

SIN AND PROVIDENCE IN *THE WINTER'S TALE*

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ABSTRACT: *The Winter's Tale* stands out among Shakespeare's last plays in that the sin of the hero is the mainspring of drama. I would like to consider the problem of sin and its relation to providence in the play.

Leontes' jealousy is regarded by his courtier at Sicilian court as sin. It destroys marital relations and disrupts his connection with his childhood friend. He imprisons his wife on a charge of adultery.

In the midst of the trial, Apollo's oracle is read out. It declares Leontes to be guilty, and the baby to be his child. It concludes with a prophecy: "... the king shall live without an heir, if that which is lost be not found". Whereas in Greene's *Pandosto* the King at once accepts the oracle, Leontes rejects it, directly offending against god. In no time comes the news of his son's death. It shakes him from his foundation, making him realize his sin. It also shocks Hermione into a dead faint. Informed of her death, Leontes resolves to visit the grave daily with repentance.

Entrusting everything to providence, Antigonus leaves the baby on the shore of Bohemia.

In Bohemia, sixteen years have passed, during which Perdita has grown "in grace". A song conveys the change of season from winter to spring. The disguised Polixenes objects to his being kept ignorant of his son's betrothal, and removes his disguise, forbidding marriage on pain of disinheritance. Ready to give up his succession, Florizel decides to "put to sea".

Back in Sicilia, where the final act is set, Leontes' repentance makes him hesitate to receive divine forgiveness. He feels it necessary to wait until time is ripe for him to be reconciled with the heavens. Spring arrives at last in Sicilia with the visit of Prince Florizel and his princess.

The discovery of Perdita is regarded as the fulfilment of the oracle. When Leontes and others view the statue of Hermione, Paulina offers to move the statue on condition that "you do awake your faith". She seems to refer to faith in the power of art. From another angle, it can be said that she means faith in gods, whose providence has brought Perdita back. As the statue moves, Paulina says that life "redeems" Hermione from death. Leontes' sin has also been redeemed. Hermione prays to "gods" for "graces" on her daughter. They have waited for the fulfillment of the oracle as part of providence.

Key words: *Sin, Oracle, Repentance, Providence, Grace, Redemption*

As a play written in Shakespeare's later years, *The Winter's Tale* has many traits in common with *Pericles*. But differences between the two are all the more remarkable because of their similarities. *Pericles* depicts the life of a man who, tossed by various fortunes, patiently endures suffering and entrusts himself to providence. Though the play's world is not without sinners, the sins are committed by those who surround the hero and his daughter. On the other hand, it is the sin the hero himself commits that starts the drama of *The Winter's Tale*. In what follows I would like to consider an aspect of the play with the problem of sin as a clue.¹⁾

In the second scene of *The Winter's Tale*, Polixenes, in answer to Hermione, speaks about the innocent childhood of two kings, Leontes and himself:

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)²⁾

Sin is the underlying theme of Polixenes' words. True, the two lambs to which he compares the two friends symbolize innocence. Their unstained childhood is shown by the repetition of the word "innocence". In order to emphasize it, however, Polixenes refers to his past ignorance of "the doctrine of ill-doing". It is a familiar rhetorical device to mention the absence of something in order to draw attention to it. The

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subjunctive of “Had we pursu’d that life, ...” suggests a sin that they have committed since then. What he considers to be “sin” is caused by “blood”, comes from within and surfaces with growth, and is not necessarily against nature. “Blood”, however, is also described as “stronger”, which goes beyond the bounds of reason.³⁾ By “the imposition ... / Hereditary ours” he means nothing but “the penalty of Adam” (*As You Like It*, II.i.5) and its spread to all human beings, that is, original sin.

As an example of “the penalty of Adam” the old Duke in *As You Like It* makes special mention of “The season’s difference” (II.i.6). In a dedicatory Epistle as a preface to his translation of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Arthur Golding recommends an allegorical reading of mythology: “Moreover by the golden age what other thing is ment, / Than Adams tyme in Paradyse, who beeing innocent / Did lead a blist and happy lyfe untill that thurrough sin / He fell from God?” (ll. 469-72).⁴⁾ In the text of *Metamorphoses*, the following description is found in relation to the golden age: “The Springtime lasted all the yeare, and Zephyr with his milde / And gentle blast did cherish things that grew of owne accorde” (The First Book, 122-23). Shakespeare shows that the forest of Arden, unlike the myth of the Golden Age or “Adams tyme in Paradyse”, is not the land of everlasting spring but the harsh world of reality where “the winter’s wind” (7) blows. The change from winter to spring conveyed through the songs in *As You Like It* is expanded to the whole play in *The Winter’s Tale*, in which winter symbolizes a desolate state of mind.

The image of eternal boyhood suggestive of everlasting spring comes back to 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. (I.ii.62-65)

Turning from the Old Testament to the New Testament, the innocence of children is evoked by the famous words of Jesus (Matthew, 19:14). On the other hand, the location of “the imposition clear’d / Hereditary ours” (I.ii.74-75) in the consecutive clause of the subjunctive makes it clear that Polixenes does not deny original sin itself. At the same time, childhood in Polixenes’ memory is traced far back to the state before the Fall where man was in close relationship with God. However, such a state cannot last forever in the real world. This is the reason for his use of the subjunctive, to which Hermione responds sensitively:

Her. 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.
Her. Grace to boot!
Of this make no conclusion, lest you say
Your queen and I are devils. ...
(I.ii.75-82)

Hermione’s use of the verb “trip” to mean “commit a sin” is implicitly derived from the multiple meanings of “fall”. Polixenes suggests that “Temptations” (77) to fall in love were placed by his wife and Hermione respectively, leading to the Fall, or the loss of Paradise. Hermione discontinues talking because she knows that, his logic being pushed forward, each of the queens will be compared to a serpent that creeps into Eden.

As Hermione’s persuasion has taken effect, Polixenes decides to stay longer in the court of Sicilia. It was Leontes who first asked Polixenes to stay, but his firm resolution led him to entrust his wife with persuasion: “Tongue-tied our queen? Speak you.” (27) Although Leontes himself has asked her, the success of her persuasion ironically makes him uneasy:

Leon. Is he won yet?
Her. He’ll stay, my lord.
Leon. At my request he would
not. (I.ii.86-87)

On the face of it, his simple words seem just to praise her success, but they also sound like an expression of jealousy. Leontes is soon overwhelmed with anxiety, and begins to lose his sense of self.

Objectively speaking, Hermione entertains her husband’s friend warmly, while Polixenes responds to her with due honour. Leontes tries to understand the situation in this way, but cannot control his emotions. Though her unconscious coquetry triggers it, Leontes’ jealousy, unlike the case of *Othello*, generates itself without an external machination.

Leontes talks to himself about his thought and emotion in an aside:

[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. 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 the 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.

(I.ii.108-19)

Though Polixenes regards love as sin, his use of the image of “stronger blood” (73) suggests a physiological phenomenon like disease rather than sin. However, in a chapter on “Diseases of the Soul”, Campbell states “that it was upon the basis of this inter-relation between soul and body that the study of the devastating effect of passion was based during the Renaissance.”⁵⁾ Leontes even refers to the Latin name of a disease, “*tremor cordis*”. His image of “mingling bloods” has a sexual connotation, and shows his illusion, or delusion, of the queen's adultery.

Moreover, his delusion not only destroys connubial harmony but also disrupts his connection with his friend. The hard and jerky breathing in his aside suggests his uncertain self, having lost his relationship with others.

Although his aside conveys his image of Hermione and Polixenes, we cannot vouch for its truth. To Leontes they look like Narcissus gazing into each other as “a looking-glass” (116). But is it not Leontes himself who is looking at a mirror? The distorted mirror of his mind shows him the distorted images of his wife and his friend.

To him Hermione's sigh sounds like horns at deer hunting. As “deer” (117) is associated with horns, it suggests those which cuckolds are said to wear on the brow. The superfluous alliteration of the “b's” in the last line comically reveals his anxiety about his horns.

Having lost the stability of his world, he tries to make sure of his son's identity:

Mamillius,
 Art thou my boy? (I.ii.119-20)
 Art thou my calf? (I.ii.127)

In an attempt to clear his mind of Hermione and Polixenes staring each other in the face, he seeks comfort in his son, urging him to “Look on me with your welkin eye” (I.ii.131). In the midst of anxiety, the sight of his son leads Leontes to remember his childhood (I.ii.153ff.).

Like Polixenes, he looks back over the years to the days of innocence free of care.

Still, his obsession follows him:

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 it be?—
 With what's unreal thou coactive art,
 And fellow'st nothing: then 'tis very credent
 Thou may'st co-join with something;

(I.ii.137-43)

In his mind Leontes turns over the working of “Affection”, which he personifies with the personal pronoun “Thou”. It affects the “centre” of our heart, makes the impossible possible, and prompts us to interact with the unreality of “dreams”. In affection, “nothing” becomes “something”, so it is no wonder that his wife commits adultery not only in fantasy but with a real person. Thus, illusion and reality are indistinguishable from each other in his consciousness.

Leontes regards Camillo, his trusted courtier, as his confessor:

I have trusted thee, Camillo,
 With all the nearest things to my heart, as well
 My chamber-counsels, wherein, priest-like, thou
 Hast cleans'd my bosom: I from thee departed
 Thy penitent reform'd. (I.ii.235-39)

It is Camillo who first mentions “sin” when he hears Leontes speak of his wife as “slippery” (273):

You never spoke what did become you less
 Than this; which to reiterate were sin
 As deep as that, though true. (I.ii.282-84)

As his view is denied by his confidante, Leontes protests that everything is nothing:

Is whispering nothing?
 Is leaning cheek to cheek? is meeting noses?

...

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)

Camillo, however, makes an exact diagnosis:

Good my lord, be cur'd
Of this diseases'd opinion, and betimes,
For 'tis most dangerous. (I.ii.296-98)

If the disease grows worse, it is feared that Leontes may turn fantasy into reality, and actually commit a sin, which will harm both his self and others.

Camillo's misgivings prove true. Leontes incites Camillo to murder Polixenes by poisoning (312-18). In agony of inner conflict, Camillo confides Leontes' secret thoughts to Polixenes. His remarks on the nature and effects of Leontes' jealousy (451-57) get to the heart of the matter. Guided by Camillo, Polixenes and his followers escape from Sicilia.

In contrast with tension which underlies the first two scenes, the next scene opens in a relaxed mood with a family talk among Hermione, Mamillius, and ladies. In the words of Mamillius, we hear the play's title casually dropped: "A sad tale's best for winter: ..." (II.i.22-25). As if evoked by his tale (29-31), Leontes enters to disturb the harmony with a discordant voice of agonizing fantasy (39-45). His speech makes no sense to Hermione except as a bitter joke: "What is this? sport?" (II.i.56-58).

A rift between husband and wife hinted at in the failure in communication widens as he expresses his doubts about the unborn child inside Hermione (II.i.59-62). The sense of estrangement becomes evident in his change in the use of personal pronoun from the second person "you" to the third person "she". On the other hand, he speaks to Antigonus, lords and others with "you", making her the object of public attention:

You, my lords,
Look on her, mark her well: ...
...
She's an aduress! (II.i.64-78)

He finally imprisons her after he further accuses her as "a traitor" (89) with Camillo as an accomplice, being "privy / To this their late escape" (94-95). Thus Hermione is wrongly charged with adultery and treason. Against Leontes' accusation, a Lord and Antigonus defend her as being, in the words of the former, "spotless / I' th' eyes of heaven, and to you" (131-32).

Hermione attributes the unexpected development of the situation to fortune:

There's some ill planet reigns:
I must be patient till the heavens look
With an aspect more favourable. (II.i.105-7)

While "ill planet" and "an aspect" derive from astrology, "the heavens" refer to gods. She decides to wait patiently, trusting herself to divine providence.

Leontes' sin does not end up charging Hermione with adultery and treason, but, in his soliloquy with which II.iii. begins, he steps over a boundary line to harbour a murderous intent toward her (II.iii.1-9). Execution by "fire" (8) is associated with witch-hunt, and so suggests that his delusion is akin to the mass fantasy of witch craze. Later in the same scene, he threatens Paulina with burning at the stake: "I'll ha' thee burnt." (113) His murderous intent finally extends to the newborn baby (II.iii.133).

The birth of a royal baby is an event on which the fate of a kingdom depends. Hermione gives birth to a child in prison. Paulina, a lady in waiting and wife to Antigonus, decides to bring it to Leontes so as to "soften" him (II.ii.40). However, when she shows him the baby, it unexpectedly shocks him, whose reaction in turn shocks us (II.iii.66-68). The same baby who seems to Hermione to be innocent as the fruit of conjugal love seems to Leontes to be horrible as the work of witchcraft. Leontes thinks about how to deal with the child, and finally orders Antigonus to carry "this female bastard" to "some remote and desert place, quite out / Of our dominions", where he should leave it to its "own protection / And favour of the climate" (172-78).

Since no one shares his doubt, Leontes calls his court "A nest of traitors" (81). Failing in communication, he directs his anger against the others: "You're liars all." (145) On the other hand, Paulina points out that it is "himself" (83) who is the traitor to himself. Paulina goes on to hint at his "tyranny" (119) based on his arbitrary judgment against Hermione, and prays to Jove for the protection of the baby: "Jove send her / A better guiding spirit!" (125-26). In order to prove that he is not a tyrant, Leontes decides to open a court of justice. The trial is, in effect, not for deliberations on the case but for self-justification.

Our awareness of divine providence, to which Hermione has trusted herself, is heightened when Leontes consults an oracle to lend authority to the trial of her case. In Greene's prose romance, *Pandosto*, which is the main source of the play, it was Bellaria, Queen to Pandosto, who made a request for the oracle of Apollo, and Pandosto, being unable to deny it, agreed to send

ambassadors to the Isle of Delphos.⁶⁾ Before the earliest known performance of the play, which Simon Forman saw at the Globe on 15 May, 1611, three editions of the romance were published in 1592, 1595, and 1607 respectively.⁷⁾ So Shakespeare wrote the play on the assumption that his audience knew the story. In dramatizing the romance, he changed it in important points including the request for the oracle.

Just before the public trial we have an impressive scene, which opens as follows: "The climate's delicate, the air most sweet, / Fertile the isle, the temple much surpassing / The common praise it bears" (III.i.1-3). We suddenly feel fresh air freed from the stifling atmosphere of the court. The dialogue between Cleomenes and Dion also evokes awe and admiration for the sacred (5-11).

In the trial scene, Hermione appeals to gods, or "powers divine", whom she believes to watch over "human action" (III.ii.28-32). As Leontes cannot understand her, so she cannot understand his accusations:

Her. ... You speak a language that I understand not:
My life stands in the level of your dreams,
Which I'll lay down.

Leon. Your actions are my dreams.
You had a bastard by Polixenes,
And I but dream'd it. (III.ii.80-82)

Each of them feels the other living in a different world and they find themselves in a situation incomprehensible to them. It is this sort of sensation that they both convey with the metaphor of "dreams". She seeks truth revealed by the oracle:

I do refer me to the Oracle:
Apollo be my judge! (III.ii.114-15)

Her nobleness stands out against adversity (119-23). In the midst of the trial, Cleomenes and Dion have brought from Delphos the "seal'd-up Oracle" (127). The seals are broken up and the oracle is read out:

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.
(III.ii.132-36)

It not only clears Hermione, Polixenes, and Camillo of suspicion but declares Leontes to be guilty, and the baby

to be his child. It also prophesies the future, whose meaning we are yet to know. The oracle denies everything he has been obsessed with.

In *Pandosto*, the King at once accepts the oracle and asks for forgiveness.⁸⁾ In *The Winter's Tale*, however, while the others bless Apollo, Leontes rejects the oracle, being unable to accept its truth:

There is no truth at all i' th' Oracle:
The session shall proceed: this is mere falsehood.
(III.ii.140-41)

This is the turning point of the play. In addition to his ill will toward Hermione, Polixenes and others, he has committed blasphemy, directly offending against god. In no time comes a servant, telling him of his son's death:

The prince your son, with mere conceit and fear
Of the queen's speed, is gone. (III.ii.144-45)

It shakes him from his foundation. Just as he was suddenly seized with jealousy, so he immediately realizes his sin:

Apollo's angry, and the heavens themselves
Do strike at my injustice. (III.ii.146-67)

The news of the death of Mamillius not only brings Leontes to himself but shocks Hermione into a dead faint.

While she is carried away for "remedies for life" (153), Leontes asks for forgiveness, confessing his sin to Apollo:

Apollo, pardon
My great profaneness 'gainst thine Oracle!
I'll reconcile me to Polixenes,
New woo my queen, recall the good Camillo,
Whom I proclaim a man of truth, of mercy:
For being transported by my jealousies
To bloody thoughts and to revenge, I chose
Camillo for the minister to poison
My friend Polixenes: ...
... how his piety
Does my deeds make the blacker! (III.ii.153-65)

His own sinfulness having led to the loss of his son and his baby daughter, the effect of his sin culminates in the death of Hermione as reported by Paulina: "... the queen,

the queen, / The sweet'st, dear'st creature's dead ...” (200-201).

The scene concludes with Leontes' resolution with deep repentance:

Once a day I'll visit
The chapel where they lie, and tears shed there
Shall be my recreation. ... (III.ii.238-40)

“Recreation” here not only means consolation but suggests his spiritual rebirth, toward which a long and arduous journey through purgation has just begun.

The purgatorial experience, however, is not represented in the play. Shakespeare has already explored it in *King Lear*. In Act IV, the focus shifts from Leontes to his daughter along with a shift in locale from the Sicilian court to the country in Bohemia.⁹⁾

Before the story of the next generation starts, there is a transitional episode which introduces us to the land of Bohemia. As is often the case with Shakespeare, it contains a voyage and a storm at sea. A mariner attributes the threatening weather to divine wrath at what they are about to do, i.e., the abandoning of the baby:

Mar. ... the skies look grimly,
And threaten present blusters. In my conscience,
The heavens with that we have in hand are
angry,
And frown upon's.
Ant. Their sacred wills be done! ... (III.iii.3-6)

Antigonus entrusts everything to “their sacred wills”, that is, divine providence.¹⁰⁾

Alone with the babe on the shore of Bohemia, he recounts his experience on the night before, thinking that he saw a ghostly apparition of her mother rather than a dream (III.iii.11.16-37). She appeared to him to be “a vessel of ... sorrow ... in pure white robes / Like very sanctity” (21-23). Her address to him as “Good Antigonus” (27) shows her sympathy with him in spite of his role assigned by “fate” (28). He tells us that it was her apparition who told him of “Bohemia” (31) where he was to leave the babe, and that she asked him to name the child “Perdita” because it was “counted lost for ever” (33). She finally foretold that he would never see his wife again due to “this ungentle business, / Put on thee by my lord” (34-35). Her disappearance, “... She melted into air” (36-37), indicates that he has seen a spirit.

His prayer for the babe, “Blossom, speed thee well!”

(III.iii.46), stands out for its floral imagery under the threatening sky. As Antigonus runs away pursued by a bear, a shepherd and his son enter successively, whose presence functions as a bridge between the two Acts. It is the shepherd who finds the babe, whereas his son tells us of the end of Antigonus on land and that of a crew at sea: Antigonus is eaten by the bear while sailors on the ship are sunk by the storm. The symbolic words of the shepherd, “... thou met'st with things dying, I with things new-born” (112-13), are the pivot of the play, on which the play turns from death to new life through the workings of providence.

As the roar of the sea dies away, the allegorical figure of Time as Chorus appears alone on stage. Time tells us of the passage of years—“sixteen years” (IV.i.5). He also appeals to the spectators' imagination for the change of place to Bohemia (19-21). Departing from the classical rule of unities, the purpose of Time is to shift the play's focus from the generation of parents to that of children:

... To speak of Perdita, now grown in grace
Equal with wond'ring. (IV.i.23-25)

Found and brought up by the shepherd, Perdita, now sixteen, embodies natural growth and divine grace, imparting to the audience a sense of wonder.

By a song sung by Autolycus, Shakespeare conveys the change of season from winter to spring.¹¹⁾ The song begins as follows:

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.
(IV.iii.1-4)

The song prepares the way for the scene of sheep-shearing, on whose occasion Perdita is going to be mistress of the feast.

Act IV, sc. iv, where the sheep-shearing feast is held, is so long a scene that it seems as if time stood still. While Neptune's feast furnished an occasion for the reunion of the hero and his daughter in the voyage of life in *Pericles*, the sheep-shearing feast provides a setting for a fresh love between Perdita and Florizel in the pastoral scene of *The Winter's Tale*.

Florizel's words at the beginning of the scene in praise of Perdita are resonant with Autolycus' song:

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)

Once again the verb "peer" with a floral image indicates the beginning of spring. "April" symbolizes the flowering of new life after the deathlike winter.

In spite of the joy of being in love, a shadow of a "difference" (17) in degree falls across her mind. Fearing that the king his father would forbid their love, she is not afraid of committing her life to love. Florizel is ready to cast away his status as the prince royal. He finds his true self not in the social status but in his personal union with Perdita.

To the disguised Polixenes and Camillo as guests at the feast, she offers winter flowers (IV.iv.73-76). In her talk with Polixenes we overhear her trust in "great creating nature" (88), behind which we also suppose the presence of divine providence. What is worthy to note is her invocation to Proserpina:

O Proserpina,
 For the flowers now that, frightened, thou let'st fall
 From Dis's waggon! (IV.iv.116-18)

Like Proserpina in Roman mythology, Perdita, who represents "things new-born" (III.iii.113), has symbolically come back from the underworld. If so, we share her unconscious misgiving that she will have to return there. Her keen sense of time is observed in her words which also reflect the cycle of the seasons:

... the year growing ancient,
 Not yet on summer's death nor on the birth
 Of trembling winter, ... (IV.iv.79-81)

On the other hand, as she enumerates various flowers which are not here and now, it helps her to express her feelings for Florizel with poetic intensity:

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. (IV.iv.127-32)

It is also significant that the sheep-shearing feast is superimposed by Perdita on Whitsunday:

Come, take your flowers:
 Methinks I play as I have seen them do
 In Whitsun pastorals: sure this robe of mine
 Does change my disposition. (IV.iv.132-35)

Whitsunday is defined by *OED* as "The seventh Sunday after Easter, observed as a festival of the Christian Church in commemoration of the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost". Set in the folk festival of sheep-shearing feast, the scene full of allusions to classical mythology is here given a Christian dimension. Perdita feels she is not her ordinary self, and attributes her emotional uplift to the robe she is wearing for the occasion.

The feast scene comes to a climax with Florizel's praise of Perdita, comparing the graceful movement of her dance to the endless rhythm of the waves (IV.iv.140-43). However, knowing Florizel's identity, but not knowing her own, she fears that their wedding may be beyond reach. Contrary to her expectations, Polixenes admires her and almost sees through to her royal blood, sensing "something greater than herself, / Too noble for this place" (158-59). What he objects to is his son's attempt to proceed with the betrothal ritual without inviting him or letting him know of it. Florizel's insistence leads Polixenes to remove his disguise and to quit the scene, forbidding the marriage on pain of disinheritance.

The unexpected event subjects Perdita and Florizel to an ordeal which tests the quality of their love. Faced with a critical situation, Perdita's simple acceptance of her fate is supported by her Biblical view that all men are equal: "... The selfsame sun that shines upon his court / Hides not his visage from our cottage, but / Looks on alike" (IV.iv.442-47). While Perdita's reference to the sun reminds us of Apollo whom we saw preside over Sicilian scenes, her view of equality based on the New Testament suggests the presence of God behind the sun: "he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:45).¹²⁾

As the feast has come to a sudden close, she is faced with the harsh reality of her life:

... this dream of mine—
 Being now awake, I'll queen it no inch farther,
 But milk my ewes, and weep. (IV.iv.449-51)

She considers her love as well as the feast to be a fleeting dream from which she has awoken. With a touch of pathos, her words convey her sober acceptance of what she thinks to be her identity. Facing the stark reality, Florizel declares his constancy in love:

I am but sorry, not afeard; delay'd,
But nothing alter'd: what I was, I am; ...
(IV.iv.464-65)

To love her as ever means to uphold his self-identity. Ready to give up everything for love, including his succession to the throne, he decides to "put to sea" (499).

Camillo finds the decision coincident with his long-cherished desire to see "dear Sicilia / And that unhappy king, my master" (512-13). Because Florizel intends a voyage with no particular goal in view (540-42), Camillo suggests him that he should go with Perdita to the court of Leontes for help. Foreseeing a scene of reunion, his words strike the key-note of the play:

Methinks I see
Leontes opening his free arms and weeping
His welcomes forth; asks thee there 'Son,
forgiveness!'
As 'twere i' th' father's person; kisses the hands
Of your fresh princess; ... (IV.iv.548ff.)

Thus the locale shifts back to Sicilia, where the play made up of three movements reaches its final phase. Just as Camillo once accompanied Polixenes to Bohemia, so he now prepares a voyage to Sicilia for Florizel and Perdita. All this while, Paulina has stayed in Sicilia to prepare for a denouement.

Years have passed, during which Leontes has kept his resolution to mourn and pray daily as atonement for his sin. Mentioning his expiation and divine forgiveness, Cleomenes implores Leontes not to blame himself any longer:

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.7-12)

Though Cleomenes speaks like a chorus, the epithet "saint-like" sounds tempting. However, Leontes' gaze

at himself is so steady as to avoid self-deception. Thinking of the lives lost, sixteen years is not long enough for him to forget his sin. His sense of sin, which has been deepened by the passage of time, is uttered in words with emotional shading:

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)

It is the repentance of his sin and deep sorrow for the loss of his family as a loss to his kingdom brought on by himself that make him hesitate to accept divine forgiveness. With humble self-knowledge he still feels it necessary to wait until time is ripe for him to be reconciled with the heavens.

However, the seasons turn after all these years and spring arrives symbolically in Sicilia with the unexpected visit of Prince Florizel and "his princess" (V.i.86) from Bohemia. Comparing the grown-up prince to Leontes' son who died in infancy, Paulina brings it home to him that "there was not full a month / Between their births" (117-18). Though a sense of loss comes back again, his meeting with Florizel is a step toward his reconciliation with Polixenes. He also sees in Florizel the image of Polixenes whom he met when young. Time has passed, but the past is revived in the new generation.

As Florizel reminds him of his son, so the "fair princess" (130) recalls his daughter. Leontes compares their arrival to the advent of spring:

Welcome hither,
As is the spring to th' earth. (V.i.150-51)

Kind greetings supposed to have been brought by Florizel from his father prompts Leontes to reflect on himself, and his sense of sin against Polixenes is aroused again: "the wrongs I have done thee stir / Afresh within me" (147-8). Somewhat exaggeratedly praising Polixenes, he traces his sad lot back to its source:

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: ...

(V.i.169-73)

Leontes regards his sin against Polixenes as one committed ultimately against “the heavens”. Consequently, the heavens have deprived him of his son, his daughter, and his wife. Such loss has also led him to spiritual death although he has cherished his last hope of spiritual rebirth or “recreation” (III.ii.240) through the daily service of mourning. His reference to his old friend as “a holy father, / A graceful gentleman” is suggestive. With a heart full of sorrow and repentance he has been waiting for the arrival of divine grace. The following words from the Psalms give us an insight into the state of mind he has been in:

I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his
word do I hope.

My soul *waiteth* for the Lord more than they that
watch for the morning: *I say, more than they that*
watch for the morning. (Psalm 130: 5-6)¹³⁾

He has been waiting for the light of day as redemption from sin for sixteen years. Out of compassion Leontes supports Florizel’s petition, and offers to request his father to approve his marriage with the shepherd’s daughter.

The rest of the play is devoted to the process of discovery or recognition, whose keynote is wonder. Although we find a theme common between *The Winter’s Tale* and *Pericles*, the difference between the two is remarkable in the manner of final resolution as well as in the cause of tragic loss. While the miraculous reunion of the aged hero with his daughter is acted out as the climax of the former play, the corresponding scene between Leontes and his daughter is just told as having happened offstage.

First, in answer to Autolycus’ question, a Gentleman reports on what he saw happen between the old shepherd and the king of Bohemia accompanied by Camillo. Having been commanded out of the chamber soon after the shepherd opened a bundle, what he heard was brief and fragmentary:

... methought I heard the shepherd say he found the
child. ... the changes I perceived in the king and
Camillo were very notes of admiration: 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
heard of a world ransomed, or one destroyed: a

notable passion of wonder appeared in them; ...

(V.ii.2ff.)

He speaks as if he had seen them witness a miracle. Their open-eyed, speechless wonder even makes him allude to Christian redemption of the world from sin and the end of the world. His words help toward the way in which we understand Leontes’ sin. Another message brought by the Second Gentleman that “the Oracle is fulfilled; the king’s daughter is found” (22-23) once again attests to the presence of divine providence.

The recognition scene between father and daughter as well as the reconciliation of the old friends are told by the Third Gentleman:

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, which
stands by, like a weather-bitten conduit of many
kings’ reigns. (V.ii.50ff.)

He then proceeds to speak of the last moment of Antigonus (V.ii.62ff.).

The conclusion drawn from the fate of Antigonus and his followers on the ship by the Third Gentleman indicates poetic justice: “all the instruments which aided to expose the child were even then lost when it was found” (V.ii.70ff.). While deserting the baby, they did not kill her but entrusted her to fortune: they left her with gold and letters hoping against hope that she would be found by a good person. It may dehumanize them, and in the play it is regarded as sin, or an offence against the heavens. Still, it is difficult to tell if their conduct deserves death.

After all, the way of Heaven, different from ours, is a mystery, to which, according to the Third Gentleman, Paulina reacts with a mixture of emotions:

... But O, the noble combat that ’twixt joy and
sorrow was fought in Paulina! She had one eye
declined for the loss of her husband, another elevated
that the Oracle was fulfilled: ... (V.ii.72ff.)

Leontes’ confession of the death of Hermione and his daughter’s reaction to it are also narrated in the report (V.ii.81ff.). He finally refers to the statue of Hermione carved and painted “by that rare Italian master, Julio

Romano, ..." (95ff.).

The narration now gives place to representation, and the final scene focuses on the viewing of the statue in "the chapel" (V.iii.86). After silent wonder at the lifelike statue, Leontes is urged by Paulina to speak:

Her natural posture!
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. (V.iii.23-32)

He remembers Hermione, to whom he refers in the third person. Then he speaks to her statue with "Thou" as if it were living. And yet Hermione who lives in his memory is the real Hermione, to whom he refers in the third person again. The overlapping of her statue before his eyes and her image in his memory makes him move back and forth between the past and the present.

While Leontes gazes into the statue, the stone image works upon him. Changing from the third person to the second person, he goes on to speak directly to her:

So much to my good comfort as it is
Now piercing to my soul. O, thus she stood,
Even with such life of majesty, warm life,
As now it coldly stands, when first I woo'd her!
I am asham'd: 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 conjur'd to remembrance, ...
(V.iii.33-40)

Once again he is awakened to a deep sense of sin. In expiation for his sin, he has kept mourning through many years. To the intensity of his grief Camillo's words testify:

My lord, your sorrow was too sore laid on,
Which sixteen winters cannot blow away,
So many summers dry: ... (V.iii.49-51)

Curiously enough, the sculptor's art is praised for capturing the effect of time on her rather than for eternizing her image:

Leon. ... But yet, Paulina,
Hermione was not so much wrinkled, nothing
So aged as this seems.
Pol. O, not by much.

Paul. So much the more our carver's excellence,
Which lets go by some sixteen years and
makes her
As she liv'd now. (V.iii.27-32)

To Perdita this is virtually the first meeting with her mother from whom she was separated soon after her birth. Perdita also speaks directly to the statue as if it were living:

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)

Perdita's understanding of herself as the successor of her mother makes us think of the continuity of life.

Leontes seeks communion with the statue to such an extent that he almost goes into ecstasies: Paulina says that he is "transported" (69), while Leontes aspires to "that madness" (73). So lifelike is the statue that it seems to him as if it breathed like a living person:

Still methinks
There is an air comes from her. What fine chisel
Could ever yet cut breath? (V.iii.77-79)

With his spiritual exaltation in view, Paulina offers to move the statue—on one condition:

It is requir'd
You do awake your faith. (V.iii.94-95)

At first, she seems to refer to faith in the power of art to move the statue, which leads to our faith, or "willing suspension of disbelief", in what happens in the old tale, of which this scene is a part. On second thought, I infer that she also means faith in gods and their help including Apollo and his oracle, for it is providence which has brought Perdita back to Sicilia with Camillo as the guide.

As in *Pericles*, music accompanies the moment of resurrection:

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: stir, nay, come away:
Bequeath to death your numbness; for from him
Dear life redeems you. (V.iii.98-103)

She is acting as a priestess, who invites Leontes and others to join in communal prayer. As if in response to the prayer, the statue of Hermione begins to move. Members of the audience who witness the scene are called upon to believe that life has redeemed Hermione from death. Paulina's choice of words draws our notice. It suggests the possibility that Leontes' sin has also been redeemed.

He touches the statue with his hand:

O, she's warm!
If this be magic, let it be an art
Lawful as eating. (V.iii.109-11)

It is her warmth that makes him realize her life. Polixenes and Camillo marvel at the miracle of resurrection:

Pol. She embraces him!
Cam. She hangs about his neck! (V.iii.111-12)

Significantly, Paulina refers to "an old tale" to describe the miraculous event of the dead Hermione coming back to life:

That she is living,
Were it but told you, should be hooted at
Like an old tale: ... (V.iii.115-17)

Though she is directing the drama of resurrection as a real and supernatural event, there are also lines scattered in the last two scenes to suggest a more natural or rational explanation for it (V.ii.104ff; V.iii.27-32, 46-48, 60-61, 63-70, 77-79, 80-83).

The play comes to its final climax as Hermione, at the request of Paulina, speaks and blesses her daughter:

You gods, look down,
And from your sacred vials pour your graces
Upon my daughter's head! (V.iii.121-23)

Hermione's prayer for her daughter also applies to Leontes, whose sin has at last been washed away by grace. With Hermione's embrace forgiveness has already been given, which Leontes asks again in his concluding speech: "... both your pardons, / That e'er I put between your holy looks / My ill suspicion." (V.iii.147-49)

The possibility of a more natural or rational explanation for resurrection that I mentioned is given

support by Hermione herself: "... I, / Knowing by Paulina that the Oracle / Gave hope thou wast in being, have preserv'd / Myself to see the issue" (125-28). For the first time the audience hears that Hermione has been alive. While borrowing the oracle from Greene, particularly the dark prophecy: "... the king shall live without an heir, if that which is lost be not found" (III.ii.134ff.), Shakespeare has put it to new use. It is the oracle that has paradoxically given Hermione and Leontes hope to live without a spouse, and has led Paulina to quietly prepare for the final resolution. Both Hermione and Leontes have given up getting another child and decided to wait until their daughter is found. Thus the discovery of Perdita as the fulfillment of the oracle has led to the reunion of Leontes and Hermione.

The final scene of their reunion is original to the play and is not found in *Pandosto*. In the latter, the hero's wife does not come back to life. Moreover, after an episode in which he makes advances to Fawnia before he discovers her to be his daughter, Pandosto, "calling to mind how first he betrayed his friend Egistus, how his jealousy was the cause of Bellaria's death, that ... he had lusted after his own daughter",¹⁴ sinks into melancholy and kills himself when everything seems to be moving to a happy ending. According to Roy Battenhouse, "Greene apparently thinks Pandosto's compensating suicide an exemplum of divine justice."¹⁵ Changing the fate of the hero, Shakespeare has transformed Greene's story into a drama which has a different view of providence.

The play is unique among his plays in that a character keeps an important matter secret not only from the other characters but also from the audience. The wonder we feel towards the revival of Hermione is close to that toward Emilia's survival at the recognition scene of *The Comedy of Errors*. In the early play, however, no character intended to hide it. If a poor actress plays Paulina, she will appear to be slyly manipulative. Accordingly, in order to see the final scene in proper perspective, it is essential to remember the oracle. What the main characters have been doing is to wait and prepare for its fulfillment as the only way to participate in providence.

Notes

1) Because sin is a problem rooted in human nature, many scholars and critics have touched on it in their interpretations of *The Winter's Tale*. S.L. Bethell, in particular, deals with it in the chapter entitled "Sin and Repentance" in a pioneering work on the play. See *The Winter's Tale: A Study*, pp. 76-89. R.G.

Hunter discusses sin in the play in relation to the theme of forgiveness in his *Shakespeare and the Comedy of Forgiveness*, Ch. 8. I intend to consider the implications of sin with relation to providence in the play.

2) Quotations from the play are from J.H.P. Pafford, ed., *The Winter's Tale*, The Arden Shakespeare (Second Series).

3) For the ambiguous implications of "blood" in the play, see Douglas L. Peterson, *Time, Tide and Tempest: A Study of Shakespeare's Romances*, pp. 155-57, 160.

4) My quotation from *Metamorphoses* is from W.H.D. Rouse, ed., *Shakespeare's Ovid*, p. 23. Though Shakespeare could read Ovid in Latin, he had a chance to read Golding's translation which was first published in London in 1567.

5) *Shakespeare's Tragic Heroes*, p. 83.

6) '*Pandosto*' or '*Dorastus and Fawnia*' being the Original of Shakespeare's '*Winter's Tale*', pp. 24-25. My references to *Pandosto* are to this edition.

7) See Pafford's Introduction to the play, pp. xxi and xxviii.

8) *Pandosto*, p. 29.

9) In Greene's romance, *Pandosto* is the King of Bohemia, and the change in locale is from Bohemia to Sicilia. On the contrary, Shakespeare makes Leontes the king of Sicilia. Based on "the Greek setting in Sicily" as well as the Greek names of characters, Martz compares the play to Greek tragedy, and, developing Tillyard's view, makes an insightful comment on the jealousy of Leontes. See Martz, *From Renaissance to Baroque*, Ch. 8 and Tillyard, *Shakespeare's Last Plays*, p. 41. Schanzer considers why Shakespeare chose Bohemia instead of Sicilia for the pastoral scene in the Introduction to his New Penguin edition of the play, p. 18.

10) *OED* defines "providence", or "divine providence" in full, as follows: "The foreknowing and beneficent care and government of God (or of nature, etc.); divine direction, control, or guidance." Unlike *Hamlet* or *The Tempest*, there is no explicit mention of providence in the play. But words and events in it strongly suggest the presence of what Antigonus calls the "sacred wills" (III.iii.6) of the heavens, which is almost a definition of providence.

11) Shakespeare mentions "summer" (11) in the song with English summer in mind, which is, according to his famous Sonnet 18, "lovely" and "temperate". In England, spring ends in April or May, while summer stretches from May to August. "Daffodils" come out in March or April.

12) Quotations from the Bible are from *Authorized Version*. The passage is rendered as follows in *Bishops' Bible* (1568): "... for hee maketh his sunne to rise on the euil and on the good, and sendeth raine on the iust, and on the vniust." "Long s" is replaced with "short s". I use the edition published in 1585.

13) The corresponding passage in *Bishops' Bible* is as follows:

"I haue wayted for God, my soule haue waited [for him:] and I haue reposed my trust in his worde. / My soule [listeth] more after God, then watchmen doe after the morning: I say more then watchmen doe after the morning."

14) *Pandosto*, p. 85.

15) Battenhouse, "Theme and Structure in *The Winter's Tale*", *Shakespeare Survey* 33, 123.

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