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TIME, SEXUAL LOVE, AND THE USES OF PASTORAL IN *THE WINTER'S TALE**

By PETER LINDENBAUM

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)¹

* This essay is a revised version of a paper read at the Newberry Library Renaissance Conference in Chicago, May 9, 1970.
¹ Quotations are from the New Arden Edition of *The Winter's Tale*, ed. J. H. P. Parford (London and Cambridge, Mass., 1963).

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 Winter's 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.² 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).³ Both of these interpretations of the

² *The Winter's Tale: A Study* (London, 1947), p. 104. Other critics who look upon the play as an expression of Christian belief are: J. A. Bryant, Jr., *Hippolytia's View: Some Christian Aspects of Shakespeare's Plays* (Lexington, Ky., 1961), pp. 207-25; and S. R. Navey, "What Shakespeare Did with *Pandosto*: An Interpretation of *The Winter's Tale*," in *Pacific Coast Studies in Shakespeare*, ed. Waldo F. McNeir and Thelma N. Greenfield (Eugene, Ore., 1966), pp. 263-79; Derek Traversi, *Shakespeare: The Last Phase* (New York, 1955), pp. 105-92, gives great emphasis to the use of theological terms in the play, but sees them not as referring to the Christian scheme existing before and independent of the play, but as metaphors used to build up an original "symbolic" pattern in the play; in his view, *The Winter's Tale* embodies a movement from passionate breakdown to reconciliation, a process of maturing from debased human nature to possession of "grace" in the form of civilized social values.

³ For emphasis on parallels between *WT* and fertility myths, see: F. C. Tinkler, "The Win-

ter's Tale"—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.⁴

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

⁴ *WT*, *Scrittivity*, 5 (1937), 344-64 (especially pp. 357-59); E. M. W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's Last Plays* (1938, rpt. London, 1958), p. 46; F. David Hoeniger, "The Meaning of *The Winter's Tale*," *UTQ*, 20 (1950), 11-26; E. A. J. Honigmann, "Secondary Sources of *The Winter's Tale*," *PQ*, 34 (1955), 27-38, suggests further that Shakespeare intentionally reversed the settings of his source, making Perdita's original homeland be Sicily instead of Bohemia, so as to enforce the parallel between her return and that of Proserpina by Pluto. G. Wilson Knight, *The Crown of Life* (1947; rpt. London, 1965), pp. 76-128, tends to combine the Christian and fertility myth readings of the play. He states that "Nature rules our play" (p. 88), and while himself viewing it as "scarcely orthodox," sees the play expressing a "pantheism of such majesty that orthodox apologists may well be tempted to call it Christian" (p. 97).
⁴ Bethell, p. 93; Traversi, pp. 170-72; Knight points with enthusiasm and approval to the "savings after eternity" in the play (p. 120).

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.⁵

When in the second scene of the play Polixenes is asked by Hermione to describe his and Leontes' youth together, he calls upon im-

agery from the pastoral world to convey the particularly ir-ent 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.⁶ With the reference to "stronger blood," he is

⁵ Philip M. Weinstein's recent article, "An Interpretation of Pastoral in *The Winter's Tale*," *SQ*, 22 (1971), 97-109, also emphasizes what he calls "a conflation of realism and symbolism" (p. 97) in the play, and in the sheepshearing scene particularly. In focusing primarily on that scene and the questions it as pastoral raises, Weinstein necessarily touches upon some of the material covered in the present essay, though in quite a different way; the main burden of his argument is to show that "the supreme achievement of the Pastoral Scene [IV.iv] is perhaps its modesty: its status as both idyll and the inadequacy of idyll" (p. 108).

⁶ Palford understands the phrase "the imposition clear'd / Hereditary ours" to mean that the boys would be able "to plead themselves guiltless of all personally-committed sin, that is, of all sin except original sin" (p. 9, n.). He takes "clear'd" to mean "excepted," then. This does not seem to be the easiest or most reasonable interpretation of "clear'd" or of the phrase as a whole. It is much more likely that "clear'd" takes on its more common meaning of "removed," a meaning the word has in legal contexts ("to be cleared of the charges against one"); such a

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

meaning is more consonant with the word's immediate context, which has Polixenes referring to filing a plea of "not guilty" before a judge, albeit an eternal one. I understand the whole phrase to mean, then, that the boys would be pleading "not guilty" to original sin. My reading makes less theological sense than Pafford's does (since it is impossible to plead "not guilty" to original sin), but it is, I believe, precisely because of the theological error in Polixenes' remark that Shakespeare has Hermione catch him up and query him further.

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 that 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 outburst 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 padding 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).⁷ It is not unreasonable to assume that it is the conversation be-

⁷ Despite the attempts of J. Dover Wilson (in his notes to the New Cambridge Edition of *WT*) and Nevill Coghill ("Six Points of Stage-Craft in *The Winter's Tale*," *Shakespeare Survey* 11 [Cambridge, 1958], pp. 31-33) to explain away what critics before them saw as a flaw in the play's dramaturgy—the lack of psychological preparation for Leontes' initial outburst of sexual jealousy—it is difficult to find concrete evidence of Leontes' jealousy before the exchange between Hermione and Polixenes. Leontes has been rather unexpansive since his initial entrance, but the first possible indication of anything troubling him comes in his answer to Hermione's desire to be made as fat as a tame thing and he told when she first spoke to the purpose. In that speech Leontes, using his first notable or striking metaphor in this play, describes his own courtship of Hermione as taking "three crabbed months" which "sourd themselves to death" (102). And this rather discordant metaphor may be only an unsuccessful attempt on Leontes' part to express a lover's impatience with waiting. Indeed, there may be an advantage in having Leontes' jealous outburst come upon us with dramatic suddenness at the "Too hot, too hot" of line 108, as the very suddenness of that outburst would help to emphasize and convey the violence and force of the insanity that has seized Leontes' mind. On the other hand, William H. Matchett, "Some Dramatic Techniques in *The Winter's Tale*,"

between Hermione and Polixenes about the princes' Edenic th, 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.i.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."⁸ 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)

Shakespeare Survey 22 (Cambridge, 1969), pp. 97-98, has argued that although there is little to reveal Leontes as suspicious before line 108, there is much in the early part of I.ii that might well arouse the audience's suspicions. The audience sees a visibly pregnant Hermione enter, quickly learns that Polixenes has been in Sicily for nine months, and then hears what Matchett shows to be a whole series of lines from Polixenes and Hermione which have possible double (and sexual) meaning. While Hermione and Polixenes, being innocent of any sin, cannot themselves have intended this double meaning and while the audience's suspicions subsequently prove to be ill-founded, the effect of Shakespeare having aroused our suspicions is to prepare us for, and hence make dramatically believable, Leontes' outburst of sexual jealousy at line 108.

⁸ *Shakespeare: The Last Phase*, p. 108.

Leontes. 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 "muzz'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.⁹ 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 of 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.¹⁰ 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

⁹ *Shakespeare: The Last Phase*, p. 145.

¹⁰ For these and further parallels, see Ernest Schanzer, "The Structural Pattern of *The Winter's Tale*," *RHL*, 5, No. 2 (1964), 72-82; Edward William Taylor, *Nature and Art in Renaissance Literature* (New York and London, 1964), p. 133, notes that the two pastoral moments in the play balance each other structurally, the first preceding disruption and the second preceding integration.

safer to assume that Polixenes speaks for Leontes as well, while 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" (II.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.¹¹

¹¹ Perdita has more wit than critics usually give her credit for possessing, and this wit appears even in the debate with Polixenes on nature and art, a debate she is generally credited to lose to Polixenes' superior reasoning and logic. But both Polixenes and Perdita are aware of definite flaws and self-defeating implications in Polixenes' argument; for, in attempting to prove that art adds to or betters nature and yet is itself nature's creation, Polixenes discovers that the terms of his argument run counter to his own previously held beliefs:

You see, sweet maid, we marry
A gentler scion to the wildest stock,
And make conceive a bark of baser kind

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 Per-

By but of nobler race. This is an art
Which does mend nature—change it rather—but
The art itself is nature.
(IV.ii.92-97)

Polixenes has come to the sheepshearing least specifically to prevent just such a grafting process as he describes in these lines. That he views the female partner, the one that does the "conceiving," as the baser slip and the other and hence male partner or sion as a "bud of nobler race" is some indication that he has that original intention in mind as he speaks. We can see this further in his qualification and alteration of his wording from "mend" to the more neutral "change" in his last sentence here. He was on his way to saying that the grafted plant would be an improvement upon what nature could produce without man's art, and a plant therefore that man ought to strive to create. When such a conclusion is applied to the analogy of a human marriage, the implication to be drawn is that one ought to favor a match between a noble prince and a base maid. In switching to the word "change," Polixenes backs away from that implication, and ends instead by saying merely that the grafted plant, though an alteration, is fully nature's creation.

Perdita's wit is to be seen in the fact that she picks up Polixenes' near error in using "mend" and turns that error against him. Despite Polixenes' urging, she still refuses to plant gillyvors, a man-made hybrid, and, for purposes of argument and combating Polixenes, she rather cleverly and nicely assumes something which she does not herself believe—that she is the nobler bud, and the disguised Florizel is of baser kind:

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.
(99-103)

It is the "only therefore" of the penultimate line here that marks her response to Polixenes' correction of the word "mend"; she follows up the implication that the mixed or grafted plant is superior to the plant created by nature alone by suggesting that the youth standing next to her, Florizel, might desire to breed by her and thus mend or improve upon nature *only* because they differ—she being painted and he, not so. In suggesting this she has reduced Polixenes' unstated belief in class distinctions to a distinction of being painted or not: she is herself wittily and covertly implying that claims to nobility of blood are artificial, that there is no more to being noble than being painted. Her answer to Polixenes, then, can be seen as an egalitarian statement opposing the aristocratic snobbery he betrayed in shying away from accepting a marriage between a base and noble plant, or human, as equal or superior to a marriage between two of noble race. And her response is by no means the reaction of one who, as Pafford for instance would have it (p. lxxviii), has a "peasant" mind and cannot understand Polixenes' argument.

For a different reading of Perdita's answer to Polixenes, one which looks upon her reference to being painted not (in the way I have done) as a metaphor for talking about claims to nobility of blood, but more straightforwardly as expressing a pastoral objection to any art that conceals reality, see Mary L. Livingston, "The Natural Art of *The Winter's Tale*," *MLQ* 30 (1969), 340-55.

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 of 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.¹² 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)¹³

¹² See, for instance, Pafford in his note to IV.iii.37. My own interpretation of these lines is in agreement with and indebted to the reading of William O. Scott, "Seasons and Flowers in *The Winter's Tale*," *SO* 14 (1963), 412-13.

¹³ The Folio does not give any stage direction for lines 103-108. Pafford, in his note to line

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 Florizel*]
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, frighted, 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 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. (127-32)

103, assumes that the men of middle age are not Polixenes and Camillo, but rather some other guests. But since Camillo has the next speech and since no other guests speak up at this point, it is most reasonable to assume that Perdita has given the flowers of midsummer to Camillo and Polixenes.

one pauses on "or if" most likely because she has in her mind a quick 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 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. (135-46)

G. Wilson Knight has commented 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."¹⁴ 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 unstrain'd shepherd,
With wisdom I might fear, my Doricles,
You woo'd me the false way. (146-51)

¹⁴ *Crown of Life*, p. 120; Hoerniger, p. 12.

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.¹⁵ 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 marrying 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.

¹⁵ Leontes was in that unnatural desire, then, placing himself in much the same position as Macbeth and Lear when the former bid the witches answer him "though the treasure / Of Nature's gems tumble all together, / Even till destruction sicken" (IV.i.58-60) and the latter in his rage on the heath called for Nature's mold to crack and "all germents spilt at once / That makes ingrateful man" (III.ii.8-9).

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 maidenheads 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:

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 ancients, stealing, fighting.... (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 calling 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 (IV.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.

Indiana University

THEMATIC UNITY AND THE HOMOGENIZATION OF CHARACTER

By RICHARD LEVIN

The most common method today for demonstrating the unity of an Elizabethan play is to discover that its component parts are integrated by some "central theme" which it (or its author) is supposed to be "making a statement about" or "exploring." Critics may disagree sharply on the identity of this theme in a particular work—indeed, it is difficult to find one who is entirely satisfied with any of the candidates proposed by his predecessors—but they very rarely disagree on the value of the approach itself, or of the analytical techniques that have grown up around it. One of these techniques I call the homogenization of character, wherein the analysis is directed to proving the essential similarity of all (sometimes "almost all") of the major characters in a play by reducing them to a single category exemplifying the central theme. This is certainly not a necessary consequence of the thematic approach, which can also group the characters into two opposing camps (especially if the theme is to be one of those cosmic dichotomies such as "art versus nature," "good versus evil," etc.) or into various other patterns, but it is now turning up often enough to constitute a significant trend, and raises interesting questions that lead to some of the assumptions underlying the conception of thematic unity.

I am not sure how far back this trend can be traced, but it seems to be related to the critical revolution that got under way on both sides of the Atlantic during the 1930s. The earliest example of it that I can recall is Muriel Bradbrook's commentary on *The Changeling* in *Themes and Conventions of Elizabethan Tragedy* (1935):