II.iii.161-2), replied, “I'll pawn the little blood which I have left / To save the innocent” (II.iii.165-6), and the sight of fleeing Antigonus does distract the savage bear from Perdita. In this context, Antigonus's death resembles the lethal consequence of a bearbaiting gone awry. Sidney Lee notes that “[t]he exhibition was at times diversified by the introduction of a blind bear, which was also secured to a stake by a long chain, and was attacked by men armed with whips. Occasionally the blind bear broke from its chain and ran amok among the crowd, with disastrous results.” Exit, actually pursued by a bear.  

Rather than being the baiter, Antigonus becomes the sacrificial bait in Apollo's providence, which entails saving Perdita's life. The repeated description of a shoulder blade links Antigonus with Autolycus in such a way that Shakespeare suggests that in dying Antigonus undergoes a rebirth. A witness to Antigonus's dismemberment, the old shepherd's son remarks that “the bear tore out his shoulder-bone” (III.iii.92). Later in the episode wherein Autolycus picks the son's pocket, the rogue's account of his beating, robbery, and loss of clothes parodies “the parable of the Good Samaritan, the pattern being completed by the clown's continuation,” “Dost lack any money? I have a little money for thee” (IV.iii.77-8). In this setting, Autolycus exclaims, “O good sir, softly, good sir! I fear, sir, my shoulder-blade is out” (IV.iii.72-3). It is as though Antigonus has come back to life, with one odd detail from his previous death remaining—that dislocated shoulder blade. The Christian context created by the evocation of a New Testament parable strengthens the resurrectional quality of what would pass, partly analyzed, as simply another metamorphosis in a play of metamorphoses.
Autolycus of course is not Antigonus; the resurrection is patently figurative. The “renewal” of Antigonus in Autolycus exists to establish the validity of the myth of Proserpina and her annual return from the underworld, which is pervasive in the play as a way of understanding the “rebirth” of the members of Leontes’ family. More specifically, this “renewal” authorizes Hermione’s “resurrection” from statue to breathing wife and queen. The actual death of Antigonus, grievous to Paulina, finds its place in a pattern of remarkable rebirths, which might be called Apollo's divine comedy. The bearbaiting of act III, scene iii contributes to this impression of providential divine comedy, a kind of comedy validated by the presence of laughter in the episode. The old shepherd's son says that Autolycus “haunts wakes, fairs, and bear-baitings” (IV.iii.99-100). Autolycus's predecessor, Antigonus, was present at an unconventional kind of bearbaiting. Stephen Dickey concludes that, “to judge from the handful of contemporary eyewitness accounts of baiting matches, again and again the audience was pleased by what it saw, cheered it on, and laughed at it … [O]bservers' testimonies about their pleasure, amusement, and contentment suggest that, were an Elizabethan audience to specify what genre of spectacle it was seeing at the Bear Garden, the answer might well be ‘a comedy.’”27 Granted this cultural attitude, Shakespeare invites contemporary playgoers to apply their generic perspective on bearbaitings to the scene involving Antigonus, Perdita, and the bear. They may have laughed heartily at the sight of whip-bearing performers running for their lives from the raging, blind bear loose in the bear pit and so also have laughed predictably at the spectacle of a bear chasing Antigonus. It is likely that the bear chasing Antigonus off the stage was a suited actor rather than a tame animal from nearby Paris Garden, and this effect may have struck spectators as especially comical.28

The amusing metaphors coined by the clown as he recounts the drowning of the mariners offshore and the dismemberment of Antigonus are crucial to the nearly simultaneous humor and tragedy in the pivotal episode of Shakespeare's tragicomedy. The old shepherd's son speaks in a homely, even friendly, manner of the sinking of the ship as “swallowed with yeast and froth, as you'd thrust a cork into a hogshead” (III.iii.89-91). In the same breath, he begins narrating “the land-service, to see how the bear tore out [Antigonus’s] shoulder-bone” (III.iii.91-2). When the old shepherd exclaims, “Would I had been by to have helped the old man,” the clown coins a pun involving the foundation of charities: “I would you had been by the ship side to have helped her; there your charity would have lacked footing” (III.iii.103-7).

S. L. Bethell has claimed that the clown's comedy “carries further the grotesque humour of Gloucester's attempted suicide in King Lear.”30 I would argue, however, that the nongrotesque comedy of the Bankside bear pit invoked first in this scene of The Winter's Tale carries over to the clown's subsequent narration of disasters and provides a relatively undisturbing context for its reception. Such dramatic coloring through its nontragic tones accords with the consolatory overtones of Antigonus's figurative resurrection in Apollo's divine comedy.

Earlier dialogue between Camillo and Polixenes both anticipates and confirms the salvific dimension of Antigonus's “bearing hence.” Having divulged Leontes' paranoid suspicion of Polixenes to the king of Bohemia, Camillo adds,

If therefore you dare trust my honesty
That lies enclosèd in this trunk, which you
Shall bear along impawned, away tonight.
Your followers I will whisper to the business,
And will by twos and threes at several posterns
Clear them o' th' city.

(I.ii.429-34)

By saying his body—his physical “trunk,” which Polixenes will bear hence—is “impawned,” Camillo implies that it is capable of redemption, as a treasure placed in pawn generally is. While Camillo chiefly means that his “impawned” body is a “pledge” insuring the truth of his desperate warning, his metaphor also suggests that he may one day be “redeemed”—returned back to his native land, Sicilia. Polixenes appropriates Camillo's bearing-hence conceit, in the process evoking a redemptive classical image recognizable to Jacobean's familiar
with Virgil's *Aeneid*. "Come, Camillo," Polixenes concludes, "I will respect thee as a father, if / Thou bear'st my life off hence" (lines 455-7). Latent in this utterance is the famous image of Aeneas bearing on his back his old father Anchises out of the burning city of Troy. That Shakespeare often recycled this Virgilian image is apparent in Cassius's account of bearing exhausted Caesar ashore out of the Tiber (*Julius Caesar*, I.ii.112-5) and Orlando's bearing on his back old Adam, famished, to the life-saving feast of Duke Senior (*As You Like It*, II.vii.166-8).

The classical image invoked by Polixenes' statement of gratitude informs the audience that Camillo's bearing Polixenes hence amounts to a brave deed of piety, one that makes the bearer a "father" to the father figure he carries. It reflects a respect for the authority that preserves a society. Camillo's response to Polixenes' urgent wish "Let us avoid," suggests that authority is a value associated with his life-saving bearing hence: "It is in mine authority to command / The keys of all the posterns," Camillo replies (I.ii.457-9). This response identifies Camillo as the authority of the opportune moment, the *kairos* that must be seized in Time's progression. Whereas Leontes' tyrannical authority metamorphoses into the bear that fatally bears Antigonus hence, Camillo's courageous moral authority facilitates the bearing hence of Polixenes' life, not only to the Bohemian king's personal salvation but also to the eventual happiness of all the characters of *The Winter's Tale* governed by Apollo's providence.

Camillo's bearing Polixenes hence is part of a pattern in *The Winter's Tale* that constitutes a redemptive counterpart to Antigonus's bearing hence. The bearing hence of act IV that creates a pattern with Camillo's is not formed by wordplay on "bear," nor is it actually carried out. It materializes nevertheless as a result of the wordplay on "bear" to operate in a linguistic field of reference in terms that suggest a resolution to characterological problems defined by that field. In this play of myriad Shakespearean metamorphoses, the bear is only one of Leontes' transformations; another involves a bull. When Leontes, disturbed by his suspicion of adultery, sees Mamillius's "smutched" nose, he tells the boy, "[w]e must be neat" (I.ii.120, 122). With the word "neat" sliding in Leontes' mind into the Jacobean meaning of "horned cattle," Mamillius becomes a "calf" because the king suspects that Hermione is a compliant "heifer" for the mounting Polixenes (line 123). This corrupt image requires Leontes to think of himself also as a horned creature, a cuckold. In this context, the "rough pash" (head) and "shoots" (horns), which he says characterize him, create the image of a royal bull (line 127). Later, when illustrating for Perdita the notion that the classical gods humbled themselves for love, Florizel activates Leontes' latent metaphor involving the bull by alluding to a familiar Ovidian transformation of Jupiter into a bull, who "bellowed" out of love for Europa (IV.iv.27-8). Florizel refrains from acting out with Perdita Jupiter's bearing Europa hence. Instead, he chooses a wholesome transport, which the following analysis reveals as a resolution of the motif I have been tracing in *The Winter's Tale*.

According to the classical myth, Jupiter as a white bull kneeled on the Phoenician seashore and, in a reversal of sexual mounting, coaxed the beautiful Tyrian princess Europa into climbing onto his back, whereupon he abducted her by swimming with her clinging to his horns to the island of Crete, where he ravished her. Florizel alludes to this notorious precedent of metamorphosis aimed at rape so as to assure Perdita (and playgoers) that he, who is chaste in his love for her, has no intention of selfishly bearing her hence. In the scope of the play, Jupiter's tempting Europa to mount him and then his bearing her hence would suit the bull Leontes' feelings of sexual inversion, while the active rape made possible by this passive behavior fulfills his implied complementary fantasy of royal sexual domination (played out in his mind by the image of Polixenes copulating with his "heifer" Hermione).

The cluster Jupiter/Leontes/Polixenes' bearing hence Europa/Hermione more closely resembles the image of the bear/Leontes' bearing hence Antigonus than it does the image of Camillo/Aeneas' bearing hence Polixenes/Anchises. That is simply to say that in the play's series of physical and imaginative bearings hence it is at basis destructive rather than creative or redemptive. One could say that Europa was partly compensated for her fate by her later marriage to Asterius, King of Crete; by her brother Cadmus's founding of the celebrated city of Thebes during his search for her; and by her name being given to a continent. Yet she was
also said to be the mother (by Jupiter) of Minos and Rhadamanthus, the pitiless judges of the underworld, and—in some forms of her story—of the Minotaur, the infamous half-bull/half-man who, in Shakespeare's play, corresponds to the bull-man of Leontes' own disturbed fantasy.\textsuperscript{34}

Once Polixenes throws off his disguise at the sheep-shearing festival and prohibits his son's marriage to Perdita, Florizel resolves to elope with her to an unknown quarter of the world. Camillo again providentially bears hence a member of the Bohemian royal family when he convinces Florizel to sail his vessel to Sicilia and Leontes' court. The counselor promises to give the prince written directions for “[t]he manner of your bearing towards [Leontes]” (IV.iv.555). By the word “bearing,” Camillo means “behavior,” but heard in the context of its field of wordplay, the term jars auditors into realizing that here we have a bearing hence that can give closure to \textit{The Winter's Tale}. Camillo neither bears the lovers figuratively on his back, nor does he ride in the ship that bears Florizel and Perdita to her true home. Nevertheless, he sets Florizel on a bearing that will guide him and the rest of the cast of the play to relative happiness.

That Leontes can participate in the secular blessedness of Hermione's “resurrection” owes much to his having reached the limit of suffering that a person can bear. Just before the statue scene, Leontes tells Florizel what he lost:

\begin{quote}
All mine own folly—the society,
Amity too, of your brave father, whom,
Though bearing misery, I desire my life
Once more to look on him.
\end{quote}

(V.i.134-7)

Leontes still “bear[s] misery” at this moment because he still feels the effects of acting bearish toward Hermione, Perdita, and Antigonus. Bearing that misery is a load heavier than the weight of any man carried on his shoulders. But that numbing burden suddenly lifts with the first movements of posed Hermione and his stunning awareness that his wife and daughter live again. Then Leontes in his joy loses all traces of the bear to reemerge fully as the royal lion, the monarch aware of his responsibility for building an extended ruling family.

Notes

2. Biggins, pp. 10-1.
5. Ibid.
10. Biggins, p. 7. “When Antigonus enters at the beginning of [act III, scene iii.] he is already an emblem of broken integrity; his soliloquy announces his final moral corruption” (p. 8).


12. Bristol notes that Shakespeare departed from his source by making Sicilia rather than Bohemia the locus of the initiating action and by changing the royal protagonist’s name from Pandosto to Leontes: “In this new version the king of Sicilia, who is associated with summer, with the south, and also with fertility, is given the name of Leontes, that is Leo [the Lion], the central zodiacal sign of summer, identified with the sun as its planet” (p. 156).


20. Ibid.


22. In this respect, Shakespeare contradicts one of his possible romance sources. Velma Bourgeois Richmond argues that a woodcut in William Copland's Valentine and Orson (1550?) (which Shakespeare drew upon for certain details of Macbeth) bears upon the composition of act III, scene iii of The Winter's Tale. Figure 13 of the prose romance “shows in a wooded landscape as two separate episodes the fate of the twins and the bear. On the left the bear carries away in his teeth a basket with one of the twins; on the right is a man picking up the other swaddled infant. Shakespeare's reference to bears and wolves suckling children in The Winter's Tale [II.iii.186-8] is sometimes noted as evidence that he knew Valentine and Orson” (Shakespeare, Catholicism, and Romance [New York: Continuum, 2000], pp. 181-2, 182). Shakespeare's bear, however, prefers pursuing Antigonus to picking up the bundled Perdita.

occasionally loose in the baiting venues and perhaps even on the Bankside. During the summer of 1609, in a widely lamented incident, a bear killed a child that was negligently left in the bear house. Late in June, “according to the King’s commandement, this Beare was bayted to death upon a stage; and unto the mother of the murthered child was given twenty pounds out of part of that money which the people gave to see the Beare kild” (qtd. in John Nichols, The Progresses, Processions, and Magnificent Festivities of King James the First, 4 vols. [London: J. B. Nichols, 1828], 2:259). Some playgoers in the original audience of The Winter's Tale may have momentarily thought of this case as Shakespeare's bear appeared on stage and rushed toward—but then past—the defenseless infant, Perdita.


26. Barbara L. Estrin, in “The Foundling Plot: Stories in The Winter's Tale,” MLS [Modern Language Studies] 7, 1 (Spring 1977): 27-38, 35, 37-8, remarks that the conceit of hibernation links the bear of the play with Hermione’s “resurrection.” Paulina, according to Estrin, invokes the notion of hibernation in the statue scene when she tells her guests, “prepare / To see the life as lively mocked as ever / Still sleep mocked death” (V.iii.18-20). In the notion of sleep mocking death, Shakespeare, according to Estrin, “hint[s] at Hermione's bearlike retreat” (p. 35)—her sixteen-year period of suspended animation and present “sleep” on a pedestal. Like the hibernating bear, Hermione awaits a revitalization of spring, a secular resurrection.

27. Dickey, pp. 259, 263. Jason Scott-Warren has recently written provocatively about the overlap between early modern bear arenas and the theater in “When Theaters Were Bear-Gardens; or, What's at Stake in the Comedy of Humors,” SQ 54, 1 (Spring 2003): 63-82. Scott-Warren's essay (esp. pp. 70-4) complements Dickey's by suggesting the noncomic, knowledge-giving functions that the English sport of bearbaiting performed for spectators, such as the discovery or confirmation of the courage or cowardice of different species and breeds of animals.


29. Orgel explains that the pun involving two senses of the words “charity,” “footing,” and “foundation” implies that the old shepherd’s hypothesized charity “would therefore have been all the more charitable” (p. 158n 105-7).


31. “My father had spoken. But now through the town the roar of the fire came louder to our ears, and the rolling blaze brought its hot blast closer. ‘Well then, dear Father,’ I said, ‘come now, you must let them lift you onto my back. I will hold my shoulders ready for you; this labour of love will be no
weight to me’ … So saying, I bent down and cloaked my neck and shoulders with a red-brown lion's
skin. I then took up my load” (Virgil, *The Aeneid*, trans. W. F. Jackson Knight [Baltimore: Penguin,
1968], p. 72).

32. For definitions of kairos, see G. F. Waller, *The Strong Necessity of Time: The Philosophy of Time in
Shakespeare and Elizabethan Literature* (The Hague: Mouton, 1976), p. 17; Donn Ervin Taylor,
“‘Try in Time Despite of a Fall’: Time and Occasion in *As You Like It*,” *TSL [Texas Studies in
Literature and Language]* 24, 2 (Summer 1982): 121-36, esp. 121-7; and Maurice Hunt, “*Kairos and
the Ripeness of Time in As You Like It*,” *MLQ [Modern Language Quarterly]* 52, 2 (June 1991):
113-35.


34. The more common mythic version of the Minotaur ascribes its origin to the sodomization of King
Minos's daughter Pasiphae by a bull. This myth suggests a terrible distortion (but nevertheless a
repetition) of the grandmother Europa's copulation with a bull-god. After all, this union produced the
cruel son, Minos, and through him the perverse Pasiphae. These connections stained Europa's
reputation in the minds of many who were aware of her legend.

**The Winter's Tale (Vol. 91): Further Reading**

**CRITICISM**

Beauregard, David N. “Shakespeare against the Skeptics: Nature and Grace in *The Winter's Tale.*” In
*Shakespeare's Last Plays: Essays in Literature and Politics*, edited by Stephen W. Smith and Travis Curtright,

Argues that *The Winter's Tale* reveals Shakespeare's Roman Catholic religious perspective in that it follows
the orthodox progression of penance through “the movements of contrition, confession, and satisfaction.”

Fawkner, H. W. “Negative Miracle.” In *Shakespeare's Miracle Plays: Pericles, Cymbeline, and The Winter's

Maintains that Shakespeare's dramatic treatment of the miraculous in *The Winter's Tale* is an artistic
regression compared to his earlier romances, but acknowledges the effort as the playwright's willingness to
risk failure in order to test the limits of his art.

Fortier, Mark. “Married with Children: *The Winter's Tale* and Social History; or, Infacticide in Earlier

Discusses Shakespeare's depiction of family relations in *The Winter's Tale*, noting that this play “is his most
systematic representation of everything wrong with family life.” The critic considers how modern social
historians have sought to identify Jacobean cultural anxieties toward marriage, maternity, and sexuality
through an examination of the play.

2003.

Views Perdita as a fundamentally “two-dimensional” paragon of “virtue and optimism” who assists in
Leontes's transformation from jealous tyrant to contrite husband and father.

Contends that \textit{The Winter's Tale} contains an implicit political critique of contemporary propaganda which propagated the notion that James's I ascension to the throne signified the emergence of an ideal Golden Age in England.


Posits that Shakespeare utilized pastoral conventions in \textit{The Winter's Tale} to express to his audience the benevolent conditions by which a monarch might inculcate a productive commonwealth and benignly pass on political authority to the next generation.


Considers the relationship between feminine autonomy and the women characters' acts of disappearing from the patriarchal system in \textit{The Winter's Tale}.


Explores how the “re-commodification”—or the recreating and retailing—of the Pandosto and \textit{The Winter's Tale} stories reflects an increasingly pluralistic British readership from the seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries.


Maintains that the contrary acts of tragic suffering and comic laughter in \textit{The Winter's Tale} reflect Shakespeare's artistic preoccupation with how these divisions “complement each other and enrich human life.”


Analyzes the generic implications of a perceived connection between the romance tradition and the emerging Renaissance preoccupation with history in \textit{The Winter's Tale} and \textit{Pericles}.


Examines the ambiguous relationship between friendship and polity in \textit{The Winter's Tale}, noting that Leontes's and Polixenes's amity is emblematic of a proscribed Renaissance “craft” of making and maintaining friends in both the private and the public spheres.

Argues that Leontes prematurely removes Mamillius from his boyhood environment of feminine nurturing and forces him to assume a masculine identity. Snyder concludes that Mamillius's exposure to this ruthless gender polarization causes his untimely death.


Commends Gregory Doran’s 1999 Royal Shakespeare Company production of The Winter's Tale, singling out Antony Sher's “wonderfully rich and complex characterisation” of Leontes.


Assesses Matthew Warchus’s 2002 Americanized Royal Shakespeare Company staging of The Winter's Tale, particularly the thematic contrast of Sicilia—a film noir high society—and Bohemia—an Appalachian hoe-down. The critic concludes that the over-exuberant Bohemia scenes unintentionally made the concluding statue scene in Sicilia anticlimactic.


Asserts that Shakespeare manipulated his Jacobean audience's collective memory of Marian mythology and Henry VIII's wives and daughters in both The Winter's Tale and Henry VIII to lament the replacement of the traditional matriarchy with the early modern patriarchy.

What Means Sicilia? He Something Seems Unsettled: Sicily, Russia, and Bohemia in The Winter's Tale: Introduction

“What Means Sicilia? He Something Seems Unsettled”: Sicily, Russia, and Bohemia in The Winter's Tale

R. W. Desai, University of Delhi

The opening scenes of The Winter's Tale bring together royalty from three different regions in Europe: Leontes, king of Sicily, which is in the extreme south, in the Mediterranean region; his wife, Hermione, daughter of the Emperor of Russia in the northeast; and Polixenes, king of Bohemia, now the Czech Republic, also in the northeast. This joining of geographical regions has its counterpart in the contemporary joining of the regions of literary and other forms of cultural discourse. New Historicism has challenged the long established assumption, theorized by New Criticism, that "Art" is an autonomous aesthetic region which transcends the society, ideology, and culture that forms its matrix. Denying this, New Historicism insists upon a different methodology, a cultural criticism that refuses to see literature and history as two distinct entities since such differentiation is a product of our own phenomenological cultural conditioning which can be altered if our perspective is shifted. My purpose here is to attempt to shift our perspective on The Winter's Tale to show how Renaissance notions of ethnicity play a crucial part in the play's aesthetic.

What Means Sicilia? He Something Seems Unsettled: Sicily, Russia, and Bohemia in The Winter's Tale: I

857
In this article I shall survey rapidly various Eurocentrist views on race and ethnic differentiation present during Shakespeare's lifetime, and trace their presence in *The Winter's Tale*. These views seem in general to be in consonance with one another, and if they demonstrate how easily stereotypes came to be perpetuated from one period to the next during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, this need not surprise us, since in our own experience today such cultural stereotyping continues unabated. In Norway as recently as 1972 when the last referendum on joining the European Union was held, the opposition's catchy slogan was: "Would you want your daughter to marry a Sicilian?"

Hitherto *The Winter's Tale* has been viewed exclusively for its thematic concerns, no attention being paid to the racial and anthropological features that the play implicitly addresses. For example, though it has of course been remarked that Shakespeare interchanges the countries of origin of Leontes, the jealous husband, and Polixenes, the putative rival—Sicily and Bohemia, respectively, thus radically altering these details as given in Greene's *Pandosto*—the possible reasons for this intriguing transposition have not been investigated, as far as I am aware. Such an investigation, taking into account the ideological connotations involved, will, I think, bring to light the underlying assumptions of the Elizabethans on matters of race and ethnicity. (In any attempt to reconstruct attitudes to cultural issues, whether in the past or the present, some over-simplification and generalization are unavoidable. Having said this, it should not be necessary to punctuate every assumption here made with the warning that it is speculative.)

I shall argue that the superiority claimed by the northern Europeans over their southern counterparts is a significant element in the multiculturalism that *The Winter's Tale* embodies. Yet, at the same time, I shall try to show that though initially seemingly subscribing to this popular belief, the play's final message is not its confirmation but rather its questioning and its rejection—up to a point at least. Viewed in this multicultural context, the play seems to embody a discourse in which populist notions are challenged, disjunction is harmonized, and irreconcilable contradictions are transcended. Still, at the play's end, total harmony has not been achieved, and traces of certain elements which the narrative seemed to efface are still disturbingly present.

In making the jealous husband, Leontes, a Sicilian belonging to the Mediterranean type of culture, Shakespeare may have been exercising discretion. His acting company having become the King's Men after the accession of James I to England's throne, Shakespeare may have been reluctant to offend the new monarch by showing a northern European consumed by an irrational sexual jealousy. As is well known, *The Winter's Tale* was one of the plays presented as part of the festivities devised to celebrate the marriage of the king's daughter, Princess Elizabeth, to Frederick, elector palatine of the Rhine, which took place in 1613. In 1619 Frederick was crowned king of Bohemia, the country ruled by Polixenes in *The Winter's Tale*.

Before examining the multiculturalism that the triad of countries—Sicily, Bohemia, and Russia—releases into the play, it seems desirable to resolve the puzzle of the time period in which the play is located. The Oracle at Delphos would define the period as pre-Christian and classical, while the explicit reference to Julio Romano (V.ii.97) would of course advance the period to the mid-sixteenth century. I shall argue that the latter is the intended time-slot, the former classical time-slot being assimilated into the Renaissance time-frame quite effortlessly. As Sukanta Chaudhuri has recently shown, it was in the Renaissance that, uniquely, an earlier age of Greek and Roman classicism was seen as unfolding and, as it were, realizing itself again in course of the Renaissance. . . .

Hence Renaissance man can live simultaneously in two worlds—widely separated in date. . . . He is shaped by two parallel operations of process, two developing contexts of thought and writing widely separated in the calendar, while the intervening "Middle" ages recede into the background. The three-part chronology of classical, medieval and Renaissance was devised in the Renaissance itself: a rare instance of an age happily defining its own time-referents and having them accepted by posterity. This permitted a very real though profoundly
unchronological linkage of the first and third elements, mental proximities that have nothing
to do with distance in space or time.²

Hamlet too, we recall, is set in a post-Martin Luther period, as the reference to Wittenberg indicates, yet the
play has a Roman dimension as well, as is suggested by names such as Claudius, Horatio, Marcellus,
Francisco, and Barnardo. Accordingly, I shall explore in this paper prevailing views in England on race and
ethnicity during the sixteenth century, particularly as they were directed toward Sicily, Bohemia, and Russia.

What Means Sicilia? He Something Seems Unsettled: Sicily, Russia, and Bohemia in The Winter's Tale: II

Julio Romano died in 1546. Assuming that Paulina intended her audience to believe that the "statue" was
created during the last years of his life, then Hermione, now in her mid-forties, would have been in her late
twenties at the time of her banishment, and this would place her date of birth at around the early 1500's so that
her father, the Emperor of Russia, a detail she specifically mentions (III.ii.119), would have been Ivan III,
known as Ivan the Great (1462-1505). But even more immediate for, and better known to, Shakespeare and
his audience would have been the exploits of Ivan IV, also known as Ivan the Terrible (1533-84). An English
contemporary, Sir Jerome Horsey, related the sack of Novgorod in vivid terms:

he chargeth it with 30 thousands Tartors and tenn thousands gonnors of his guard, withowt any
respect ravished all the weomen and maieds, ranzacked, robbed, and spoiled all that wear
within it of their jeweils, plate, and treasur, murthered the people yonge and olde, burnt all
their howshold stuff, merchandices, and warehowses of wax, flaex, tallow, hieds, salt, wynes,
cloth, and silks, sett all one fier, with wax and tallow melted down the kennells in the streats,
together with the bloud of 700 thousands men, weomen and children, slaine and murthered;
so that with the bloud that rann into the river, and of all other livinge creaturs and cattell, their
dead caracess did stoppe as it wear the stream of the river Volca, beinge cast therin. Noe
historie maketh mencion of so horrable a massacre.³

For Shakespeare's audience watching the play, Hermione's father, "the Emperor of Russia," could quite easily
have meant a telescoped image of the two Ivans. Queen Elizabeth had in fact established such close trade and
cultural links with Ivan the Terrible that the king of Poland had written cautioning her against such a
friendship:

We seemed hitherto to vanquish him onely in this, that he was rude of arts, and ignorant of
policies. . . . [W]e that know best, and border vpon him, do admonish other Christian princes
in time, that they do not betray their dignity, liberty and life of them and their subiects to a
most barbarous and cruel enemy. . . .⁴

Accordingly, when Hermione wishes that her emperor father "were alive, and here beholding/ His daughter's
trial," but "with eyes/ Of pity, not revenge" (III.ii.120-23), her lament is more than pathos: her reference to
"revenge" implies the military power that the country to which she belonged possesses and could exercise to
defend her against the false charge leveled against her by her husband. In Shakespeare's source, Greene's
Pandosto, the Emperor of Russia is not the father of Bellaria (Hermione) but of the wife of Egistus (the wife
of Polixenes, who, in Shakespeare's play, does not enter the action at all). Evidently the changes made by
Shakespeare would have had immediate political meaning for his viewers.

Ivan the Great was the first Muscovite ruler to designate himself "Grand Prince of all Russia." His first wife
died in 1472, and he then married Zoe Palaeologa, the niece of the last Byzantine emperor. But though of
Byzantine descent, Zoe Palaeologa had been raised in Italy, a circumstance that helps to explain why
Hermione (Zoe's daughter in Shakespeare's play) is the wife of Leontes, king of Sicily. Through the marriage of Zoe to Ivan, Italian influences made themselves felt in Russia. An Italian architect designed the Upenski Cathedral in the Kremlin, and a new Italianate palace was also built there. Russia, in fact, had entered the English consciousness a decade before the birth of Shakespeare when Sebastian Cabot's expedition sailed into the White Sea by the northeast route. The explorers were well received by Ivan IV and were entertained with great hospitality. In 1555 Ivan granted a monopoly of trade in the White Sea to an English company called the Muscovy Company, and in 1566 Queen Elizabeth's emissary Anthony Jenkinson wrote: "I came before the Emperours Majestie, sitting in his seate of honour, and having kissed his hand and done the Queenes Majesties commendations, and delivered her Graces letters and present, he bad me to dinner, which I accepted, and had much honour done unto me both then and all the time of my abode in Russia." In England there was great interest in Russia during this period. A Russian deputation was at the English Court in 1582-83, and this, as is well known, is reflected in the last act of Love's Labor's Lost.

What Means Sicilia? He Something Seems Unsettled: Sicily, Russia, and Bohemia in The Winter's Tale: III

The Elizabethan interest in Russia extended to Russians' physical characteristics, which would likely have figured in stage representations of Muscovites. Anthropologically the Russians, like the Czechs and Slovaks, belong to the Slavic peoples. "The Great Russians are mostly of the characteristic Moujik type with a squarish face and heavy features, reddish-blond hair and orange-brown . . . eyes. These in the main are the Muscovites of history." Turning to Leontes, king of Sicilia and the husband of Hermione, we note that he would have belonged to the Mediterranean type, the physical characteristics of which are "wavy or curly black hair, an average stature of about 5 feet 3 inches, slender build, long head and narrow oval face, straight nose rather inclining to be broad; the eyes are very dark." Thus Leontes would be a distinct contrast to Hermione in appearance, and this distinction should be made by directors of stage and film productions of The Winter's Tale. What exacerbates Leontes' insecurity and sexual jealousy could well be the physical and cultural affinity that Polixenes has with Hermione. Polixenes, king of Bohemia, is, like Hermione, of Slavic descent. The Czechs and the Slovaks both belong to the western branch of the Slavic peoples. Around the fifth century A.D. both tribes migrated south and settled in what became Czechoslovakia, with the Czechs in Bohemia in the west and the Slovaks in Slovakia in the east.

But the affinity between Polixenes and Hermione is more than merely anthropological; it is cultural as well. Hermione's easy familiarity with Polixenes, so galling to Leontes and so grievously misunderstood by him, springs not from a perversity of nature but from his misinterpretation of the social mores and customs of northern Europe to which they belong. That in the company of Polixenes Hermione is revealing a facet of her personality totally unknown to Leontes is implied in his aggrieved recollection of her restraint when she was wooed by him:

Why, that was when
Three crabbed months had sour'd themselves to death,
Ere I could make thee open thy white hand,
And clap thyself my love; then didst thou utter
"I am yours for ever."

(I.ii.101-05)

And it may not be too far-fetched to suggest that Leontes' "thy white hand" is ironic, the adjective having resonances suggestive of racial difference. Shakespeare had already explored this subject in Othello, a play.
whose striking correspondences with *The Winter's Tale* have been noted in Shakespearean criticism. A dark complexion, often associated with the south, carried connotations of cultural and social inferiority, as may be seen, we recall, in Beatrice of *Much Ado about Nothing*, a play also often regarded as a precursor of *Othello* and *The Winter's Tale*, and whose setting is Messina, one of the chief cities of Sicily. Beatrice wryly attributes her failure to find a husband to her complexion: "Thus goes every one to the world but I, and I am sun-burnt. I may sit in a corner and cry 'Heigh-ho for a husband!"" (II.i.318-20).

The sexual freedom enjoyed by women of the north was something totally denied to the women of the south. The striking opening sentence of Maria Pia di Bella's essay "Name, Blood and Miracles: The Claims to Renown in Traditional Sicily" states this well: "As is well known, honor looms large in the daily life of Mediterranean peoples. . . . The elements that constitute the honor of the group and the criteria by which it is granted seem to be . . . the chastity of its women; . . . the courage of its men on the battlefield and, whenever their point of honor is at stake, in the home community; their ability to defend their women from blemish." 8

In contrast to the restrained behavior of the women of the south, the freedom exercised by northern women was easily misconstrued as licentiousness by the southerners. The following passage from Robert Burton is only one of many drawing a distinction between the two cultural practices: concerning "those northern inhabitants," Burton writes:

> Altomarus, Poggius, and Munster in his description of Baden, reports that men and women of all sorts go commonly into the baths together, without all suspicion; "the name of jealousy" (saith Munster) "is not so much as once heard of among them." In Friesland the women kiss him they drink to, and are kissed again of those they pledge. The virgins in Holland go hand-in-hand with young men from home, glide on the ice, such is their harmless liberty, and lodge together abroad without suspicion, which rash Sansovinus, an Italian, makes a great sign of unchastity.9

Burton's book was not published until 1621, but as Anthony Gerard Barthelemy points out, it "codifies opinions that were in currency long before its publication." 10

Act I, scene ii of *The Winter's Tale*, when enacted on Shakespeare's stage so as authentically to represent physically visible differences between the national origins of Leontes, Hermione, and Polixenes, would have encoded a semiotics that the audience would have intuitively grasped and understood, as easily as we today, for example, understand what long and unkempt hair, a frayed shirt, tattered jeans, and open sandals denote. As Allesandro Serpieri points out, drama has a semiotics of its own, quite distinct from a literary text:

> A semiotic reading of the dramatic text must be aware not only of the cultural pragmatics of its historical context, but also of the potential pragmatics of the stage relationships that are inscribed in the strictly verbal make-up of the text itself in accordance with the codes and conventions (both general and historical) of the genre. In a word, critical enquiry into the contextual values of the drama should be carried out with a view to its specific semiotic complexity, a complexity quite distinct from that of literary genres, which are not conditioned by directions for a more-than-verbal use.11

In addition, I would like to argue for a further differential between Sicily and Bohemia that aggravates Leontes' aggression, is partly responsible for Polixenes' long nine-month visit to Sicily, and is the reason for his hasty and terrified flight from the country without the observance of the customary protocol. During the sixteenth century, Sicily was prosperous economically and enjoyed political stability, while Bohemia was in both these respects in a state of decline. True, much earlier, in the fourteenth century, Bohemia had emerged as a powerful nation under Charles I, whose reign was considered a golden age. Charles University in Prague, named after him, was the first university to be founded in eastern Europe. But by the sixteenth century
Bohemia had all but lost her intellectual supremacy in Europe. Internecine conflict on religious and political issues had divided the country, and the tyranny of the Bohemian nobles had pressed the masses of the population into virtual serfdom. In 1618 occurred the famous Defenestration of Prague, and, as already noted above, the Hapsburgs, beginning with Frederick, son-in-law of James I of England, took control of the country by invitation and ruled it for three centuries thereafter.

In contrast to Bohemia's economic and political distress, Sicily during this period was flourishing. The granary of Europe, she exported vast quantities of grain to the north. "[T]he ever-growing demand for grain in the cities of northern Italy, Provence, Catalonia, helped transform extensive areas of Sicily and Apulia into large farms concentrating on the cultivation of wheat for export." In fact, by the beginning of the seventeenth century the whole of Italy was one of the most highly developed regions of western Europe, with an exceptionally high standard of living for that time. It hardly needs to be pointed out that during this period the Renaissance in Europe had reached its peak in Italy, and the cultural gap between Italy and Russia was at its widest. Foreign travelers were amused at the barbarous and revolting behavior of the Muscovites, as the following account shows: "Filthily dirty, clad in long, cumbersome garments which prevented all free movements, unkempt hair down to their shoulders, and matted beards, they behaved hoggishly at table dipping their black and greasy fingers indiscriminately into plates and dishes, always eating too much and drinking noisily and greedily out of unwashed vessels." The economic power and cultural prestige of Italy in comparison to the rest of Europe—and to Bohemia in particular—is reflected in the play's opening scene in which Archidamus, a Bohemian courtier, confesses with obvious embarrassment that Bohemia cannot possibly match Sicilia's lavish style of hospitality:

> Verily I speak in the freedom of my knowledge: we cannot with such magnificence—in so rare—I know not what to say—We will give you sleepy drinks, that your senses (unintelligent of our insufficience) may, though they cannot praise us, as little accuse us. (I.i.11-16)

The assertion of superiority on the part of the court of Leontes over Polixenes and his entourage that gives rise to the "insufficience" of Bohemia is seen in the bullying infliction of the forms of hospitality by Leontes upon his reluctant guest, who has long outstayed his welcome and is now on sufferance. Literature does not merely reflect reality; it encapsulates and assimilates it, often so thoroughly that text and context are indistinguishable. To capture this "political unconscious" (Frederick Jameson's coinage and the title of his best known book) we must look not so much at political history as seen in the letters, diaries, and sermons of the period but rather at what was happening on the Elizabethan and Jacobean stage.

What Means Sicilia? He Something Seems Unsettled: Sicily, Russia, and Bohemia in The Winter's Tale: IV

Traditional approaches to The Winter's Tale have regarded Greene's Pandosto as its main source, and no doubt this is true in terms of plot and narrative. But, as I have tried to show, the changes Shakespeare makes are related to culture and politics. That the plays of Shakespeare use their main sources as mere frames within which to incorporate contemporary discourses is now generally accepted. This development in critical practice indicates a welcome and long overdue departure from the too simplistic notion held by many that Ben Jonson was the more widely read and intellectually superior author, while Shakespeare, lacking a university education, used his dramatic instinct to produce plays that were theatrically successful. Fortunately, this kind of patronizing concession to Shakespeare is no longer fashionable. That he must have known the works of Montaigne, Machiavelli, and other well-known Renaissance philosophers is of course well established, but it is equally likely that he knew the work of the French writer Jean Bodin (1530-96), one of the most influential geographers of the time.
Since in this century England entered the nautical age on a wide scale, geography was the science of the future, the equivalent of computer science today. In the preface to his History of Travel Richard Willes commented:

There was a time when the arte of grammar was so much esteemed. . . . Than was it honourable to be a Poet . . . that tyme is paste. There was a tyme when Logike and Astrology weereid the heades of young schollers . . . that tyme is past. Not long since happy was he that had any skil in the Greke language. [However, now] all Christians, Iewes, Turkes, Moorues, Infidels and Barbares be this day in louve with Geographie.14

Bodin's immensely popular Methodus aimed at establishing a correlation of culture with climate and topography, these studies including politics and ethnography as well.

Between 1566 and 1650 the Methodus was issued in thirteen Latin editions, the République translated into four languages and published frequently in abridged form. That the proud position of history was to be short-lived and that the Cartesians were to denounce it as unreliable—a collection of myths, and a conglomeration of errors—is relevant only on the Continent, where historical pyrrhonism rose to its highest level and where Bodin's name was seldom mentioned. In England the reception of his work was different. There, from 1580 to the end of the first quarter of the seventeenth century, the French scholar enjoyed a reputation for brilliance and high originality. He not only was known to all serious English students of history and geography but was admired, quoted, and imitated. William Harrison, the author of the Description of England in 1577, mentioned him, as did Holinshed, Sidney, Nash, Spenser, Bolton, Hobbes, Wheare, Heylyn, Burton, Carpenter, and Hakewill. "You cannot stepp into a schollar's studye," said Gabriel Harvey, "but (ten to one) you shall litle [sic] finde open either Bodin de Republica or Le Royes Exposition. . . ." Robert Burton, at one time a teacher of geography, referred to him many times in the Anatomy of Melancholy (1621).15

Here is one such reference by Burton, in which, quoting Bodin, he contrasts the freedom between the sexes practiced by the northern Europeans with the restraints imposed on them by Italian culture, this difference having a geographical cause: "Bodine . . . ascribes a great cause to the country or clime, and discourseth largely there of this subject, saying, that southern men are more hot, lascivious, and jealous than such as live in the north; they can hardly contain themselves in those hotter climes, but are most subject to prodigious lust. . . . Germany hath not so many drunkards, England tobaccoists, France dancers, Holland mariners, as Italy alone hath jealous husbands."16 Today the "correct" response is to dismiss such generalizations as conventional stereotypes, but perhaps all that has happened is that we push our feelings underground. Earlier centuries were more outspoken, as can be seen in Shakespeare's creation of characters like Shylock and Don Armado, the "fantastical Spaniard" of Love's Labor's Lost.

One of Bodin's intents was to explain the cultural diversity which, he believed, was originally non-existent, for mankind began as a homogeneous unit. Basing his conclusions on observation and on a vast assemblage of documentation, Bodin points out that the people of the south are "of a contrarie humour and disposition to them of the North: these are great and strong, they are little and weake; they of the north, hot and moyst, the others cold and dry; the one hath a big voyce and greene eyes, the other hath a weake voyce and black eyes; the one hath a flaxen haire and a faire skin, the other hath both haire and skin black; the one feareth cold, the other heate."17 As Terence Hawkes has drily remarked, "All nations execrate their enemies, and the discourse of denigration has a long and monotonous history in Europe, on all sides, and towards all cultural groups."18

But Bodin does not quite conform to this kind of a predictable pattern: he is original and interesting because he often refuses to adopt the expected stance. Thus he speaks frequently and approvingly of the good effects of the mingling of races and cultures—"The fusion of peoples changes the customs and nature of men not a
Like Bodin, *The Winter's Tale* is much occupied with genetic fusion. Perdita, herself a product of the union of Sicily and Russia—though she is unaware of this—is critical of cross-breeding and has to listen to Polixenes’ celebrated speech in which he extols the ingenuity of genetic engineering in improving the breed:

> You see, sweet maid, we marry  
> A gentler scion to the wildest stock,  
> And make conceive a bark of baser kind  
> By bud of nobler race. This is an art  
> Which does mend Nature—change it rather—but  
> The art itself is Nature.

(IV.iv.92-97)

Polixenes' later repudiation of his own philosophy, as seen in his vicious denunciation of Perdita, prompted by the fear of plebeian blood contaminating that of his royal family, would seem to suggest that the play satirizes the belief in the purity of blood. But it must also be noted that the play is not a complete overturning of conventional beliefs, for Perdita, we know, is actually not a plebeian at all, and her union with Florizel is not the same as King Cophetua's choice of a beggar-maid, a story that Shakespeare knew very well (see *Love's Labor's Lost* IV.i.65-66, 2 Henry IV V.iii.102, and *Romeo and Juliet* II.i.14). Thus, though it challenges notions of class and blood superiority, *The Winter's Tale* does not totally repudiate them, and even the challenge is couched in terms that are muted, not strident. After all, Shakespeare by this time was writing for a chiefly aristocratic audience.

**What Means Sicilia? He Something Seems Unsettled: Sicily, Russia, and Bohemia in The Winter's Tale: V**

What light, if any, does this dimension of multiculturalism shed on Perdita in terms of her development towards womanhood? Physically, she is the image of her mother, as is remarked by the Third Gentleman (V.ii.36-37) as well as by Leontes, who almost falls in love with her (V.i.226-27). Thus we are in a sense seeing Hermione all over again, except that Perdita's behavior is just the opposite of her mother's. Whereas Hermione, a Russian princess, was free and familiar with her guest Polixenes, Perdita, half-Russian and half-Sicilian, is "retired" when her guests, including Polixenes, arrive and is reprimanded for this by her putative father, the Old Shepherd (IV.iv.62). "Sir, welcome./ It is my father's will I should take on me/ The hostess-ship o' th' day. You're welcome, sir" (IV.iv.70-72). In the restrained conduct of Perdita, "now grown in grace" (IV.i.24), we witness a reenactment of the Polixenes-Hermione relationship, but this time with a new and transformed Hermione as hostess. It is a flashback, so to speak, but with a difference, a marvelous piece of dramatic legerdemain.

One final observation: it must have been evident to Shakespeare's audience that, following the death of Mamillius, the prophecy of the Oracle—"the king shall live without an heir, if that which is lost be not found" (III.ii. 134-36)—had been fulfilled with the discovery of Perdita, whose marriage to Florizel would result in heirs both for Sicilia and Bohemia, thus reconciling the two countries that had been estranged. With Mamillius' death, the crown would ultimately pass on to his nephew, or niece, Perdita's offspring; similarly, with Queen Elizabeth's death, the English crown had passed on to her nephew, James VI, son of her cousin, Mary Queen of Scots.

In *The Winter's Tale* the prospect of heirs being born is projected in the image of the "branch" and in the possibility of the King having "no son" (I.i.24, 45), a curious innuendo made in the play's opening scene in the
face of the fact that the King *does* have a son. But looked at in the light of the contemporary political scene, this and the play's ending would, of course, have reminded the members of Shakespeare's audience of what they had themselves not long before experienced: the anxiety of seeing their recent monarch Queen Elizabeth dying without an heir and also the relief they felt at the throne being then painlessly filled by James VI of Scotland, coming to England as James I, thus effecting reconciliation between two long-standing antagonists, England and Scotland, and uniting them under a single crown. For that audience, politics and history had become drama.20

Notes

1 References to *The Winter's Tale* are to *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans *et al.* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974).


7 Ibid., p. 140.


"You Speak a Language That I Understand Not": The Rhetoric of Animation in *The Winter's Tale*: Introduction

Lynn Enterline, *Yale University*

Between Leontes's opening imperative, "Tongue-tied our queen? Speak you" (1.2.28), and the final act, where Hermione as living statue returns to her husband yet says nothing directly to him, *The Winter's Tale* traces a complex, fascinated, and uneasy relation to female speech.\(^1\) A play much noted for interrogating the "myriad forms of human narration"—old tales, reports, ballads, oracles—*The Winter's Tale* begins its investigation of language when Hermione tellingly jests to Polixenes, "Verily, / You shall not go; a lady's 'verily' is / As potent as a lord's" (11. 49-51), for Leontes's swift turn to suspicion hinges on the power of his wife's speech. Unable to persuade Polixenes to stay, he first expresses annoyance when Hermione is able to do so. Polixenes has just assured his boyhood friend "There is no tongue that moves, none, none i' th' world, / So soon as yours could win me" (11. 20-21). Nonetheless, it is Hermione's tongue, not her husband's, that wins Polixenes. "You, sir, / Charge him too coldly," she chides Leontes before persuading their friend to stay (11. 29-30). Leontes therefore shifts quickly from "Well said, Hermione" (1. 33), to churlish acknowledgment of her rhetorical power. He understands her persuasive speech not as obedience to his desire—since he is the one who commanded "Speak you"—but as a force that eclipses his own:

LEONTES  Is he won yet?
HERMIONE He'll stay, my lord.
LEONTES  At my request he would not.

(11. 86-87)
From Hermione's success, jealous deductions quickly follow. Indeed, the first hint that something is amiss in this marriage is this seemingly minor quibble over who speaks to better purpose and who is the better rhetorician. When he later broaches with Camillo Polixenes's decision to stay, Leontes confirms his suspicions on the basis of his own earlier failure to persuade:

**CAMILLO** You had much ado to make his anchor hold, When you cast out, it still came home. **LEONTES** Didst note it? **CAMILLO** He would not stay at your petitions, made His business more material. **LEONTES** Didst perceive it?

(11. 213-16)

Outdone in rhetorical power by his wife, Leontes makes two interpretive moves to reassert control over her language. First, he reminds Hermione of her answer to his proposal of marriage—in fact, he quotes her words of assent, "I am yours for ever" (1. 105)—and calls those words a "better" speech than the one to which Polixenes has yielded. And, second, he reads as evidence of infidelity the conversation he has himself induced between Hermione and his friend: "Too hot, too hot!" (1. 108). Making himself arbiter of Hermione's language, Leontes approvingly quotes the words he prefers while giving a fixed, suspicious meaning to the ones he does not. The scene's pronounced interest in acts of persuasion, one failed and the other successful, produces an odd effect: plunging into Leontes's jealousy, the scene makes his unreasonable emotion appear to be the consequence of this rivalry between male and female speech. As the drama quickly unfolds, we watch the king turn a rhetorical anxiety—why do her words achieve the desired effect where mine do not?—into a sexual one, minimizing his wife's superior rhetorical skill by interpreting it narrowly as the consequence of her erotic power. In Act 5, however, Hermione returns as a theatrical version of Pygmalion's silent statue to the husband who was once so jealous of her tongue. Almost but not quite "tongue-tied," she addresses herself to her lost daughter only. (I will return to her words to Perdita at the end of this essay.) After her theatrical metamorphosis, Hermione does not address the man who doubted her to the brink of annihilation. Having once triggered a terrible response with her voice, she now evades the problem by saying nothing to Leontes.

I am tempted to say Hermione has learned her lesson. But as I hope to show, *The Winter's Tale* defies an intuitive understanding of the difference between speech and silence—or, for that matter, the difference between agency and impotence, male and female, often allied with it. The elaborate Pygmalion fantasy offered in the last scene as a way to resolve the problems inaugurated by Hermione's initially "potent" tongue tells us that before we can begin to hear the full resonance of her concluding silence, we must consider the relationship between, on the one hand, the trope of the female voice in the Ovidian-Petrarchan tradition that Shakespeare inherits and transforms in this play and, on the other, the quite specific rhetorical concerns through which *The Winter's Tale* reads that tradition, turning it into theatrical metacommentary. Any reading of the play's uneasy fascination with the female voice, that is, must take account of the complex literary legacy of Pygmalion's obsession with his mute simulacrum. As this silent figure passes from Ovid to Petrarch to Shakespeare, it criticizes even as it perpetuates a mysterious tie between love of art and hatred for women. Narratives of rape and misogyny frame the figure of the animated statue, tranishing the luster of a story that otherwise seems to be about love for beautiful form, visual as well as verbal. The literary legacy of Pygmalion's statue asks readers, therefore, to think again about the consequences of the many kinds, and discourses, of love.

I should preface this analysis by noting that when I speak of a "female voice" in this play, I mean to designate a pervasive and seductive trope—a discursive effect, not a prediscursive fact. Through the sound of the very
"female" voice that inaugurates Leontes's jealousy, I will argue, the play distances itself from the king's essentializing effort to dismiss Hermione's rhetorical power by understanding it as erotic power only. Of course the arbitrary force of Leontes's jealous interpretation of his wife's tongue raises troubling questions about the violence latent in such culturally pervasive ideas as those of "male" speech and "female" silence. Because The Winter's Tale was written for a transvestite theater, moreover, I do not presume a given—or, more important, an intelligible—phenomenon anterior to the language that gives it shape (for instance, "woman" or "the female subject"). Reading the way in which the voices of Hermione and Leontes affect and implicate each other, I hope to show, tells us that—like Echo and Narcissus or Salmacis and Hermaphroditus—female and male voices in this very Ovidian play are locked in a mutually defining, differential embrace. An analysis of the "female voice" in The Winter's Tale is important precisely because it must change our understanding of that term.

Renaissance revisers of the Metamorphoses routinely adopt such stories as Ovid's Pygmalion as a way to comment on the medium of their appearance; Shakespeare is no exception. Ovid's own generic experimentation, his rhetorical and poetic self-reflexivity, and his habit of linking oral/aural dilemmas to visual ones encouraged in Renaissance imitators a highly self-conscious practice of borrowing. Erotic stories from the Metamorphoses became highly charged reflections on the power (and dangers) of the story's very medium—whether painting, poetry, music, or drama. Such self-conscious visitations prepare us for Shakespeare's much noted—and celebrated—effort to turn Ovid's story of Pygmalion into one about the transforming powers of theatrical representation, about a theater that succeeds where even Orpheus failed: "I'll fill your grave up" (5.3.101). Because the idea of the living statue plays a crucial role in Shakespeare's claims for the theater and in our own critical reception of those claims, it becomes vital that we understand the epistemological and ethical consequences of the rhetoric of animation. For Shakespeare's final invocation of the living statue's "magic" draws on a story that self-consciously proposes a close yet opaque alliance between aesthetics and misogyny. I will suggest that, in silence as in speech, the female voice in The Winter's Tale allows us to interrogate the terms and the limits of that alliance.


I. "SHALL I BE HEARD?"

To apprehend the burden Shakespeare assumes when he has Paulina tell Hermione to "bequeath to death" her "numbness," we must remember the symbolic and libidinal economy that informs the Pygmalion story in the two chief texts that gave it such tenacity as a fiction about voice, masculinity, and desire: Ovid's Metamorphoses and Petrarch's Rime Sparse. As Leonard Barkan writes, Hermione's metamorphosis enacts "a kind of marriage of Pygmalion and Petrarchanism." In the Rime Sparse, Petrarch draws on numerous Ovidian characters to represent his own situation of unfilled desire; and in a pair of sonnets that praise Simone Martini's portrait of Laura, he brings Ovid's story of Pygmalion into the cycle as a particularly compelling analogue for his own predicament. Two rhetorical issues are central to both Petrarch's and Shakespeare's versions of Ovid's Pygmalion: the trope of apostrophe and the language of praise or epideixis. By lamenting the picture's silence—"if only she could reply to my words!" ("se risponder savesse a' detti miei!")—Petrarch's apostrophe creates the fiction of his own voice; a second apostrophe accentuates the fiction of a voice and the language of epideixis at once: "Pygmalion, how much you must praise yourself for your image ("quanto lodar ti dei") if you received a thousand times what I yearn to have just once!" (78.11, 12-14). In these concluding lines Petrarch rewrites Ovid's story according to one of the Rime Sparse's controlling signifiers: lodare. He thereby refashions Ovid's Pygmalion in his own image, reading him as an artist devoted to praising himself for the excellence of his simulacrum. Petrarch derives the name Laura from the Latin laudare and, according to the Secretum, loves the name just as much as he loves the lady herself.
In *The Winter's Tale*, Shakespeare reads the tradition Petrarch's poetry inaugurated in precise rhetorical terms—in terms, that is, of the power of address and of epideixis. Long before staging his own kinds of address to a composite Ovidian-Petrarchan statue ("Chide me, dear stone" or "descend; be stone no more; approach" [5.3.24, 99]), Shakespeare fits the representation of Hermione (and Leontes's relation to her) into a meditation on epideictic speech. Where *The Rape of Lucrece* explores the violent consequences of Petrarchan epideixis—because "Collatine unwisely did not let / To praise" Lucrece to other men (11. 10-11), rape is the consequence—*The Winter's Tale* gives us a Hermione who, in jest, offers herself as the beloved object of praise:

What? have I twice said well? When was't before?  
I prithee tell me; cram's with praise, and  
make's  
As fat as tame things. One good deed dying  
tongueless  
Slaughters a thousand waiting upon that.  
Our praises are our wages.

(1.2.90-94)

Understood in light of Shakespeare's critique of praise in *The Rape of Lucrece*, Hermione's pose as epideictic object for her husband while in the presence of another man should alert us that the rhetorical competition between Hermione and Leontes may already have entered the troubled world of Petrarchan verbal exchanges gone awry. Indeed, Hermione's very participation in a rhetorical competition with one man to vie for another man's ear alerts us that culturally dominant alignments of gender and rhetoric do not pertain. Her "potent" rhetoric disrupts received expectations for epideictic speech. And so in this play, terrible consequences attend Hermione's speaking, even though Leontes is the character whom her playful remarks about praise might lead us to believe will follow Collatine as ill-fated epideictic rhetorician. Instead of hearing more from Leontes, however, we hear from Hermione; and what she speaks about is her own power of speech. Her balanced syntax hints to the jealous ear that, just as they are matched in her discourse, the two men may be equivalent objects for her exchange: "I have spoke to th' purpose twice: / The one for ever earn'd a royal husband; / Th' other for some while a friend" (11. 106-8). As if following her lead into the language of payment and exchange, Leontes begins to angle for proof by changing Hermione's equation of the two men into a marketplace where she is their commodity: "Hermione, / How thou lov'st us, show in our brother's welcome; / Let what is dear in Sicily be cheap" (11. 173-75). While the rest of the play may seem to return to expected discursive convention by making Hermione (and her fidelity) the enigmatic object of others' discourse—in praise and in slander—that predicament, we should remember, is initiated in Act 1 by the unexpected power of her persuasive tongue.

The play's most striking debt to the Petrarchan tradition, of course, emerges in the final scene when a stony lady comes to life. Both Ovid and Petrarch use what Kenneth Gross aptly calls "the dream of the moving statue" as an erotic, synesthetic investigation of the status of the human voice and the consequences of rhetorical speech. In both, as in Shakespeare's play, this investigation occurs by way of a meditation on the success or failure of an address. In each of the three texts, this address draws our attention to the way that all parties present are implicated in and defined by the verbal event. Before looking more carefully at Petrarch's version of Pygmalion, however, we must first understand the complex connections between rhetoric, voice, and sexuality which he inherited from Ovid's poem.

In the *Metamorphoses*, Pygmalion's wishes come true because he addresses words of prayer to Venus. The story of animation, the event of the statue's motion, offers an erotic version of a rhetorician's dream. The scene's action and considerable dramatic effect (waiting for a statue to move) derives from a pun on the
desired end of rhetorical speech. Drawing on the contemporary word for rhetorical power—the power, that is, to "move" (movere)—the narrator tells us that in his statue, Pygmalion believes he has an audience who "wants to be moved" (X.251). And because the narrator of the story is the grieving Orpheus, yet another compelling fantasy about the voice's power informs the ivory maiden's animation. Shakespeare, too, connects the stories of Orpheus and Pygmalion. After the "statue" moves, Paulina warns Leontes: "Do not shun her / Until you see her die again, for then / You kill her double" (5.3.105-7). Paulina's imperative deftly combines the story of Pygmalion's statue with that of Orpheus's Eurydice by implying two things: like the statue, Hermione has come to life; and because of this animation, she may, like Eurydice, die twice. Indeed, Golding's translation of Ovid's text may have suggested Paulina's wording. For Ovid's version of Eurydice's "twin" death—"stupuit gemina nece coniugis Orpheus" (X.69)—Golding renders, "This double dying of his wyfe set Orphye in a stound." 11

The interwoven stories of Orpheus and Pygmalion seem, at first glance, to propose a familiar hierarchy between male verbal agency on the one hand and female silence and death on the other. Where the sculptor's prayer succeeds, the statue says nothing and has no name; where Orpheus's song momentarily takes over the narrative of the poem—thus predicating Book X of the Metamorphoses itself on Eurydice's absence—Eurydice utters a barely audible "vale " before "falling back again to the place whence she had come" (X.63). As Petrarch realized, the first (male verbal agency) seems to depend on the second (female silence and death). But trouble soon disturbs this too-sanguine version of male vocal power. Once able to move the inanimate world by "moving his voice in song" ("hoc vocem carmine movit" [1. 147]), Orpheus dies because Bacchic (female) noise drowns out his voice: the "huge uproar" of discordant flutes, horns, drums, "and howlings of the Bacchanals" overwhelms the sound of Orpheus's lyre ("ingens / clamor . . . et Bacchei ululatus " [XI. 15-18]). Once-listening stones turn to weapons, stones now "reddened with the blood of the bard whose voice was unheard" ("saxa / non exauditi rubuerunt sanguine vatis" [II. 18-19]). And where Pygmalion succeeds in animating his beloved, his narrator fails. Having won Eurydice only to lose her again through his own action, Orpheus then sings a song in which we hear the story of yet another beloved woman given life through art. Orpheus's failure underwrites the story he tells, making the fantasy of the statue's animation part of the wishful fort-da game of his impossible desire. These interwoven narratives therefore tell us that power is fleetingly, intermittently, and only phantasmatically granted the male voice. And they tell us, moreover, that his voice may not be the only sound that matters.

Still, we must acknowledge that Eurydice's death and the unnamed statue's silence in the Orpheus-Pygmalion sequence conform to a larger fantasy, first proposed in Book I of the Metamorphoses, in which male vocal triumph requires female absence or resistance. Two stories of attempted rape—Apollo's pursuit of Daphne and Pan's of Syrinx—tell the origins of epideictic and pastoral poetry by presenting a rigid sexual division of labor in the production of song. Close on Daphne's heels, the god of poetry fails to persuade and so becomes himself because she eludes his grasp. And hard on the heels of that encounter follows Pan's pursuit of Syrinx, an attempted rape that repeats and intensifies the first. Where Apollo's breathing down Daphne's neck becomes the breath of poetry, Pan's breath turns into music as he sighs through the newly immobilized body of Syrinx: "the soft air stirring in the reeds gave forth a low and complaining sound" ("sonum tenuem similemque querenti" [I.708]). In the context of this violence, remember that yet other forms of misogyny underwrite the Orpheus-Pygmalon sequence. Grieving for Eurydice, Orpheus "shunned all love of womankind," becoming the "author" in Thrace of "giving his love to tender boys" ("ommnegque refugerat Orpheus / femineam Venerem . . . Ule etiam Thracum populis fuit auctor amorem / in teneros" [X.79-84]). Pygmalion's "disgust" for female sexual behavior repeats his narrator's aversion: having seen the prostitution of the Propoetides, he creates a statue "better than any woman born" ("qua femina nasci / nulla potest" [II. 248-49]) to eradicate the "faults that nature had so liberally given the female mind" ("vitiis, quae plurima menti / femineae natura dedit" [II. 244-45]). For rejecting women, Orpheus will soon die at the hands of the Bacchantes. Ovid thus twice qualifies Pygmalion's seeming aesthetic triumph, suggesting that it is rooted in misogyny; aversion to women is its inaugural gesture. The Bacchic cry upon seeing Orpheus—"here is the man who scorns us!" ("hic est nostri contemtor!" [XI.7])—claims that revenge is the best this
erotic-symbolic economy can expect.

Such misogyny was not lost on later writers. In "The Metamorphosis of Pigmalion's Image" (1598), John Marston summarizes his reading of Pygmalion concisely:

Pigmalion, whose hie love-hating minde
Disdain'd to yeeld servile affection,
Or amorous sute to any woman-kinde,
Knowing their wants, and mens perfection.
Yet Love at length fore'd him to know his fate,
And love the shade, whose substance he did hate.

As Shakespeare's only other direct reference to the story suggests, he is more than familiar with this "love-hating" tradition. In Measure for Measure the phrase "Pygmalion's image" means "prostitute," exactly recalling the reason for Pygmalion's creative act. "What, is there none of Pygmalion's images newly made woman to be had now, for putting the hand in the pocket and extracting [it] clutch'd?" (3.2.44-47). In this version of the story, the fantasy of animation is the moment of sexual penetration (i.e., "to make a woman" is to deflower a virgin). Both Shakespeare and his audience were well aware of the sexual and misogynist aspects of the story that are omitted in order to achieve closure in The Winter's Tale. If we ignore the negative aspects of the Pygmalion tradition, we foreclose the possibility of thinking about the work and effects of repression in the play's last scene—or, for that matter, about the problem that Ovid's narrative so memorably posed: what, precisely, is the relationship between misogyny and art?

In the first three acts Leontes's skepticism places the "truth" of Hermione's body (her innocence or her guilt) beyond the reach of words—beyond the reach, even, of oracular speech. Similarly, the final scene turns to a story in which evasion of the female body is representation's foundational premise: Pygmalion's statue is not mimetic; it is "better than any woman born." From this disquieting gap between language and the world, Shakespeare aspires to a mode of representation that can move beyond the impasse. If, as most critics agree, the spectacle of Hermione's pregnancy troubles the play's language from the start (most obviously in Polixenes's opening reference to "nine months"), this spectacle works together with her potent tongue to spark her husband's suspicions. The final scene of animation therefore works to reclaim another, "better" mode of generation than the one that so disturbs Leontes's understanding of the world. In constructing this scene, Shakespeare tries to replace the animating power of the maternal body with the language and visual spectacle of the theater.

The play's implied claim for theatrical power, then, derives from a literary history of aversion to female flesh. But this is not the only story the play tells about its own fiction. I want to suggest not only that Hermione's concluding silence criticizes the symbolic-erotic economy inaugurated in Book I of the Metamorphoses and developed in the Orpheus-Pygmalion sequence, but that this economy itself tells us something important about why Hermione's speech is so unexpectedly powerful. It is as if the first half of The Winter's Tale were asking of this legacy, what would happen if the stony lady actually did speak back? To understand the play's question, we need only remember that Pygmalion's statue is both nameless and speechless. Or that Eurydice, lost again, says only "farewell" before finally disappearing in death. Although the first book of the Metamorphoses initially proposes a sexual division of labor in the creation of poetry and the Orpheus segment adds death to rape as one of the possible roles for women in the process of inventing poetic song, readers may have heard the murmur of a story different from the one that emerges from a focus on the activities of Apollo, Pan, or Orpheus. For in the line I quoted about Pan's music, Ovid leaves unclear exactly whose voice is audible in these pipes: "Instead of [Syrinx] he held nothing but marsh reeds . . . and while he sighed in disappointment, the soft air stirring in the reeds gave forth a low and complaining sound" (I.708). Ovid lets us
wonder, whose sound is this? The complaint seems as much Syrinx's as Pan's. The female voice troubles the Apollo-Daphne story, too, thus disturbing one of the Metamorphoses's most prominent narratives about the origins of poetry. Where Apollo's "imperfect" rhetoric ("verba imperfecta") fails to persuade her to stay, Daphne's prayer to lose the "figure" that provokes such violence convinces her father to change her shape. Her words possess a persuasive force that Apollo's do not; they inaugurate one of the metamorphoses that are the subject of Ovid's poem. If Book I creates the expectation that the poem will focus on male vocal power, that expectation is soon thwarted. In a series of influential stories, Ovid ventriloquizes numerous women, obliquely yet consistently hinting that these female characters are violated by the very mode of representation available to them. Echo's mimicking voice, Syrinx's complaining reed, Philomela's severed tongue, and, I would argue, Medusa's fearsome face mark female experience in the Metamorphoses as a struggle against the restrictive conditions within which they must represent themselves. To return to the case in point: Daphne's metapoetic plea—that she lose her "figura"—tells us that the figurai quality of language betrays her just as surely as her bodily form makes her vulnerable to Apollo's violence. For when Daphne prays to lose her figure and is turned into a tree, she may not have meant to lose her human form: when used to signify the body rather than language, figura designates not only general shape but also a person's beauty. What Daphne means to ask is to become less attractive, but what she actually says prompts her father to alter her human figure altogether. The relief brought her by the unintended power of her prayer is just as constraining as the figurai language with which she must speak—language that departs "from the straightforward and obvious" and whose obliquity therefore condemns her to be "immobilized" or "stuck fast" with "sluggish roots" ("pigris radicibus haeret" [1. 551]). Her voice may do more than Apollo's, her words may achieve greater effects, but their action eclipses her intention. And this sense of violation by language, I believe, forms the basis of Ovid's insistent alliance of the origin of poetry with rape.

This aspect of Ovid's poem—in which female voices such as Daphne's are betrayed by the very words they speak—helps us to understand Hermione's courtroom protest that she stands somehow outside the restrictive terms of Leontes's accusation: "Sir, / You speak a language that I understand not" (3.2.79-80). To the woman who will later be restored to life as a version of Pygmalion's statue, her husband's "language," like his jealousy, violates her sense of herself. Hermione's ensuing remark about the deadly effects of fantasy—"My life stands in the level of your dreams, / Which I'll lay down"—then provokes Leontes's most concise statement of his Pygmalionlike revision of womankind: "Your actions are my dreams" (11. 81-82). As both Apollo's desire and figurative language ensnare Daphne yet give her voice an unforeseen efficacy, so the collusion between language and male fantasy frames Hermione yet does not utterly deprive her voice of power. The Winter's Tale may mark her words as insufficient to tell the truth or command belief, yet it also gives her voice the power to unhinge her husband's sense of the world itself: "Is this nothing? / Why then the world and all that's in't is nothing" (1.2.292-93).

And the corollary aspect of Ovid's poem—in which female voices suggest that male voices are not so powerful as the stories of rape or of animation might lead one to believe—illuminates why Leontes, once he has lost the rhetorical competition with his wife, spends much of the play trying (and failing) to control his own language and the language of others. For Leontes the fact that tongues other than his own can speak becomes an increasing source of irritation. When his lords voice their initial opposition to his accusation of adultery, Leontes snaps: "Hold your peace" (2.1.139). He then dismisses their comments as an infringement of his power:

Why, what need we
Commune with you of this, but rather follow
Our forceful instigation? Our prerogative
Calls not your counsels . . .
We need no more of your advice. The matter,
The loss, the gain, the ord'reng on't, is all
Properly ours.
Leontes always speaks as if his voice alone should be heard. When accusing Hermione, he leans on the implicit power of his own voice: "I have said / She's an adultress, I have said with whom" (11. 87-88, my emphasis). The mere existence of a king's saying, he believes, should be enough to establish facts. Where Orpheus tried and failed to use his voice to master death, Leontes tries and fails to use the power of his tongue to master truth. In both cases women's bodies become the signifiers of that desire. Leontes, moreover, pairs his sense of his own linguistic prerogative with a declaration designed to preempt all other voices whatsoever: "He who shall speak for her is afar off guilty / But that he speaks" (11. 104-5, my emphasis). To Leontes anyone else's discourse is but a further sign of guilt. This is so, I submit, because Leontes, like an Orpheus singing alone in the woods, can bear to hear only the sound of his own tongue.

The king aspires to order all linguistic exchanges in Sicily, but Hermione's voice teaches him that any such ordering properly belongs to no one. Just as she obeys his command, "Speak you," in Act 1 only to challenge Leontes's sense of authority over acts of persuasion, so in Act 2, scene 1, Hermione speaks in obedience to his command with words that prompt Leontes to assert that his voice has again been eclipsed. Although Leontes has just ordered "Away with her, to prison" (1. 103) and his order is obeyed, by the end of Hermione's speech, Leontes protests that he has somehow gone unheard. Hermione addresses herself to the attendant lords in words that obey the king's command and yet seem to him to undermine it:

HERMIONE . . . Beseech you all, my lords, With thoughts so qualified as your charities Shall best instruct you, measure me; and so The King's will be perform'd!

LEONTES Shall I be heard?
HERMIONE Who is't that goes with me?

(11. 112-16, my emphasis)

Hermione cedes the power of action to Leontes's word, but her token of obedience makes that word ring hollow. The act of "go[ing]"—an act that follows the letter of the king's order—begins, in her mouth, to sound like a declaration of alliance: "Who is't that goes with me?" To counter her question, Leontes can do no more than repeat himself as he tries to reassert power over one word: "Go, do our bidding; hence!" (1. 125).

Indeed the play as a whole instructs Leontes that the linguistic marketplace he hopes to master cannot be negotiated by the careful parsing out of what he calls "the loss, the gain." He finds that it cannot be ordered by the logic of equivalence at all: language, in this play, repeatedly exceeds Leontes's demand. Certain that the oracle will prove him right, Leontes finds himself instead proclaimed a "jealous tyrant" (3.2.133-34). Responding to the charge with "this is mere falsehood" (1. 141), Leontes is confronted with the news of Mamillius's death, a death that results from Leontes's having doubted oracular speech. Or so Leontes understands it: "Apollo's angry, and the heavens themselves / Do strike at my injustice" (11. 146-47). And so Leontes finds himself, like Ovid's Orpheus, brought low by the clamorous noise of a crowd. In Shakespeare's interrogation of the fear of losing one's rhetorical power, however, Leontes's distrust of other voices turns into an imaginary scene in which he is encircled by "whisp'ring" gossip rather than Bacchic cries: "They're here with me already, whisp'ring, rounding: / 'Sicilia is a so-forth.' 'Tis far gone, / When I shall gust it last" (1.2.217-19).

It is the tongues of Hermione and Paulina together, however, that most distinctly instruct Leontes in what I take to be the lesson of Orpheus: that power resides only fleetingly in one's voice, even if it be the voice of a poet or a king. In the scene of Hermione's arrest (2.1), the queen notifies her husband, as she did indirectly in the first act, that he cannot bring all language—even his own—under control. Though Leontes may claim that
"the matter" and "the ord' ring" of his accusation of adultery is "all / Properly ours," she teaches him otherwise. Once published, Hermione reminds him, a text will go its own way. It can be controlled by no mere speaking:

How will this grieve you,
When you shall come to clearer knowledge,
that
You thus have publish'd me! Gentle my
lord,
You scarce can right me thoroughly, then, to
say
You did mistake.

(11. 96-100)

Unable to master the truth by mastering other voices, Shakespeare's Orpheus/Leontes soon finds himself heavily beset by the tongue of Paulina. In her, Leontes contends with a voice that resists all ordering:

LEONTES  [What] noise there, ho?
PAULINA No noise, my lord, but needful
conference
About some gossips for your Highness.
LEONTES  How?
Away with that audacious lady! Antigonus,
I charg'd thee that she should not come about
me:
I knew she would.

(2.3.39-44)

Like an Ovidian bad penny, Paulina returns to avenge her mistress. "A callat / Of boundless tongue, who," Leontes claims, "late hath beat her husband" (11. 91-92), Paulina plagues Leontes with her "noise." A domestic version of the Bacchic horde, Paulina has a tongue that no man controls. Thus the harassed Leontes rebukes her husband, "What? canst not rule her?" (1. 46). Paulina, the somewhat softened spirit of a revenging Ovidian woman, goes about her work with a tongue that will, after sixteen years, cure Leontes rather than kill him.


II. "NOT GUILTY"

We have seen that when Shakespeare adopts the imagined scene of speaking to a stony lady as a way to repair the devastation caused by Leontes's jealousy, he turns the conflict between male and female verbal power into a meditation on Ovidian and Petrarchan rhetoric in general and on the role of the female voice in that literary legacy in particular. Before looking more closely at the telling role female voices play in The Winter's Tale, however, we must examine the vicissitudes of the voice in the Rime Sparse, particularly for those Ovidian characters whom Petrarch borrows as so many figures for his own situation. Like many of his literary contemporaries, Shakespeare frequently juxtaposes Ovidian rhetoric with Petrarchan in order to derive a flexible lexicon of figures for sexual experience, whether erotic or violent. Recall, for instance, that Marcus
greets the mutilated Lavinia, Shakespeare's Philomela, with the conventional language of a blason in praise of her beauty and talent (Titus Andronicus, 2.4.22-47). Similarly, the narrator of The Rape of Lucrece sets his critique of Petrarchan epideixis in an explicitly Ovidian context, rewriting the story of Lucretia from the Fasti in terms of several other Ovidian characters: most notably, Philomela, Orpheus, and Hecuba. Understanding the Rime Sparse and Ovid's presence in it will help clarify why the female voice occasionally exercises such disruptive force in a play that ends with yet another version of Pygmalion's address to his statue.

In Sonnet 78 Petrarch's apostrophe to Ovid's Pygmalion epitomizes the rhetorical and erotic concerns of the Rime Sparse, bequeathing strategies, tropes, and effects to one of the most influential modes of Renaissance self-representation, and allowing the poet ample room to compare the relative merits of visual and verbal figuration. Because Petrarch, as a second Pygmalion, cannot make the picture speak, the speaker's desire for words replaces Ovid's scene of desire for a new and improved woman. Words, not sex, become the focus of the poet's longing: "if only she could reply to my words!" From Petrarch's repression of Ovid's bluntly sexual scene, verbal fetishism is born.26 And so, too, is an imaginary conversation—not between Petrarch and Laura but between Petrarch and Pygmalion ("Pygmalion, how much you must praise yourself for your image . . ."). Laura's muteness, of course, is the necessary condition for this all-male conversation about aesthetic merit. And her silence deeply influenced English Petrarchanism: Barkan recalls Daniel's figure of the "marble breast" and "stony heart" and Marston's distinctly lascivious use of the metaphor. Indeed, the power relations implicit in the convention of the poet pleading with his silent mistress fuel Marston's satire of Petrarchanism: "O that my Mistres were an Image too, / That I might blameles her perfections view,"27

Despite Marston's telling barb about the erotic advantages of female silence, however, and despite Petrarch's rhetorical turn in Sonnet 78 to speak to another male artist about her silence, the distinctions of power implied by such figures as Pygmalion's statue are not absolute in the Rime Sparse. The seemingly silenced female voice does, on occasion, interrupt Petrarchan self-reflection. First, the persona who takes Apollo's story as his own also represents himself as "Echo," exiled by the very language in which he represents his fate. Like Echo or Daphne, the poem's speaker is betrayed by his own speech; in canzone 23 his echoing song angers Laura as Diana, who imprisons the poet in stone (11. 13, 64-66, 138-40). As with both Ovid's and Shakespeare's reflections on male and female voices, Petrarch's trope of echo implicates the fate of one voice in that of another. The male voice leans on various female voices from Ovid's text in order to define itself.28 Echo's may not seem the kind of verbal power an aspiring Apollo would want to claim, since it disrupts any sure sense of intention or origin; yet it remains a kind of power nonetheless. Like Echo, the poet is never able to make his pain "resound" sweetly or softly enough so as to persuade ("né mai in si dolci o in si soavi tempre / risonar seppi gli amorosi guai / che 'I cor s'umiliasse aspro et feroce" [23.64-66]). But such failure finds its Apollonian solace in the aesthetic pleasures of Petrarchan autobiography: "every valley echoes to the sound of heavy sighs which prove how painful my life is" ("et quasi in ogni valle / rimbombi il suon de ' miei gravi sospiri, / ch ' acquistan fede a la penosa vita" [23.12-14]).

Second, though Laura rarely speaks in the Rime Sparse, her few words wield authority. As Diana, she utters the taboo against speaking that subtends the cycle: "make no word of this" ("Di ciò non far parola" [23.74]). Her prohibition enables Petrarch to portray himself as one driven by compulsion to write about what is forbidden. Laura's sentence against his speech becomes, paradoxically, the positive condition for Petrarch's appearance as the speaking subject in exile. Like the undertone in the complaining sound that issues from Syrinx's reed, Laura's spoken taboo is that without which we would not hear Petrarch's voice. Indeed, in the Rime Sparse as a whole, Laura's voice, when heard, carries the force of prohibition or revelation. "Soft, angelic," and "divine" ("in voce . . . soave, angelica, divina" [167.3-4]), it attracts her lover like "the sound of the sirens" ("di sirene al suono" [207.82]). I therefore understand the seeming polarity between male speech and female silence in Petrarch's rendition of the Pygmalion story in light of the larger fantasies about the poet's own symbolic and erotic condition, which give the female voice, though infrequently heard, an unsettling power.29
This voice articulates the specific rhetorical concerns that preoccupy Shakespeare as he transforms this Ovidian-Petrarchan legacy into a figure for the theater. Act 1, scene 2, the scene of rhetorical competition, opens with a brief meditation on the power and limits of a particular speech act: Polixenes complains of the imbalance between "thank you" and the time it takes to say it.

Nine changes of the wat'ry star hath been
  The shepherd's note since we have left our throne
  Without a burthen. Time as long again
  Would be fill'd up, my brother, with our thanks,
  And yet we should, for perpetuity,
  Go hence in debt. And therefore, like a cipher
  (Yet standing in rich place), I multiply
  With one "We thank you" many thousands more
  That go before it.

(1.2.1-9)

Leontes's reply, however, only reopens the debt that Polixenes's "I multiply" was meant to close: "Stay your thanks a while, / And pay them when you part" (11. 9-10). Polixenes's verbal maneuvers open a rhetorically self-conscious play in which Shakespeare continues to test language's power as a mode of action rather than mere vehicle of representation, to search for a kind of voice that can effect the changes of which it speaks. Moreover, the verbal power that Polixenes desires in this scene and Paulina finally stages in the last raises the same question—the question of language's ability to transcend time. As the concluding scene's greater success suggests, Shakespeare asks this question most pointedly through the sound of the female voice—Leontes's less than "tongue-tied" queen and the "boundless tongue" of her faithful Paulina. He does so in such a way, I submit, that the (barely) suppressed undercurrent of illicit sexuality in Polixenes's opening references to nine months and "standing in rich place" comes to define the very notion of time.

Let us examine exactly how this happens. Beginning with Polixenes's desire for words that can discharge a debt—for some kind of verbal action—the play's rhetorical concern is precisely delimited by its often-repeated doublet, "to say" and "to swear." Preoccupied with the inability of any statement to prove Hermione innocent and the concomitant failure of all speech to persuade Leontes of the truth, the first three acts of The Winter's Tale continually present us with this pair, "to say" and "to swear." The doublet appears early: in the first scene of rhetorical and sexual competition, Hermione says of Polixenes, "To tell he longs to see his son were strong; / But let him say so then, and let him go; / But let him swear so, and he shall not stay, / We'll thwack him hence with distaffs" (1.34-37). Similarly, when Leontes charges Hermione directly, "'tis Polixenes / Has made thee swell thus," she responds: "But I'd say he had not; / And I'll be sworn you would believe my saying, / Howe'er you lean to th' nayward" (2.1.61-64). This iterated pair of verbs draws a distinction similar to the one made by J. L. Austin in his theory of the difference between constative and performative utterances, between saying—words that "describe some state of affairs . . . either truly or falsely"—and swearing—words in which to say something is "to do it." In The Winter's Tale oath-taking and swearing faith take on the peculiar urgency of futility, since neither utterances that aspire to state the truth nor words conventionally designated as actions exercise any force.

Indeed we might say that this pair, saying and swearing, precisely distinguishes the two halves of the play. In Act 3, Paulina is the first woman whose spoken words command belief: "I say she's dead; I'll swear't. If word nor oath / Prevail not, go and see" (3.2.203-4). Before Paulina's oath no proof or belief attended woman's word. For women, according to Leontes, "will say anything" (1.2.131). After Paulina's oath Leontes views
female speaking differently: "Go on, go on," he says to her, "Thou canst not speak too much" (3.2.214-15). But just as Leontes invokes the evidence of sight without ever having visual proof—Hermione's adultery "lack'd sight only" (2.1.177)—Paulina's imperative makes the "fact" of Hermione's death, like the "fact" of her innocence, a kind of metatheatrical crime: the one thing the audience cannot do is "go and see." The truth of Hermione's body—its innocence and its death—is always held from view; all that remains is the evidence of "word" and "oath." Where neither "word nor oath" allow Hermione to testify to the truth of her innocence, Paulina's oath marks the moment when a woman's words do finally work—but only to testify to a lie. Only a lie—Hermione is dead—establishes the trust in Leontes necessary for her to live as innocent. Only this lie to the audience, moreover, allows Shakespeare the surprise ending of the living statue that claims such powers for the theater. Between Hermione's vain though truthful swearing of innocence and Paulina's successful yet false swearing of death, The Winter's Tale uses the female voice to point beyond truth or falsehood, beyond a conception of language as transparent description. Instead it asks us to consider the effects of language—particularly female language but also theatrical language—in relation to the fugitive truth of the female body and the "old tale" it tells.

In the courtroom scene, saying and swearing come together at the moment of their failing. The oracle, for instance, is truth-telling's last chance. That telling is supposed to be secured by another performative, for the officers, swearing "upon this sword of justice" that they have been "at Delphos, and from thence have brought / This seal'd-up oracle," open it and read: "'Hermione is chaste, Polixenes blameless... Leontes a jealous tyrant,'" and so on (3.2.124, 126-27, 132-34). Leontes merely declares, "There is no truth at all i' th' oracle" (1. 140). But in this scene, it is Hermione's voice in particular that puts performative language on trial by stressing its failure and, at the same time, connecting that failure to the central problem of the play. For her commentary on her own speaking, like Paulina's false oath that Hermione is dead, connects the transformation of language into action with the play's two chief preoccupations: the "truth" of the female body and the effects of theatrical representation. Brought forward to testify, Hermione declares her innocence by commenting on her own inability to speak. She quotes the one performative for which she longs but which, in this context, will not work:

    Since what I am to say must be but that
    Which contradicts my accusation, and
    The testimony on my part no other
    But what comes from myself, it shall scarce
    boot me
    To say, "Not guilty."

(11. 22-26)

Quoting the performative that in her mouth and in this place must misfire, Hermione's meditation on the inefficacy of saying "Not guilty" does two things. First, it constructs Leontes as tyrant for bringing her forth in a courtroom where no words can acquit her. Commenting on her own inability to speak, Hermione claims that her predicament, viewed by a higher, divine witness, "shall make / False accusation blush, and tyranny / Tremble at patience" (11. 30-32). The necessary misfiring of Hermione's "Not guilty" becomes the verbal event that marks Leontes, against his hopes, as "tyrannous" (1. 5). Second, Hermione's meditation on the necessary failure of her "Not guilty" recalls an earlier "Not guilty." This one is first spoken offstage, but it defines the time of the play as the fallen time of sexuality. In Act 1, Polixenes remembers a prelapsarian idyll of male bonding. Of his boyhood friendship with Leontes he remarks,

    We were as twinn'd lambs that did frisk i' th' sun,
    And bleat the one at th' other. What we chang'd

877
Was innocence for innocence; we knew not
The doctrine of ill-doing, nor dream'd
That any did.

(1.2.67-71)

Had this edenic state continued, he claims, "we should have answer'd heaven / Boldly, 'Not guilty'; the imposition clear'd, / Hereditary ours" (11. 73-75). In the decidedly less than innocent time of the play, "Not guilty," though boldly declared, will not clear "the imposition." Instead the immediate action of a prelapsarian performative is nullified by the sight of the female body:

HERMIONE By this we gather
You have tripp'd since.

POLIXENES O my most sacred lady,
Temptations have since then been born to 's:
for
In those unfledg'd days was my wife a girl;
Your precious self had then not cross'd the eyes
Of my young playfellow.

(11. 75-80)

Like Leontes's suspicious interpretation of her pregnancy, of course, Polixenes's comments on Leontes's fall from innocence mark Hermione's body as a sign of transgression. But the echoing of "Not guilty" across the play turns the female voice, too, into another mark of transgression. For the possibility of saying a "Not guilty" that performs the action of absolution belonged to a world without women. When young men answered to heaven, there was no human convention to be violated and so deprive these words of efficacious action. With a language so natural as that of lambs bleating, heaven automatically witnesses and ratifies all performatives; the one who enters a plea simultaneously delivers his own verdict. Between the two very different circumstances for saying "Not guilty," Shakespeare defines the play's time as one of broken linguistic conventions—conventions broken, moreover, around the question of sexual guilt. Turning what Shoshana Felman calls the scandal of the "speaking body" into the scandal of the speaking maternal body, Shakespeare sets The Winter's Tale in a time when woman's performative "Not guilty" cannot act.  

The failure of Hermione's "Not guilty" is implicit in Austin's definition of the performative. As Felman demonstrates of Austin's work, the performative is "defined only through the dimension of failure." That failure is, however, not simple; it produces further effects. If the conventional rules governing a performative utterance are not in effect—if, as Austin writes, when we say "I do" in a marriage ceremony, "we are not in a position to do the act because we are, say, married already"—that does not mean that "I do" will be "void or without effect." Instead, "lots of things will have been done": for instance, "we shall most interestingly have committed the act of bigamy." What other effects, then, follow from Hermione's meditation on the impossibility of saying "Not guilty"? As we have already seen, the inevitable misfiring of her "Not guilty" turns Leontes's court into a mockery, the ruse of a tyrant who has already determined the verdict. Within the fictions of the play and of Leontes's justice, Hermione's refusal to enter a plea defines, by rhetorical means, the extent of the king's tyranny.

But more radically still, the self-reflexivity that defines all performatives reminds us, suddenly, that we are not only in the mock courtroom of a tyrant. We are also in the mock courtroom of a play. Of such a fictive situation, Austin observes that "a performative utterance will . . . be m a peculiar way hollow or void if said by an actor on the stage." I do not cite Austin's observation here in order to endorse his distinction between a
"non-serious" theatrical use of language and a "serious" or "ordinary" use of language. Jacques Derrida, Barbara Johnson, and Shoshana Felman have amply demonstrated that such a distinction is untenable. But each of these critics argues, as well, that Austin's failed distinction is extremely revealing. When Austin writes that something "peculiar" is at work onstage or in a poem, his choice of words reminds us that his work is "often more fruitful in the acknowledgment of its impasses than in its positions." I recall Austin's unsuccessful distinction, rather, because of the considerable theoretical work on the status of the speaking subject which it has enabled. For Derrida, Austin's attempt to exclude "non-ordinary" poetic or theatrical language from his theory of performative action turns on a foundational belief in consciousness or intention: "the conscious presence of the intention of the speaking subject in the totality of his speech act." Derrida argues that this exclusion allows Austin to avoid acknowledging the "general citationality" or "general iterability" that is the "risk" or "failure" internal to all performative intentions—their "positive condition of possibility." It is not that the "category of intention will disappear," only that intention will no longer "govern the entire scene and system of utterance": "the intention animating the utterance will never be through and through present to itself and its content." Derrida therefore argues that an "absence of intention" is "essential" to performative utterances; and he calls such absence the performative's "structural unconscious.". In *The Literary Speech Act*, Felman elaborates the full psychoanalytic resonance of such a phrase, discussing the consequences of the performative's "structural unconscious" for her understanding of the condition of the speaking subject. Reading Austin together with Lacan, she rephrases Lacan's "deliberately superficial" notion of the unconscious in terms of a poststructuralist theory of the failure necessary to performatives. "It is precisely from the breach in knowledge . . . that the act takes its performative power: it is the very knowledge that cannot know itself, that [in the speaking subject] acts."

In order to specify what such a definition of the "structural unconscious" of performative utterances means for Hermione's courtroom speech, we must remember one further comment about what Austin finds so "peculiar" in a performative uttered onstage. As Barbara Johnson succinctly puts it, when Austin tries to distinguish between ordinary language and theatrical language for the purposes of his theory, he is "objecting not to the use of the verb but to the status of its subject." For in a poem or on the stage, "the speaking subject is only a persona, an actor, not a person." A theatrical performative is "peculiar" insofar as it reveals how all performatives put personae in place of persons. It reminds us that the necessity of speaking in *persona*—intrinsic to the conventionality of all performatives—opens up a difference within the speaker. Johnson evokes *Hamlet* to illustrate her point: "the nonseriousness of a performative utterance 'said by an actor on the stage' results, then, not from his fictional status but from his duality, from the spectator's consciousness that although the character in the play is swearing to avenge his dead father's ghost, the actor's own performative commitments lie elsewhere."

In the case of the trial scene in *The Winter's Tale*, Shakespeare presents us with an escalating succession of performatives. The series opens with the somber tones of an indictment that, because it is uttered in a play, divides its speaker from himself: "Hermione, queen to the worthy Leontes, . . . thou art here accused and arraigned of high treason, in committing adultery," and so on (3.2.12-14); the messengers follow suit, swearing that they have fetched the oracle and left it unopened ("All this we swear" [1. 130]). And it culminates in an oracular message that should provide the last word by enacting the verdict it announces. In the case of Hermione, who explains why she can and will not utter the words "Not guilty," the play's rhetorical move here is pointedly and internally citational: she repeats Polixenes's phrase, thereby reminding us that he, in turn, was quoting a conventional utterance despite the fantasy of his youth as an originary moment prior to language. Hermione's quotation, then, makes us uncertain of the status of the subject who is giving her voice to these deeply conventional words by elaborately refusing to say them. The conceit of her impossible "Not guilty" tells us that "Hermione" is at once a (persuasive) character terribly wronged by her doubting husband and an actor "whose own performative commitments lie elsewhere." Hermione evanescently evokes the action her words cannot achieve if uttered, reminding us that this is so, in part, because we are listening to an actor speak in a play. Hermione's words do pass into action but not the act she intended and certainly not the one that the character "Hermione" could know. What she knows—that these
words will fail—and what she does—reveal herself through these words as an actor playing a falsely accused Hermione—do not coincide.

Hermione protests that she has been "proclaim'd a strumpet" and "hurried / Here to this place, i' th open air" to proclaim innocence in vain (11. 104-5, my emphasis). It is "here" in "this place" that Hermione puts "Not guilty" in quotation marks. Her deictics refer us, within the fiction, to Leontes's mock courtroom. As if underlining the self-reflexive nature of performative utterances, however, they also refer us to the story's frame—to the "here" and now of "this" stage on which Hermione speaks. The disjunction or misfiring that happens in "this place" of the theater is what Felman might call the unconscious action of The Winter's Tale, a "knowledge that cannot know itself and therefore hollows out the speaking subject, Hermione, from within her own voice. Further still, Felman's psychoanalytic view of the import of theatrical performatives suggests that we must examine the relation between the play's unsettling rhetorical performance and its story of sexuality. I have argued that Hermione's "Not guilty," echoing Polixenes's "Not guilty," colors the entire question of performative misfiring through Leontes's obsession with female sexual guilt; only in the prelapsarian world inhabited by male twins do plea and verdict coincide. But if we read Hermione's rhetoric in light of the material conditions of the theater for which her lines were written—the here and now of the English transvestite theater—we are confronted with a division within the speaking subject called Hermione that is peculiar indeed. We are reminded not merely that Hermione is an actor, but that the voice speaking these lines was that of a boy-actor playing a falsely accused wife and mother. Leontes's suspicions may reduce Hermione's tongue to her body; similarly, the story attached to the two versions of "Not guilty" may define Hermione's voice through a story about the necessary link between the female body and sexual guilt. But the material practice of the English Renaissance stage, to which the rhetoric of Hermione's speech also refers, would tell a far different story about Hermione's body, one in which the alleged difference between two sexes is in fact a difference within one. The hollowness or duality of "her" voice, then, mirrors a division internal to the play's representation of gender. That is, the metatheatrical echo implicit in the performative and Hermione's deictics reminds us, as I suggested at the opening of this essay, that Shakespeare's representation of a "female" voice—what it can or cannot say and what effects it achieves—is a dramatic trope. It is, quite literally, a "travesty" of womanhood, a femininity-effect rather than a revelation of anything essential to what it continues to call the "female" tongue.

We might understand the tropological status of what counts as female in this play in one further way. As we have seen, what Felman calls an unconscious "breach in knowledge" is marked by the misfiring of "Not guilty." The precise content of this phrase will not let us forget that for Shakespeare a specific sexual story deeply informs what might otherwise seem a strictly rhetorical failure. Indeed, Felman's discussion of the affinities between Austin and Lacan suggests something further about the mysterious female body in The Winter's Tale. Through its constant meditation on the failures of its own language to reveal the truth or to act as intended, the play turns the secret of "female" sexuality—the question raised by Hermione's pregnancy—into what Lacan calls the missed encounter. Disjunction defines the subject's mediated, eccentric relation to "the real." One might say of the play's relation to Hermione what Lacan says of the speaking subject's relation to the real: "Misfiring is the object." On such an understanding of the discursive limits to knowledge, we might comprehend what Stanley Cavell aptly calls Leontes's skeptical "annihilation of the world" in other terms—as the vanishing of the maternal body before the joint pressure of language and of fantasy. That is, Shakespeare is exploring the (Cartesian) problem of radical doubt by representing a specific body—the maternal body—as the privileged object that resists the play's knowledge and its verbal action. A psychoanalytic perspective, moreover, reminds us that it is not a philosopher's idea about a deceptive, malignant deity but a husband's idea about a deceptive, pregnant wife which sets the process of skeptical annihilation in motion. Foundational to the way the play rhetorically defines the limits of knowledge, the female body remains, nonetheless, forever fugitive.
III. "BE STONE NO MORE"

The literary figure to whom Shakespeare turns to explore such a vexed relation to the world is Ovid's Pygmalion. For both skepticism and projection join hands to fashion Leontes's misery (e.g., "Your actions are my dreams"). On David Ward's persuasive argument for retaining the punctuation of the First Folio and for remembering the contemporary meaning of "coactive" as "coercive" or "compulsory" (and not merely "acting in concert"), Leontes's speech about "affection" is stressing "the coercive nature of affection," its "action upon the 'nothing' it generates in the imagination" (as Ward parses it, "Affection . . . Thou . . . Communicat'st with dreams . . . With what's unreal: thou co-active art, / And fellow'st nothing") In addition, it is through Ovid's Orpheus-Pygmalion sequence—particularly as given the influential contours of Petrarchan linguistic self-consciousness—that Shakespeare can explore the subject's missed relation to that (maternal) object not as a process of doubting alone but as a meditation on the simultaneously productive and aberrant effects of rhetoric—on language conceived not merely as a representation of the world but as a mode of action in the world. As I suggested above concerning Hermione's vain yet truthful swearing of innocence and Paulina's successful yet false swearing of death, such action, precisely by distinguishing the two halves of the play, turns the relation between the subject and the world of which it speaks into a recurrent misfiring. On the one hand, neither saying nor swearing reestablishes the faith in Leontes required for Hermione to live as herself, outside Leontes's "dreams" or beyond the "language" of male fantasy she "understands not." And on the other, when Paulina's words do have effect, they do their work through a lie. That such misfirings as these or Hermione's impossible "Not guilty" are inaugurated by the mere sight of her pregnant body or the sound of her voice I understand as the symptom of a deeply entrenched—though not necessary or inevitable—collusion between the representational and libidinal economies of patriarchal culture.

When the truth of Hermione is the object of representation, representation fails, drawing attention to the opacity of language rather than the clarity of truth. And when Hermione speaks, something happens that she does not intend: though she intends to persuade Polixenes to stay, her words trigger Leontes's jealousy; though she intends to speak of her innocence, her speech about the failure of "Not guilty" in her case declares her an actor and the scene the space of the theater. That a failed performative still has power to act despite having dislocated language's action from intention becomes vividly clear when the scene ends. For this self-reflexively theatrical trial produces further unintended effects. We hear that Mamillius, "with mere conceit and fear / Of the Queen's speed" in this staged trial, has died (3.2.144-45). And the report of his death becomes, in turn, words with the power to kill: "This news is mortal to the Queen" (1. 148). Hermione's unintended act—the "Not guilty" that produces the effect of theatricality—and the lethal effects that attend the play's reflection on its own fictive enactment darkly underline Shakespeare's attempt to evoke consciously and artistically controlled theatrical effects through Paulina's staging of Pygmalion's statue. That story works through yet another woman's voice to rein in the action of a now-benign theater in which language appears to perform the act it intends: "Music! awake her! . . . descend; be stone no more" (5.3.98-99).

Paulina's imperative to the statue, we should note, is not literally a performative utterance. Rather, her command represents an idea about language as performance. Shakespeare inherits this idea from Ovid's Orpheus and calls it "magic": the dream of a voice so persuasive that it can effect the changes of which it speaks. It is the dream of a language that, when it acts, "fills up" the grave, makes good our debt to time. Paulina's spectacle of Hermione-as-statue offers more than a meditation on the desire to see in the theater: it becomes a visual analogue for the play's desire for a truly performative language. The long-awaited verbal event—signaled by such performatives as "Not guilty," the incessant taking of oaths, and the search for oracular truth—finds its culminating visual icon in the event of Hermione's "animation." Drawing on verbal
and visual fictions, Shakespeare nonetheless accentuates the power of the voice in Paulina's heavily weighted moment of invocation and, eventually, in the muchdesired event of Hermione's speech. Although Leontes declares himself content to be a "looker-on" (1. 85), thus inscribing the audience in the theatrical circuit of his desire, and though Paulina apologizes for the effects of the "sight of my poor image" (1. 57), what everyone waits to hear is Hermione's voice. As the doubters in Paulina's audience demand, "If she pertain to life let her speak too" (1. 113) and "Ay, and make it manifest where she has liv'd, / Or how stol'n from the dead" (11. 114-15). The scene, however, both claims and disavows the Orphic power for which it longs. Availing itself of a language at once oral and visual, this theater seems to "steal" Hermione, like Eurydice, "from the dead." At the same time, we hear a warning, through Paulina, that the Orphic story of life, were it "told . . . should be hooted at / Like an old tale" (11. 116-17).

The acts that words do in the courtroom scene exceed intention and, by so doing, turn the theater into the space of these unpredictable effects. The final scene attempts to control verbal action through Paulina's careful stage management, her magically effective voice. Yet such an attempt may all too easily recall Leontes's disastrous desire to master the world by controlling all language. It therefore does not go unqualified. On the one hand, when Paulina proclaims "descend; be stone no more," a woman's successful voice in The Winter's Tale appears to replace Pygmalion's successful prayer to Venus in the Metamorphoses. On the other, just as Hermione once reminded her husband that even his own language exceeds his control, so now her voice is the one to remind us that the play's seeming animation is only a fiction. Despite the ruse of death, she has "preserved" herself somewhere else (1. 127). Hermione, moreover, says nothing to the man who now longs to hear her speak. She seems poised to speak to him—"Still methinks / There is an air comes from her. What fine chisel / Could ever yet cut breath?" (11. 77-79)—but does not. Leontes's lines should remind us that throughout the Metamorphoses "breath" is the etymological root for Ovid's interest in speaking voices and poetry as "song": Apollo's "breath," the "wind" streaming through Daphne's hair, and the Orphic "vox" telling the story of the statue's animation all derive from the narrator's fascination with the vicissitudes of speech, with the uneasy relationship between voice and mind. For the anima in animation—meaning "the mind," "consciousness," and "breath"—is derived from the Greek anemos for "wind" internal and external to the body.50 In this image of the chisel that can "cut breath," Leontes signals his, and the play's, desire for a rhetoric of animation, for a theatrical version of the "Taura" or "breeze" that blows through the figures of the Rime Sparse or the "breath" that Ovid asks the gods to bestow on his song (1.1-3).

What Hermione does and does not say in this scene tells us something about the cost of that desire. Given the gendered relations of power passed down through literary history as the "air" that seems to "come from her," very much indeed hangs on Hermione's voice. I take the fact of Hermione's silence toward Leontes—and the fact that, after she moves, Leontes never asks her a direct question—to be Shakespeare's way of acknowledging the problems raised by her voice in the first three acts. Nothing she says to Leontes diminishes the force of his projections; the language she "understand[s] not" limits the field of her possible responses; and any answer she makes must still be read by him, a reading she cannot control. This awareness of the limits that Leontes's fantasy places on the stony lady's possible reply stems, in part, from Shakespeare's understanding that, in Ovid as in Petrarch, the stories of Pygmalion and Narcissus are deeply intertwined.51 Leontes has, of course, always viewed others through the mediating screen of his own form. Observing his son in Act 1, he begins testing his theory about his wife's guilt according to whether or not Mamillius is his mirror: "Looking on the lines / Of my boy's face, methoughts I did recoil / Twenty-three years, and saw myself unbreech'd" (1.2.153-55). Even Leontes's admission of culpability in the final scene, prompted when he gazes on the "statue," surreptitiously imports Narcissus's story into Pygmalion's. Repentant though he may be, Leontes still reads Hermione as a version of himself: "does not the stone rebuke me / For being more stone than it?" (5.3.37-38). To Leontes even her stoniness is not "hers." If anything of the world is to return to Leontes that does not stand at the level of his dreams, it cannot do so within the reflexively binary terms proposed by Petrarchan rhetoric. Rather, Paulina's intervention tells us that if Hermione is to be restored to Leontes and not fade away again before the force of fantasy and doubt, it is on the condition that she not respond to his words only, that she not conform utterly to his language and his desire. Therefore a third party
And finally, what Hermione *does* say—precisely not to Leontes but to her lost daughter—offers a telling index of how constraining have been the terms of that address. What Pygmalion loathes, what his phantasmatic love for his *simulacrum* pushes aside, Ovid tells us, is not simply female sexuality but "the female *mind*" ("*menti / femineae*" [X.244-45]). So one final allusion to the *Metamorphoses* tells us something about that mind. Hermione's allusion prompts a question that seems never to occur to Petrarch: what does she want? The shift from Petrarchan autobiography to Shakespearean ventriloquism marks a subtly but crucially different return to Ovidian narrative. In *The Winter's Tale*, Shakespeare animates Petrarchan tropes in order to perform an ethical critique of them, particularly the animating rhetoric of address and its role in Petrarch's story of love and the self. When Shakespeare listens once more to Ovid's female voices, he shifts the emphasis away from the otherness within the self (Petrarch's "exile" of blindness, obsession, and forgetting) to pose, instead, a question: the question of the other's desire. And for a moment that "other"—the Petrarchan stony lady—has something else in mind than "responding" to the speaker whose apostrophe restricts them both ("se *risponder sav esse a ' detti miei! *"). What "moved" Hermione, her last words tell us, were thoughts of Perdita. Turning to a daughter who has already coded herself as Proserpina at the moment of dropping her flowers, Hermione models herself on Ceres as a mother unable to forget her lost, though still living, daughter:

```
Tell me, mine own,
Where hast thou been preserv'd? where liv'd?
how found
Thy father's court? for thou shalt hear that I,
Knowing by Paulina that the oracle
Gave hope thou wast in being, have preserv'd
Myself to see the issue.
```

(5.3.123-28)

Hermione's question to Perdita—"Where hast thou been preserv'd? where liv'd?"—obliquely recalls Ovid's story of violent rape and maternal grief by making her reason for living the hope of reunion with her daughter.

Where the suspicion of female sexual guilt defines the relation between time and language's action in the first half of the play, in this final scene both are redefined by another story—that of rape and maternal grief. Hermione's allusion to Book V of the *Metamorphoses*, of course, echoes the title, place, and time of *The Winter's Tale*. For Ceres's grief over Proserpina's rape brought winter into the world. Golding's translation of that grief brings the story of Ceres closer still to that of the animated statue in Act 5. When the nymph Arethusa tells Ceres why her daughter has vanished, Golding renders Ovid's lines as follows: "Hir mother stoode as starke as stone . . . And long she was like one that in another worlde had beene." It is left to Shakespeare's Hermione to return from that "other world" of stone in order to be reunited with her Proserpina. Alongside Pygmalion's prayer and Orpheus's supplicant song, then, we must also remember Ceres's curse. In Ovid's text we find yet another story, often less well remembered, about a voice that can bring about the changes of which it speaks. Orpheus's mother, the muse Calliope, tells us that when Ceres saw Proserpina's girdle floating on the surface of the pool, she "reproached all the lands loudly, calling them ungrateful . . . but *Sicily above all other lands*, where she had found the traces of her loss. . . . She ordered the plowed fields to fail in their trust and spoiled the seed" (11. 474-80). Setting his "old tale" of Leontes's winter in Sicily, Shakespeare invokes but finally turns attention away from the fantasy of the animated statue. He thereby suggests that Pygmalion's self-reflexive fantasy so narrowly constricts female speech that there is, quite literally, *nothing* Hermione can say. Yet by recalling Proserpina's rape and Ceres's powerful reproach, he grants her voice a different authority. Her last words to Perdita fleetingly testify to the violence against the female body that subtends such "old" and "sad" tales as that of an animated statue or the first appearance of
Female voices in *The Winter's Tale* acquire an oblique but telling power: the power to point out that, in the Ovidian tradition, stories about poetic authority, creativity, or "voice," however purely "poetic" their claims may seem, nonetheless entail violence against the female body. Not necessarily conscious, that violence continues to emerge in the unlikely circumstance of metapoetic or metatheatrical reflection. Challenging Ovidian-Petrarchan tropes for male vocal power when they thwart Leontes's desire to control speech, the tongues of Hermione and Paulina recall Ovid's rhetorically self-conscious narratives of rape, misogyny, and female vengeance that form the background for Orpheus's descent into the underworld. When Shakespeare returns to Ovidian narrative in this play, therefore, he reminds us that if we isolate Pygmalion's story from Orpheus's, or Proserpina's from Ceres's, we fail to notice the ethical dilemmas woven into the very fabric of Ovid's rhetorical self-consciousness in the *Metamorphoses*. Investigating the causes and effects of rhetorical speech through these seemingly disparate figures, and inviting reflection on the connections between language and sexuality proposed by their interwoven stories, Shakespeare reveals the cost to women of Ovid's foundational tropes for poetic authority. It is in the voices of Hermione and Paulina that we catch something of the sound of that cost. In their voices *The Winter's Tale* stages a cautionary story about the uncanny returns of cultural inheritance, one that attests to the often unconscious—yet no less lethal—consequences of representing such things as love, voice, and beauty in the Ovidian tradition.

A number of colleagues read and commented on this essay with care and acuity. I would like to thank them here: Ian Duncan, Kevin Dunn, Richard Halpern, William Jewett, Wayne Koestenbaum, Larry Manley, Jeff Nunokawa, Patricia Rosenmeyer, and Katherine Rowe. I owe the inaugural idea for this essay to a conversation several years ago with David Marshall.

**Notes**


3 How to read Hermione's silence has been an important question in much criticism of *The Winter's Tale*.


4 For an overview, see Barkan, *The Gods Made Flesh: Metamorphosis & the Pursuit of Paganism* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale UP, 1986). As Barkan comments of "Diana and Actaeon," Titian turns Ovid's story of Actaeon's visual transgression into a painting that comments on the act of looking at a painting. Actaeon, poised "on the threshold," lifts a curtain to gaze on Diana; therefore "the bath almost becomes a picture within a picture. The result is a powerful identification between the viewer and Actaeon as both participate in the visual, the voyeuristic, and the visionary" (200-201). One could make similar comments about the resonance between Petrarch's many allusions to Ovid's stories about the human voice and the characteristic fiction that a lyric poem is a spoken utterance—particularly in light of its favored trope, apostrophe. Such aesthetically self-reflexive allusions to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* are not a purely "Renaissance" phenomenon. On Dante's poetically self-conscious appropriations of Ovidian narrative, for example, see Rachel Jacoff and Jeffrey T. Schnapp, eds., *The Poetry of Allusion: Virgil and Ovid in Dante's "Commedia"* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1991).
5 Barkan, "Living Sculptures," 660.

6 Sonnets 77 and 78. For further discussion of the relationship between Ovid's version of Pygmalion and Petrarch's, see my "Embodied Voices: Petrarch Reading (Himself Reading) Ovid" in Desire in the Renaissance: Psychoanalysis and Literature, Valeria Finucci and Regina Schwartz, eds. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1994), 120-45.

7 I have here modified the translation of Robert M. Durling in Petrarch's Lyric Poems: The Rime sparse and Other Lyrics (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard UP, 1976) to capture the rhetorically specific sense of the verb lodare, "to praise." Elsewhere in this essay translations of Petrarch are Durling's. Barbara Johnson distinguishes between the two apostrophes in Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" in a way that is useful for reading Petrarch's two sonnets: the first, emotive "if only" lays stress on the first person, and the second, vocative "Pygmalion" on the second person. The typography of Shelley's poem marks this difference as one between "oh" and "O," a difference Johnson allies with the one between Roman Jakobson's emotive function, or "pure presencing of the first person," and his conative function, or "the pure presencing of the second person" (Johnson, A World of Difference [Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins UP, 1987], 187).


10 Quotations of the Metamorphoses follow the text translated and edited by Frank Justus Miller (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1927), though I have made a few silent emendations to Miller's translations.


12 The association between the stories of Orpheus and Eurydice and Apollo and Daphne is commonplace. The most influential Renaissance commentator on Ovid's poem, Raphael Regius, claims that Orpheus is Apollo's son, adding that the singer received his lyre from Apollo as a gift (Metamorphoses [Venice, 1556], X.1). The first edition of Regius's commentary appeared in 1492.

13 Despite the frequent representation of polymorphous desires in the Metamorphoses, Ovid's narrative almost always brings homoerotic moments such as this one back into the orbit of a controlling heterosexual imperative. Thus Iphis's love for Ianthe, which immediately precedes the story of Orpheus, is refracted through a missing penis; the phallus becomes the sign, therefore, that the love of one woman for another is "more mad" than the love of a woman for a bull (IX.668-797). Similarly, although Orpheus may be the "author" of love for boys, that love is represented as the effect of, and only in relation to, his love for his dead wife; the jury of avenging Bacchic women in Book XI then judge his love again as merely the sign of his feelings about women. Because of this frame (and its repetition in the hands of Pygmalion, Orpheus's surrogate), the song in Book X about the many kinds of transgressive love has little to say about male-male eroticism on its own terms.

Leontes signals an awareness of this punitive possibility. But he does so in the domestic register, containing the threat no sooner than uttered: "Chide me, dear stone, that I may say indeed / Thou art Hermione; or rather, thou art she / In thy not chiding; for she was as tender / As infancy and grace" (5.3.24-27).


For a history of this misogynist tradition, see Barbara Rico's "From 'Speechless Dialect' to 'Prosperous Art': Shakespeare's Recasting of the Pygmalion Image," Huntington Library Quarterly 48 (1985): 285-95. Except for the two works I discuss here—the last act of The Winter's Tale and Petrarch's paired sonnets (77 and 78)—the Pygmalion story is generally not a positive one in the Middle Ages or the Renaissance. Misogynist diatribes inform it, and the story of prostitution, too, clings to it: John Marston uses Pygmalion to adjudicate between the "wanton" and the "obscene" (252), and George Pettie's A Petite Pallace (London, 1586) alludes to the story of the statue in overtly misogynist ways. Jonathan Bate, in a book otherwise dedicated to tracing the minutiae of Ovid's presence in Shakespeare's poetry, oddly dismisses the relevance to The Winter's Tale of the misogynist genealogy in Ovid (Shakespeare and Ovid [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993]).

It seems to me no accident that the artist Shakespeare chose for his Pygmalion, Giulio Romano, was known not only as a painter but as a pornographer. The nature of Shakespeare's reference to Romano has been much debated. For a useful summary of the debate as well as an account of a contemporary English conduct book for young women which refers to the excellent work of "Iules Romain," see Georgianna Ziegler, "Parents, Daughters, and 'That Rare Italian Master': A New Source for The Winter's Tale, " Shakespeare Quarterly 36 (1985): 204-12. For Romano's notorious, if rarely seen, collaboration with Aretino (the so-called posizioni), see David O. Frantz, Festum Voluptatis: A Study of Renaissance Erotica (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1989), 46-48 and 119-23; and Frederick Hartt, Giulio Romano (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1958), 29. As Hartt points out, Romano's prints, though suppressed, were also widely copied and widely destroyed; Frantz notes that when Perino del Vaga and Agostino Carracci imitated Romano, they did so in an Ovidian vein, calling their own versions of the "posizioni" the "loves of the gods" (123). It is the rumor of Romano's work, rather than an actual copy in England, that seems to me important to Shakespeare's reference.


For a persuasive reading of the way language violates Philomela as surely as her rape—particularly Ovid's meditation on the severed "lingua" (both tongue and language more generally)—see Elissa Marder's recent "Disarticulated Voices: Feminism and Philomela," Hypatia 7 (Spring 1992): 148-66. My claim about Medusa lies outside the scope of this essay; I take up her story in greater detail in my next book, The Rhetoric of the Body in Renaissance Ovidian Poetry.

Figura signifies in both grammatical and rhetorical registers and designates the material aspects of writing as well. It can specify a written symbol or character or refer to the form, spelling, or grammatical inflection of a Latin word; it is also a rhetorical term for trope.

23 [F]igura, definition 11, OLD, 1:700.

24 Here we should remember that, according to Ovid, Medusa became the Gorgon because she was raped, and her beheading produced the fountain of poetry. Pegasus arose from the Gorgon's blood, and the Heliconian fountain, in turn, arose from the "beating of his feet" (both the horse's feet and the feet of poetic meter). The origin of poetry's fountain is therefore "the blood of the mother," the raped Medusa ("vidi ipsum materno sanguine nasci . . . est Pegasus huius origo / fontis" [V.259-63]).

25 For an analysis of the role that bodies—especially female bodies—play in the relationship between desire and "the drive to know" in modern narrative, see Peter Brooks, Body Work: Objects of Desire in Modern Narrative (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard UP, 1993). Leontes's devotion to speaking about the fantasized "truth" of Hermione's body might usefully be considered part of what Brooks calls "epistemophobia," a project in which we tell stories "about the body in the effort to know and to have it" and which results "in making the body a site of signification—the place for the inscription of stories—and itself a signifier, a prime agent in narrative plot and meaning" (5-6).

26 I adapt the phrase "verbal fetishism" from John Freccero ("The Fig Tree and the Laurel: Petrarch's Poetics" in Literary Theory/Renaissance Texts, Patricia Parker and David Quint, eds. [Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins UP, 1986], 20-32, esp. 22). My understanding of the nature of fetishism in Petrarch and the literary filiation from which it derives differs from Freccero's and is outlined in my "Embodied Voices."

27 Marston, 246.

28 Petrarch uses both female and male Ovidian characters to suggest that he is alienated from his own tongue; the story of Actaeon, as well as of Echo and Daphne, appears in canzone 23 for this purpose. For further comment on Actaeon, see my "Embodied Voices." As we have seen, Ovid no sooner proposes the story of male poetic control over language than he dissolves it; this dissolution subverts Petrarch's poetic self-portrait. Although Ovid and Petrarch after him suggest that alienation from one's own tongue is the condition of having a voice—male or female—in both poets the trope of a female voice appears strategically, as the place in the text where one can hear the greatest strain on such cherished illusions about artistic vocal power as those proposed by Apollo, Pan, Pygmalion, and Orpheus. It is the diacritical function of the female voice, its ironic juxtaposition to such ostensibly "male" fantasies, that is important for understanding Shakespeare's representation of the tongues of Hermione and Paulina.

29 Heather Dubrow has recently argued that we must attend carefully to the complex and often contradictory role of Laura's voice if we are to understand the "relationship among speech, power, and gender" in the Rime Sparse and beyond; see her Echoes of Desire: English Petrarchism and its Counterdiscourses (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell UP, 1995), 40-48, esp. 42.

30 J. L. Austin, How to do things with Words, ed. J. O. Urmson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), 1 and 6. Austin lists swear (along with such other verbs as promise, give my word, pledge myself) as part of a class of "commissive" performatives in which conventional phrases are deployed to "commit the speaker to a certain course of action" (156-57). Over the course of his lectures, Austin renders problematic his "provisional" performative/constative distinction; he eventually rejects any absolute dichotomy between the two, finding that constatives may well have a performative aspect (91). My point here is simply to note that in The Winter's Tale, Shakespeare is exploring a distinction analogous to Austin's provisional one—between statements that report some state of affairs truly or falsely (in this case, the "state of affairs" in question being Hermione's fidelity) and other, conventional statements (such as "I swear") in which saying and doing explicitly converge. For a study of performatives in Shakespeare with an emphasis on cultural and institutional authority, see Susanne L. Wofford, "To You I Give Myself, For I Am Yours": Erotic Performance and Theatrical Performatives in As You Like If in Shakespeare Reread: The Texts in New Contexts, Russ McDonald, ed.
Since, unlike the audience, the characters in the story can "go and see" the dead body of Hermione, Paulina's lie is dramaturgically more complicated than my presentation of it. Leontes describes scenes that the audience does not observe, and his words give playgoers every reason to believe that he will verify for us the fact of Hermione's death: "Prithee bring me / To the dead bodies of my queen and son. / One grave shall be for both. . . . Once a day I'll visit / The chapel where they lie, and tears shed there / Shall be my recreation. . . . Come, and lead me / To these sorrows" (3.2.234-43). Critics have argued that these lines, coupled with Antigonus's report in 3.3 of the appearance of Hermione's spirit, suggest that when Shakespeare wrote Act 3, he still intended to follow his source, in which the dead wife does not return. Whatever Shakespeare's intentions, the play's refusal to clear up ambiguities about Hermione's possible death and resurrection provides a compelling link between the play and the Orpheus/Eurydice story.


Analyzing performative language in relation to the stories of Don Juan and of Oedipus, Felman's work is equally telling for the central dilemma of *The Winter's Tale*: the relationship between theatrical representation and the female body or, more generally in Ovidian narrative, between body and voice. Felman writes that "the problem of the human act," in psychoanalysis as well as performative analysis, "consists in the relation between language and body . . . because the act is conceived . . . as that which problematizes at one and the same time the separation and the opposition between the two. The act, an enigmatic and problematic production of the speaking body . . . , breaks down the opposition between body and spirit, between matter and language" (94). She reminds us of Austin's comment that "in the last analysis, doing an action must come down to the making of physical movements with parts of the body; but this is about as true as . . . saying something must . . . come down to making movements of the tongue" (as quoted in Felman, 94).

"If one considers the conventionality of all performative utterances (on which Austin often insists), can it really be said that the chairman who opens a discussion or the priest who baptizes a baby or the judge who pronounces a verdict are persons rather than personae? . . . The performative utterance thus automatically fictionalizes its utterer when it makes him the mouthpiece of a conventionalized authority" (Johnson, *The Critical Difference*, 60). Or one could say, as well, that read rhetorically, the performative utterance may uncover the *theatrical* nature of such "ordinary" social actions.

In light of the duality of Hermione's deictics, we might read the specification "i' th' open air" within historical context as well. The stage in London's earliest commercial theaters projected into a yard and therefore placed actors "i' th' open air." On the physical conditions of London's public amphitheaters and private halls, see Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987), 13-48. Most critics believe the play to have been written for the closed theater of Blackfriars. But a note on the play by Simon Forman tells us that at least one contemporary remembers having seen *The Winter's Tale* performed at the Globe (on 15 May 1611).


Stanley Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge in Six Plays of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987), 193-221, esp. 214. Cavell is, of course, most concerned with Leontes's doubts about his son and his paternity. But in light of Janet Adelman's work on the play, one is led to wonder, when poised between these two powerful essays, why it is the *maternal* body that sparks Leontes's radical doubt. I would add to Adelman's analysis only that it is Hermione's language—the effects of her voice—as well as her body that unsettle her husband's sense of himself. To Cavell's approach, similarly, I would add only that the play explores the action of Leontes's doubt through the action of both language and thought. For the scandal of what cannot be known—the truth about Hermione—turns, as we have seen, into an interrogation of the power and the limits of theatrical representation as well as of two kinds of discourse: saying and swearing.

It is perhaps worth remembering, as Jonathan Bate points out, that Shakespeare's contemporaries understood him to be the inheritor of Ovid. Drawing on the very rhetoric of animation at issue here, Francis Meres observed that "the sweete wittie soule of Ouid liues in mellifluous and hony-tongued Shakespeare" (*Palladis Tamia* [1598], as quoted in *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, G. Gregory Smith, ed. [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1904], 317). For further comment on Renaissance Ovidianism, see Bate, 1-47; and *Ovid Renewed: Ovidian influences on literature and art from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century*, Charles Martindale, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988).

David Ward, "Affection, Intention, and Dreams in *The Winter's Tale*," *Modern Language Review* 82 (1987): 545-54, esp. 552. Ward offers a precise discussion of Leontes's "affection" in relation to sixteenth-century faculty psychology, particularly in medical discourse. Looking at discussions in Hooker and Burton, Ward suggests that with this word Leontes is designating a "disease of the mind" linked to the faculty of the appetite rather than to the will or to reason; for Hooker, affection is both involuntary ("Wherefore it is not altogether in our power") and a desire for the impossible, for "any thing which seemeth good, be it never so impossible" (as quoted in Ward, 546). For Shakespeare, Ovid's combined stories of Pygmalion and Orpheus give a distinctive mythographic and erotic turn to the involuntary aspect of affection (revulsion from womankind out of grief or disgust) and its connotation of a desire for the impossible (for art to conquer death).
See Howard Felperin, "Tongue-tied our queen?": the deconstruction of presence in The Winter's Tale" in Parker and Hartman, eds., 3-18. Although I clearly agree with Felperin's emphasis on the play's consciousness of its own failure to refer, it seems to me that, by framing the question in terms of the possibility that Hermione may be guilty, Felperin participates in the very logic he critiques; his reading repeats what it might otherwise analyze—the question of why language's misfiring should be represented in cognitive terms as the truth or falsity of the maternal body.

Ovid, of course, shared this dream: the final lines of the Metamorphoses claim that the poet will live ("vivant"), his name survive the "gnawing tooth of time" though his body does not ("ne cedax abolere vetustas"), if his poem is "read on the lips of the people" (quot;perque omnia saeculafama" [XV 871-79]). For my understanding of this scene, I am indebted to conversations with Thomas M. Greene on the relationship between poetry and magic. See his essays "The Balance of Power in Marvell's 'Horatian Ode,'" ELH 60 (1993): 379-96; and "Poetry as Invocation," New Literary History 24 (1993): 495-517.

Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott cite Hippocrates for the sense of wind in the body: derived from "-, 'blow, breathe', cf. [Sanskrit], ánī-ti, 'breathes'" (Greek-English Lexicon, 2 vols. [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951], 1:132). The primary meaning of anima is "breath" or "breathing as the characteristic manifestation of life," and it thus connotes "the characteristic or quality whose loss constitutes death" (OLD, 1:132-34). It can also designate "a disembodied spirit, soul, ghost" (132), a hint of which meaning appears, perhaps, when Polixenes asks Paulina to "make it manifest where she has liv'd, / Or how stol'n from the dead" (5.3.114-15). For interesting comments on the ghostly undertone here and at other moments in this scene, see Gross.

Since Ovid handled the scene, the link became one of the mainstays of the tradition. The subjective and objective genitive in Marston's title, "The Metamorphosis of Pigmalions Image," for instance, derives its power from this connection. Thus his Pygmalion is enamored less of the statue than of his own reflection in that statue: "Hee was amazed at the wondrous rarenesse / Of his owne workmanships perfection. . . . And thus admiring, was enamored / On that fayre Image himself e portraied" (245, my emphasis). Pygmalion's resemblance to Narcissus was also central to the representation of the lover in the Roman de la Rose; for an overview, see Louise Vinge, The Narcissus Theme in Western European Literature up to the Early 19th Century (Lund: Gleerups, 1967). I learned to attend to the crucial role that Pygmalion and Narcissus play in the Rime Sparse from Giuseppe Mazzotta (The Worlds of Petrarch [Durham, NC, and London: Duke UP, 1993]).

Golding, too, preserves the detail of Sicily in his translation: "But bitterly aboue the rest she banned Sicilie, / In which the mention of hir losse she plainely did espie" (64'). Understanding Hermione as a second Ceres may tell us why Shakespeare makes an otherwise puzzling change of location. Where Greene begins Pandosto in Bohemia and later moves to Sicily, Shakespeare opens the story of winter in Sicily only to move, in Act 4, to Bohemia's pastoral landscape.

Analysis

Analysis: Places Discussed

*Sicily

*Sicily. Island off the southern tip of the Italian peninsula in which the play opens, with Polixenes, the king of Bohemia, visiting his old friend Leontes, the king of Sicily. In Shakespeare’s time, Sicily had a reputation for crimes of jealousy and revenge that Shakespeare used in this play by having Leontes turn against Polixenes when he suspects that his friend is having an affair with his wife. Leontes’ Sicilian heritage—and the play’s insightful analyses of a jealousy so intense that it is mad—puts in context his irrational behavior in rejecting his pregnant wife Hermione and their son Mamilius. Leontes consults the Greek oracle at Delphi and rejects its judgment against his delusions. Following his son’s death, Leontes finally accepts his guilt and undertakes familiar Christian penances, performed with saintly sorrow. The final scene is in a chapel, in which the statue of the supposedly dead Hermione comes alive in a resurrection that restores lost ones, so that the sad tale for winter has a happy ending.

*Bohemia

*Bohemia. Mountainous inland country that now forms part of the Czech Republic. The play alludes to Bohemia’s having a seacoast, but it is accessible by water only on rivers. Known as a site of romantic adventure in Shakespeare’s time, Bohemia is a place where a bear eats a man shipwrecked in a storm, shepherds care for an abandoned infant, and young love thrives. Shakespeare both moved the pastoral celebration of Arcadia from its southern location to a northern clime bathed in light and made it a realistic sheep-shearing. But the regeneration of this spring/summer festival is marred by the jealousy and wrath of Polixenes, the wronged friend of the opening. When all return to Sicily, where there was “winter/ In storm perpetual,” calm and light come with forgiveness and the promise of fruitfulness in the marriage of Perdita and Florizel.

Analysis: Modern Connections

The Winter’s Tale touches on issues which are as relevant to modern audiences as they were to those of Shakespeare's time. The first issue, the relationship between art and nature, serves as an introduction to a more serious issue, that of the relationship between people who perceive themselves to be of different social classes. The terms of that relationship between art and nature are laid out in the debate between Perdita and Polixenes at the sheep-shearing festival held at the home of the old shepherd. Perdita, who is acting as the hostess of that festival, greets Polixenes and Camillo and gives them flowers. She mentions that the "streak'd gillyvors / (Which some call Nature's bastards)” (IV.iv.82-83) are more appropriate to the season than the flowers she gives them, but she does not plant those gillyvors in her garden, because she feels their variegated colors result from the art of hybridization practiced by human planters, not from nature. Polixenes replies,

Yet Nature is made better by no mean
But Nature makes that mean; so over that art
Which you say adds to Nature, is an art
That Nature makes. (IV.iv.89-92)

Polixenes's argument is that if the nests birds make and the hives bees create are considered natural because nature provides the birds and bees with the instinct to create those nests and hives, why, then, are the things man creates sometimes considered artificial? By Polixenes's reasoning, the human need to create what we call
"art" is an instinctive impulse, and the human artifacts that result from that impulse are natural rather than artificial. There can be, then, no distinction made between art and nature. The final scene of the play, in which the statue of Hermione crafted by the renowned Italian artist Julio Romano comes to life, demonstrates that it is difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish between art and nature. We can understand the attraction this notion would have for Shakespeare, an artist reaching the culmination of his creative career in the writing of the romances.

In today's world, just as in the world of *The Winter's Tale* and in Shakespeare's England, the boundaries of art are hotly debated and similarly blurry. The discussion of what constitutes art today may focus on literature, music, film, architecture, and a variety of other forms of creative expression. What some people consider to be meaningful music or powerful literature, for example, others might consider to be irritating noise or the pretentious scribbling of a hack. There are many views on what artistic expression is or should be.

We need, however, to look at the discussion between Polixenes and Perdita in a different light because their dispute serves as a metaphor that reveals a concern with class distinctions. Polixenes tells Perdita,

You see, sweet maid, we marry  
A gentler scion to the wildest stock,  
And make conceive a bark of baser kind  
By bud of nobler race. (IV.iv.92-95)

Polixenes is willing to concede that something good might come of wedding base and noble kinds of plant life, but, later, he reacts vehemently against the idea of his noble Florizel marrying Perdita, whom he takes to be only the daughter of a base and lowly shepherd. Perdita, on the other hand, argues that different kinds of flowers should remain as they occur in nature and should not be mixed. Yet, as the lowly shepherd girl she believes herself to be, she should be making the botanical argument Polixenes makes, since she hopes to marry her "wildest stock" to the "gentler scion" of Prince Florizel. Concerning humankind, Polixenes seems to embrace the notion that the stock of gentility and nobility should remain pure, but the notion that nobility expresses its inward goodness in its actions is contradicted by several of the characters in the play itself.

These characters, who are of the nobility and from whom we would expect that nobility to show itself in generosity and understanding, engage in actions that are either self-serving or destructive. Antigonus, a Sicilian lord who voices some hesitant resistance to Leontes's harsh treatment of Hermione and his baby girl, nonetheless abandons that baby to the elements and the possibility of death, placing his own safety with the king above the infant's life. Camillo, a Sicilian lord held up as the ideal of service and allegiance, deceives Florizel in order to fulfill his wish to visit Leontes. Leontes exhibits a jealousy and tyrannous willfulness so destructive that it causes the death of his own son and the banishment of his wife and daughter. And Polixenes, in his passionate outburst at discovering Florizel's intention to marry Perdita, appears vicious and vindictive. He threatens to hang the old shepherd thought to be Perdita's father and exclaims to Perdita, "I'll have thy beauty scratch'd with briers and made / More homely than thy state" (IV.iv.425-46).

To complicate matters, when *The Winter's Tale* is read from the vantage point of an allegedly "classless" society, our readings often produce unexpected or ambiguous sympathies. Perdita's shepherd father and brother are promoted to the gentility as reward for having looked after Perdita from her infancy. Their new status does not change them; they are generous with Autolycus, refusing to "lord it" over him. Yet, the new title of "gentlemen" seems somewhat ill-fitting since we have been conditioned to see them as lower-class shepherds. When Polixenes prohibits Florizel from marrying a shepherd's daughter, we may argue against him and assert that Florizel loves her for inner qualities and not for her title. At least intellectually we might do this. Secretly, we perhaps eagerly anticipate the revelation that Perdita is a king's daughter to prove Polixenes wrong.
Bibliography: Bibliography and Further Reading


Gurr, Andrew. "The Bear, the Statue, and Hysteria in The Winter's Tale." Shakespeare Quarterly 34, No. 4 (1983): 420-25. Argues that the scene in which the bear chases Antigonus concludes the tragedy of the first part of the play, and the scene in which Hermione's statue comes to life concludes the comedy of the second half. Gurr compares the scenes and notes that both contain stunning theatrical devices serving to punctuate the different genres as well as to allude to the debate concerning art and nature.


Orgel, Stephen. Introduction to The Winter's Tale, by William Shakespeare pp. 1-83. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996. A comprehensive overview of the play, discussing Shakespeare's mixing of genres; the problematic areas of the play, including its improbabilities; the relation to Jacobean politics; the motivation behind Leontes's actions; Hermione and her trial; the death of Mamillius and Hermione's apparent death; the debate between nature and art; issues related to the pending marriage of Florizel and Perdita; the character of Autolycus; Paulina's role in Hermione's restoration; the statue scene; and the date, early performances of the play, and textual issues.


Pafford, J. H. Introduction to The Winter's Tale, by William Shakespeare, pp. xv-lxxxix. London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1963. A thorough introduction, examining the printing and publication of the original text of the play, issues related to the dating of the play and its authorship; the sources used to compose the play; the relationship of the play to Shakespeare's other final plays; the nature, title, and structure of the play; the plot; themes including good and evil, time, and growth and decay, the primary characters; and the play's style and language.


White, Christine. "A Biography of Autolycus." The Shakespeare Association Bulletin 14, No. 3 (July 1939): 158-68. Analyzes the role of Autolycus in The Winter's Tale, maintaining that while Autolycus has little effect on the plot of the play, he is still a significant character, in that his presence lightens "an otherwise somber play," and he distracts the audience from the improbability of the play's denouement (final resolution).
Wilson, Harold S. "'Nature and Art' in Winter's Tale. IV, iv, 86 ff." The Shakespeare Association Bulletin XVIII, No. 3 (July 1943): 114-20. Examine how the exchange between Polixenes and Perdita in Act IV, scene iv, reflects the historical debate concerning art and nature. Wilson concludes that Shakespeare's thought on the issue "was commonplace both in antiquity and in the Renaissance."

**Media Adaptations**


**Bibliography**


Quotes

**Quotes: "A Snapper-up Of Unconsidered Trifles"**

Context: When all appears gloomy—King Leontes, it seems, has caused the deaths of his wife, his son, and his daughter, and is estranged from his dearest friend, the King of Bohemia—suddenly Autolycus, a vender and ballad-monger, appears, singing a light-hearted ballad about daffodils and spring. Autolycus ends his song and delivers a short soliloquy about himself:

AUTOLYCUS. . .My traffic is sheets; when the kite builds, look to lesser linen. My father named me Autolycus, who being, as I am, littered under Mercury, was likewise a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles. With die and drab I purchased this caparison and my revenue is the silly cheat. Gallows and knock are too powerful on the highway. Beating and hanging are terrors to me. For the life to come, I sleep out the thought of it. . . .

**Quotes: "Daffodils, That Come Before The Swallow Dares"**

Context: Banished by her father, King Leontes of Sicilia, Perdita, her mother falsely imprisoned for adultery with King Polixenes of Bohemia and supposedly dead, is reared by a shepherd in a remote section of Bohemia. Since Florizel, son of Polixenes, has fallen in love with the shepherdess (now sixteen), Polixenes and his trusted aide Camillo go disguised to the shepherd's cottage to see and pass judgment on the object of Florizel's affection. With Arcadian charm Perdita pretends she is giving appropriate flowers to her guests and, coming to Florizel, wishes for him daffodils, violets, primrose, oxlips, and lilies:

PERDITA. . . Now my fair'st friend, I would I had some flowers o' th' spring that might Become your time of day; and yours, and yours, That wear upon your virgin branches yet Your maidenheads growing. O Proserpina, For the flowers now, that frightened thou let'st fall From Dis's wagon; daffodils, That come before the swallow dares, and take The winds of March with beauty; violets, dim, But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes, Or Cytherea's breath; pale primroses, That die unmarried, ere they can behold Bright Phoebus in his strength . . .

**Quotes: "I Am A Feather For Each Wind That Blows"**

Context: King Leontes of Sicilia, falsely accusing his wife, Hermione, great with child, of adultery with his friend Polixenes, King of Bohemia, brutally sentences her to imprisonment. A daughter, born to Hermione in prison, is carried by Paulina, a lady-in-waiting of Hermione and wife of Antigonus, to Leontes with the hope that seeing his baby will cause the jealous monarch to reprieve his wife. Beholding the child, Leontes commands that she be burned to death, but then, weakening, commands Antigonus to bear the baby to some desert and abandon her. Recognizing his indecision, Leontes says:

LEONTESI am a feather for each wind that blows. Shall I live on, to see this bastard kneel, And call me father? Better burn it now, Than curse it then. But be it; let it live. It shall not neither. [To ANTIGONUS.] You sir, come you hither; You that have been so tenderly officious With Lady Margery, your midwife there; To save this bastard's life—For 'tis a bastard, So sure as this beard's gray—What will you adventure To save this brat's life? ANITIGONUS Any thing, my lord, That my ability may undergo, . . .
Quotes: "It Is An Heretic That Makes The Fire Not She Which Burns In It"

Context: Leontes, King of Sicilia, entertains his boyhood friend, Polixenes, King of Bohemia, at his court. Unable to persuade him to remain longer, Leontes urges his wife, Hermione, to persuade Polixenes to do so. She succeeds, but Leontes unreasonably construes their mutual courtesy as guilty intimacy. Obsessed with jealousy, he plots to poison Polixenes, but the would-be victim escapes to Bohemia. Now believing his suspicions confirmed by the flight of Polixenes, Leontes turns on his wife. He proclaims her an adulteress, takes her son from her, and throws her into prison, despite her ripe pregnancy. When a girl is born to the queen, her waiting woman, Paulina, takes the child to the king hoping to soften him. He disavows the child, and when Paulina tells him he is unnatural, he threatens to have her burned. She faces him bravely.

Paulina: I care not. It is an heretic that makes the fire not she which burns in't. I'll not call you tyrant; But this most cruel usage of your Queen—Not able to produce more accusation Than your own weak-hinged fancy—something savours Of tyranny, and will ignoble make you, Yea, scandalous to the world.

Quotes: "Lying Becomes None But Tradesmen"

Context: Perdita, banished to a desert as a bastard by her father King Leontes of Sicilia, is reared by a shepherd in Bohemia. Now sixteen, Perdita is courted by Florizel, son of Polixenes, King of Bohemia and one-time friend of Leontes who falsely accused him of adultery with Queen Hermione of Sicilia. Since Polixenes is incensed at the idea of the marriage of the shepherdess Perdita and his son Florizel, the youth plans to elope with Perdita, disguising himself by exchanging clothes with Autolycus, a vender. Perdita's guardian shepherd, fearing for his life, goes to Polixenes with a bundle, containing evidence of Perdita's royal birth, but he and the clown who accompanies him are accosted by Autolycus:

Autolycus: Your affairs there? What? With whom? The condition of that fardel? The place of your dwelling? Your names, your ages, of what having, breeding, and any thing that is fitting to be known—discover. Clown: We are but plain fellows, sir. Autolycus: A lie; you are rough, and hairy. Let me have no lying. It becomes none but tradesmen, and they often give us soldiers the lie: but we pay them for it with stamped coin, not stabbing steel, therefore they do not give us the lie.

Quotes: "What's Past Help, Should Be Past Grief"

Context: Leontes, King of Sicilia, believes his wife, Queen Hermione, is guilty of adultery with his boyhood friend, Polixenes, King of Bohemia. He publicly proclaims her an adulteress, takes her small son, Mamillius, from her, and throws her into prison. She is pregnant and soon gives birth to a girl. Leontes disowns the child. Brought to trial, Hermione defends herself and declares her fidelity with dignity. Word is brought from the oracle of Delphi that convinces Leontes he has misjudged his wife and Polixenes. But before he can right the wrong, Mamillius, his son, dies of grief at his mother's sufferings. At the news, Hermione swoons, is removed from the court, and her waiting woman, Paulina returns with the news that she, too, is dead. She rails at Leontes with effect, but when rebuked by a lord, is contrite at her behavior.

Paulina: I am sorry for't. All faults I make, when I shall come to know them, I do repent. Alas, I have showed too much The rashness of a woman; he is touched To the noble heart. What's gone, and what's past help, Should be past grief...