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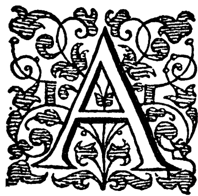
An Interpretation of Pastoral in *The Winter's Tale*

PHILIP M. WEINSTEIN

Did you not name a tempest,
A birth and death?
(*Pericles* V. iii. 33-34)

They looked as they had heard of a world ransomed, or one destroyed.
(*The Winter's Tale* V. ii. 14-15)



S is well known, the Pastoral Scene in *The Winter's Tale* functions, basically and indisputably, as a contrast with life in the Sicilian court. And this purpose is so well achieved, the sense of rebirth so strong, that E. M. W. Tillyard has written: "Now the latest plays aim at a complete regeneration; at a melting down of the old vessel and a recasting of it into something new. Thus Florizel and Perdita re-enact the marriage of Leontes and Hermione, but with better success."[1] No one would reject outright Tillyard's statement, but in an important way it overstates the case, asserting resolution where there still remains considerable conflict. Seeking to define how the Pastoral Scene functions in the play as a whole, this paper will assess what resolutions do and do not take place by analyzing several pairs of motifs —such as reality and fantasy, realism and idealization, past and present, art and nature—as they appear in both parts of the play.

To the degree that these motifs are harmonized, the Pastoral Scene does constitute a "perfectly-timed affirmation of rebirth."[2] But to the degree that such motifs remain unresolved, the scene will mirror, not redeem, life as we have seen it in "that fatal country Sicilia." Indeed, from this lack of resolution the scene attains its vivid and conflict-breeding realism (so unexpected in pastoral), while at the same time enough of the play's problems are resolved to convey the essential theme of symbolic regeneration. What results is a conflation of realism and symbolism in the Pastoral Scene that not only ballasts the symbolism—as many critics have stressed—but also limits, even indicates the inadequacy of, that symbolism.

We might begin by considering the twin motifs of death and rebirth. The Old Shepherd formulates them explicitly when, after his son has related the shipwreck and the devouring of Antigonus, he says, "Heavy matters! heavy mat-

[1] E. M. W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's Last Plays* (London, 1962), p. 22.

[2] D. A. Traversi, "A Reading of the Pastoral Scene of *The Winter's Tale*", *The Winter's Tale*, ed. Francis Fergusson (The Laurel Shakespeare, 1959), p. 20.

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ters! But look thee here, boy. Now bless thyself: thou met'st with things dying, I with things new-born" (III. iii. 111-113).[3] One tends to forget just how joined these phenomena are throughout the play, and the usual reading of the Pastoral Scene as pure spring (as pure symbolic rebirth) fails to observe that the sheep-shearing feast occurs in the waning of the year, "Not yet on summer's death nor on the birth/Of trembling winter" (IV. iv. 80-81). Since the images of growth and rebirth in this scene have been widely recognized, I would like to glance at some of the less emphasized images of death or diminution.

Perdita's flower speech is filled with an awareness of both vigor and decay:

O Proserpina,
For the flowers now that, frighted, thou let'st fall
From Dis's waggon! daffodils,
That come before the swallow dares, and take
The winds of March with beauty; violets, dim,
But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes
Or Cytherea's breath; pale primroses,
That die unmarried, ere they can behold
Bright Phoebus in his strength (a malady
Most incident to maids); bold oxlips, and
The crown imperial; lilies of all kinds,
The flower-de-luce being one. O, these I lack,
To make you garlands of; and my sweet friend,
To strew him o'er and o'er!

Florizel: What, like a corpse?

Perdita: 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. 116-132)

The power of these lines comes from the juxtaposition of robust and fragile images: brave daffodils and bold oxlips are silhouetted by dim violets and pale primroses, and the short-lived frailty of the latter is curiously described as a sexual shyness or failure. In like terms Florizel is demonstrably a quick and ardent lover, but—like those "primroses / That die unmarried"—he is for a moment glimpsed not as a vigorous young man but as a short-lived one, a corpse strewn with flowers.

Such darker motifs are more than merely glimpsed. Non-pastoral figures like Polixenes and Camillo hover in disguise throughout most of the scene, threatening at any moment to dispel its mirth. And Polixenes, the intruder from the court world, is not without authority. "'Tis time to part them" (IV. iv. 345), he curtly says, and shortly thereafter he erupts into a grisly diatribe upon old age:

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

[3] *The Winter's Tale*, ed. J. H. P. Pafford (London: The Arden Shakespeare, 1963). All textual references are based upon this edition.

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Polixenes' harsh outburst points obsessively to human decay and senility. His last question not only parodies the "symbolic rebirth" theme, but authoritatively rebukes Florizel's youthful and time-denying idealism. It reveals the nether side.

The King grows more angry. To the Shepherd he says:

> Thou, old traitor,
> I am sorry that by hanging thee I can
> But shorten thy life one week. (IV. iv. 421-423)

And he warns Perdita that if ever she tempt his son again, "I will devise a death as cruel for thee/ As thou art tender to 't" (IV. iv. 441-442). But the Pastoral Scene's concern with death surely reaches its apotheosis in Autolycus' "solemn" prophecy to the quaking Clown:

> He has a son, who shall be flayed alive, then 'nointed over with honey, set on the head of a wasps' nest, then stand till he be three quarters and a dram dead; then recovered again with aqua-vitae or some other hot infusion; then, raw as he is, and in the hottest day prognostication proclaims, shall he be set against a brick wall, the sun looking with a southward eye upon him, where he is to behold him, with flies blown to death.
> (IV. iv. 786-793)

My point, of course, is not that *The Winter's Tale* is uniformly obsessed with death and the passage of time—in Act IV, Scene iv, as well as elsewhere—but rather that the Pastoral Scene in no way avoids these matters, as critics tend to avoid them in their reading of the scene. For pastoral in *The Winter's Tale* is a great deal more nuanced than Florizel's blithe reassurance to Perdita, "Apprehend / Nothing but jollity" (IV. iv. 24-25), would indicate, and it equally escapes the simplistic confines of Polixenes' earlier idyllic reminiscences to Hermione:

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

The Pastoral Scene, as Northrup Frye suggests, operates simultaneously on several levels. "To Florizel it is a kind of betrothal mask and 'a meeting of the petty gods'; to the Court Party, Polixenes and Camillo, it is an illusion which they snatch away; to Autolycus it is an opportunity to sell his 'trumpery' and steal purses."[4] But this is not all. To Perdita it is at once a game of "borrowed flaunts", and a hypnotic celebration in which "this robe of mine / Does change my disposition" (IV. iv. 134-135). To the Old Shepherd it is the dignified and moving re-enactment of a traditional ceremony, while to his son it is an opportunity for revelry and light lovemaking. An adequate reading of the scene must see it through all of these characters, rather than see it only through the enchanted eyes of Florizel gazing upon Perdita.

Along with its variety of characters and perspectives, the play exhibits a spectrum of motives and events that ranges from the grossly realistic to the wildly fanciful. Moreover, Shakespeare's implicit attitude toward his characters'

[4] "Recognition in *The Winter's Tale*", *Essays on Shakespeare and Elizabethan Drama,* ed. Richard Hosley (Columbia, Missouri, 1962), p. 238.

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behavior—rational or fantastic—is far from constant. For instance, the play is ruthlessly critical of the passion of Leontes, in which a dream world has been spawned where fancy replaces fact: "Thou [his passion] dost make possible things not so held, / Communicat'st with dreams" (I. ii. 139-140). Leontes equates all of reality with this new and insubstantial fabric:

> Is this nothing?
> Why then the world, and all that's in't, is nothing,
> The covering sky is nothing, Bohemia nothing,
> My wife is nothing, nor nothing have these nothings,
> If this be nothing. (I. ii. 292-296)

He becomes wholly isolated, incomprehensible to others:

> *Hermione:* Sir,
> You speak a language that I understand not:
> My life stands in the level of your dreams,
> Which I'll lay down.
> *Leontes:* Your actions are my dreams.
> You had a bastard by Polixenes,
> And I but dream'd it! (III. ii. 77-82)

The irony of the last line is heavy as Leontes scornfully speaks truth while preparing to act upon fantasy. Dreams in this case lead to illusion and madness.

Still, Antigonus will fatally learn that some dreams do come true, even though their logic is obscure. And, by extension, a statue coming to life is certainly incredible, possessing no clear and self-evident logic, easily "hooted at / Like an old tale" (V. iii. 116-117). This last complication—which suggests that fantasy or fable lies at the heart not only of the structure, but also of the title and the meanings of the play—brings up deeper connections between dreams and reality which I shall not discuss until later.

Shifting slightly from dreams and reality to idealism and realism, we are perhaps surprised to discover just how substantial, how factual is the sheep-shearing feast. Here Shakespeare is farthest from the pastoral conventions, for as W. W. Greg observes on the nature of pastoral, the shepherd has been chosen as a fitting image of sophisticated and often sentimental artlessness by a complex society seeking leisure. Therefore "the shepherds are primarily and distinctively shepherds; they are not mere rustics engaged in sheepcraft as one out of many of the employments of mankind."[5]

But in *The Winter's Tale* Shakespeare does just the opposite. His shepherds are realistic, unsophisticated rustics, and, as Tillyard says (p. 43), "the country life is given the fullest force of actuality." When the Clown speaks of the celebration, we almost taste the items on his list:

> Let me see; what am I to buy for our sheep-shearing feast? Three pound of sugar, five pound of currants, rice. . . . I must have saffron to color the warden pies; mace; dates, none—that's out of my note; nutmegs, seven; a race or two of ginger, but that I may beg; four pound of prunes, and as many of raisins o' th' sun.
>
> (IV. iii. 36-49)

[5] W. W. Greg, *Pastoral Poetry and Pastoral Drama* (New York, 1959), p. 3.

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If in addition to these realistic elements one considers the far from outdated tricks of Autolycus and the lively folk dances, one becomes convinced of the scene's actuality and its firm entrenchment in the Elizabethan English countryside. It is conspicuously here and now rather than there and then, closer to "rustics engaged in sheepcraft" than to the more artificial and self-conscious pastoral. In this sense there is very little artifice or idealization.

Greg notes also (p. 4) that what is constant in different versions of pastoral is "the recognition of a contrast, implicit or expressed, betwen pastoral life and some more complex type of civilization." Such a contrast obviously exists in *The Winter's Tale,* but its implications are not clear-cut. On the one hand the frolic and festivity, the frank and healthy attitude toward love in the pastoral scene are surely preferable to the jaded and stifling atmosphere of sensuality, grief, and death that broods about Leontes and "that fatal country Sicilia." Further, Autolycus keenly satirizes court snobbery when he says to the gullible Clown: "Receives not thy nose court-odor from me? reflect I not on thy baseness, court-contempt? . . . I am courtier *cap-a-pe*" (IV. iv. 732-736). But this is no simple-minded preference for pastoral purity. The irony cuts both ways, as the Clown is greatly impressed by such unmistakable "authority": "This cannot be but a great courtier" (IV. iv. 749). Moreover, the rustics in general are systematically gulled: Autolycus is prologue and epilogue to the scene, and he prospers. In fact, only the unmasking of Polixenes checks him:

> . . . and had not the old man come in with a whoo-bub against his daughter and the king's son, and scared my choughs from the chaff, I had not left a purse alive in the whole army.
>
> (IV. iv. 616-620)

The characters are realistically presented as fallible in both parts of the play; the rustics as well as a King are capable of being imposed upon. Like Leontes they will accept a dream, an impossible fable as the truth. Mopsa says of Autolycus' ballads: "Pray now, buy some: I love a ballad in print, a life, for then we are sure they are true" (IV. iv. 261-262). So gullible as to be able to believe Autolycus' outrageous ballads, the rustics thus bring home to us the whole prickly question of belief—our belief, the characters' belief—in something patently "false" like Leontes' dreams, or Shakespeare's "winter's tale". One wonders who is being gulled. The balance between fantasy and reality is by no means resolved in Act IV, Scene iv, and there is little chance for successful and idyllic leisure when Autolycus is on the prowl, and Polixenes and Camillo are waiting in disguise.

If my preceding analysis is correct, then Tillyard omits a great deal when he writes (p. 43) that "the whole country setting stands out as the cleanest and most elegant symbol of the new life into which the old horrors are to be transmuted." For Shakespeare this type of transmutation is much too important to be relegated to landscape. The country is surely different—and importantly so —from the city, but not necessarily its antidote; the distinctions between reality and fantasy are still unresolved: what is new in the Pastoral Scene is the way resolution is attempted.

Here Shakespeare's use of pastoral begins to achieve its meaning. If the play is to bridge the gap between Leontes' sin and his regenerated virtue, it can only

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do so by recreating the situation of Leontes' fall, and yet somehow avoiding a second fall. The past innocence of Leontes' boyhood, his youthful wooing and idealistic love, must be reconstructed vicariously, but the reconstruction can be persuasive only if the challenge to it is likewise present.

> The friendship between the two kings has rested so far on the youthful state of innocence; based on a sentimental ignoring of the reality of the temporal process, it has assumed with pathetic simplicity that it was possible to remain "boy eternal." The realities of human nature, however, make this impossible. . . . Only through a conscious reaction to tragedy, and the consequent acceptance of deeper experience, can this idyllic state of childhood grow into an independent, conscious maturity.[6]

For genuine resolution to occur, there must be some firm and sane middle ground between "twinn'd lambs" frisking "i' th' sun" (I. ii. 67) and "paddling palms, and pinching fingers" (I. ii. 115). A balance between ideal youth and realistic adulthood must be struck, one that welds the past and the present.

The Sheep-shearing Scene renders precisely both sides of this balance; its pastoral elements express those qualities of idealism and youth needed to reinvigorate Leontes' deadened capacity for innocence and joy, while the realistic elements of the scene expose the inadequacy of that idealism. For the scene does not finally effect a triumphant bridge between youth and adulthood; it supplies instead the indispensable and otherwise missing element of passionate loyalty. Its great virtue is in the way it supplies this element simultaneously with an announcement of its limitation.

Because the idyllic is only one strand within a complex web, Shakespeare can grant Florizel some of the most beautiful lines in the play. His lyric and extravagant devotion to Perdita atones, as it were, for the harsh brutality of Leontes' earlier insults to Hermione:

> 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)

Florizel believes in the reality of this dream, accepts as genuine the pastoral roles he and Perdita are playing; they enable him to express the plenitude of his love, uncluttered by other concerns. He is magnificently excessive:

> I take thy hand, this hand,
> As soft as dove's down and as white as it,
> Or Ethiopian's tooth, or the fann'd snow that's bolted
> By the northern blasts twice o'er. (IV. iv. 363-366)

But the impatient realist Polixenes is there to bring him down to earth:

> What follows this?
> How prettily the young swain seems to wash
> The hand was fair before! (IV. iv. 366-368)

It is as though Miranda had said, "O brave new world, / That has such people

[6] Traversi, *An Approach to Shakespeare* (Garden City, N. Y., 1956), pp. 264-265.

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in't!" and Prospero had wisely replied, "'Tis new to thee" (*The Tempest* V.i. 183-184).

Shakespeare has constructed a world in which Florizel sees only Perdita, while we see Polixenes and Camillo as well. And the pastoral conventions are potent enough to embroider the fabric of Florizel's fancy so as to make it almost irresistible. We have the idealized world of Leontes' and Polixenes' youth, recreated as it might have been—even to its oversimplification—and simultaneously the infringing pressures of reality which challenged and, for Leontes, destroyed that idealism.

But there is a difference here. Florizel and Perdita have solved the problem of the blood. They have joined physical desire with loyalty to one another, although they are still incapable of integrating their private feelings into the domain of public responsibility. Unlike Florizel, however, Perdita remains aware of this problem, and though her lover may naïvely counsel, "Apprehend / Nothing but jollity", she is not amazed when Polixenes reveals his presence:

> I told you what would come of this: beseech you,
> Of your own state take care: this dream of mine—
> Being now awake, I'll queen it no inch farther.
> (IV. iv. 448-450)

Perdita is not merely realistic; she too has had a dream, one in which she was at one time the wife of a prince and—during the feast—became the goddess Flora: "sure this robe of mine / Does change my disposition." "Being now awake," she declares her love to have been a dream: "I'll queen it no inch farther." And yet this dream of her love and her queenship, while only a fantasy to her, will be revealed in Act V as true.

Dreams in the play are both misleading and prophetic; only their trial in time can prove them to be reality or fantasy. By remaining constant to his love, Florizel symbolically repudiates the lack of loyalty that Leontes had shown toward Hermione: "I am but sorry, not afeard; delay'd, / But nothing alter'd: what I was, I am" (IV. iv. 464-465). Tested, as Leontes was tested, Florizel retains his loyalty; by weathering duress he will transform his dream into reality.

The situation, however, is even more complicated, and the young prince is unequal to its other stresses. Although Florizel's ardor is praiseworthy, is there not something slightly fatuous about his exaltation?

> That were I crown'd the most imperial monarch
> Thereof most worthy, were I the fairest youth
> That ever made eye swerve, had force and knowledge
> More than was ever man's, I would not prize them
> Without her love. (IV. iv. 373-377)

Perdita remains silent during this declamation; Florizel goes on to mention with complacent pride (and unintended cruelty):

> One being dead,
> I shall have more than you can dream of yet;
> Enough then for your wonder. (IV. iv. 388-390)

Moreover, when Camillo, in a role he has played before, tries to bring Florizel

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to reason, the young man in his resistance bears an uncanny resemblance to Leontes:

> *Florizel:* From my succession wipe me, father; I
> Am heir to my affection.
> *Camillo:* Be advis'd.
> *Florizel:* I am: and by my fancy. If my reason
> Will thereto be obedient, I have reason;
> If not, my senses, better pleas'd with madness,
> Do bid it welcome.
> *Camillo:* This is desperate, sir. (IV. iv. 481-486)

We have witnessed madness before, and there also it was allied to the fact of an heirless throne. There is no wonder, then, that when Florizel says,

> So we profess
> Ourselves to be the slaves of chance, and flies
> Of every wind that blows (IV. iv. 540-542)

he ominously echoes Leontes' "I am a feather for each wind that blows" (II. iii. 153). The relationship between fantasy and reality may fail in a less drastic way in Bohemia than it did in Sicilia, but it fails nonetheless. This becomes clearer when the problem is refocused in terms of passion and reason.

For Florizel has simply failed to take into account the whole realm of public responsibility. His family and its legitimate expectations are burdens—extending back through time—that he cannot reconcile with his immediate and private desire. Rather than assimilate he will discard, and he chooses the less demanding stance of either-or: "Or I'll be thine, my fair, / Or not my father's" (IV. iv. 42-43). Therefore he may reject but he cannot refute the disguised Polixenes' reproach:

> Reason my son
> Should choose himself a wife, but as good reason
> The father (all whose joy is nothing else
> But for posterity) should hold some counsel
> In such business.
> *Florizel:* I yield all this. (IV. iv. 407-411)

Florizel has indeed chosen a wife with "reason", but the second "reason"—the public one which concerns the father, posterity, and the welfare of the state—he has been unable to confront. Faced with a situation too complicated to resolve, he chooses flight rather than integration. The description of Florizel's love, by echoing that of Leontes' jealousy, betrays its inadequacy to the situation. The pastoral conventions which he so willingly adopts for his lovemaking are an insufficient frame of reference for the son of a king.

Finally Camillo, who had earlier tried and failed to advise Leontes, succeeds with Florizel, managing to perfect symbolically the Prince's passion by gracing it with rational reflection:

> Then list to me:
> This follows, if you will not change your purpose,
> But undergo this flight; make for Sicilia.
> (IV. iv. 542-544)

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This joining of Florizel's passion and Camillo's reason is alone responsible for *directing* the flight of the lovers. Camillo has this to offer:

> A course more promising
> Than a wild dedication of yourselves
> To unpath'd waters, undream'd shores; most certain
> To miseries enough. (IV. iv. 566-569)

Reflection and feeling thus fused, the lovers can depart from Bohemia, heading now for the shore of civilization, that complex and corrupt kingdom of Sicilia where all genuine resolutions must take place.

In the Pastoral Scene Shakespeare has rendered the idealistic love of Florizel and Perdita with superb nuance. In the Prince we recognize a saner version of Leontes, a young man who would have succeeded the Leontes frisking with Polixenes in the sun and prevented Leontes the tyrant. For Florizel, unlike the "frisking lambs", has moved from innocence into sexual maturity; in him the "weak spirits" have been successfully blended "with stronger blood". The result is a lover whose desires "run not before mine honour, nor my lusts / Burn hotter than my faith" (IV. iv. 34-35). In this context he is Leontes as he was not and should have been.

But on the other hand Florizel's love is an inadequate guide for the stresses with which he must cope; defined by the exuberant "jollity" of Act IV, Scene iv, it resembles too much Leontes' weak and insufficient pastoralism. As Leontes' saccharine childworld became an "unweeded garden", so Florizel confuses the lusty and many-faceted sheep-shearing feast with an unreal Arcadian paradise. Both imagined worlds are not only isolated—Leontes' engulfed in one moment of Time, Florizel's in a timeless Golden Age—but they are essentially fantastic and reductive distortions (each in its own way) of the complex realities of Sicilia and Bohemia.

If Florizel were perfect, if Polixenes welcomed Perdita, this new green world would neither relate to Leontes' stricken world nor convince in itself. It is not enough that Florizel avoid the mistakes of Leontes; he must, in avoiding them, make mistakes of his own, mistakes which echo those of Leontes. For the generations come together not as "error" and "exemplum" but as kindred human beings, in effect ransoming each other. Only then can the Pastoral Scene convince us of its own realism and of its legitimate relation to the rest of the play. Only then can it provide the cross-over, the missing point of reference that makes credible the play's essential themes of continuity and regeneration.

Forced by abrupt circumstances to act—the idyll is now over—Florizel attains his heroism and makes his mistake at one and the same moment. His disobedience to his father is both mistaken and heroic, and the ambivalence that results is inseparable from the ambivalence of dreams that I have already touched upon. It is an ambivalence that comes from acting in time, from making a value decision in a world of flux. If the scene were simply "green" and idyllic, there could be no such trial of Florizel. But Time tries all, and Florizel makes his decision. The problem of value in a spatial-temporal world, of appearance and reality, becomes his.

This problem brings into prominence the larger motif of past and present—of time in general—as it operates in both parts of the play. The isolation of

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Leontes, as I suggested earlier, derives from his obsessive fantasy of betrayal. His unvarying perspective, filled with images of filth and sordid sensuality, prevents him from temporally connecting the degraded present in any way with his idyllic past. He has no point of comparison; the "weak spirits" of his idealism, "ne'er ... higher reared / With stronger blood", have failed to support him.

Likewise he is yoked to one point in space; pastoral for him connotes only a stable, and his colloquial language parodies the rustic elements in Bohemia. Leontes has no recourse to the freshness of a new climate; he would be insensible to Cleomenes' description of the isle of the oracle:

> The climate's delicate, the air most sweet,
> Fertile the isle, the temple much surpassing
> The common praise it bears. (III. i. 1-3)

In its aura of health and fertility this description suggests the spacious world of the sheep-shearing scene and contrasts with the infected world of Leontes. As yet he is incapable of making an overpass to it.

Hermione, however, possesses a deep sense of continuity, which serves to ballast and preserve her from the malice of Leontes' dream. Her appeal (III. ii. 28-45) to the dignity and proofs of the past, the promise of the future, the *whole* of his experience with her, her request that he see her as a queen, as a daughter, and as a mother—these pleas that he extend his horizons in space and time are all lost on Leontes. His dream tells him but one thing: "She's an adultress!" (II. i. 78).

Although the need to see the present moment within a larger continuum recurs as a leitmotif throughout the play, Florizel's arguments explicitly assert just the opposite: constancy to Perdita precludes constancy to the state. He would cling to an unchanging present, just as Polixenes had reminisced about being "boy eternal". But the Prince's inability to unite his private ideals with the responsibility of public position, his selfish desire to enjoy love beyond the influence of time and the implications of place, contrasts massively with the warning of Time who tries all, with the presence of Polixenes and Camillo at the sheep-shearing feast, and—most intimately—with the latent sources of his own love for Perdita:

> 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. (IV. iv. 135-146)

Here, as in Perdita's flower speech, the poise between things past and things present, between the continuing flux of time and the isolated moment, accounts

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for the beauty of Florizel's tribute. And it is Perdita's own mastery of such a poise that moves him most. Only when he compares what she does with "what is done", does he realize "That all your acts are queens." Like the wave which is always the same and always moving, the resulting grace comes not from timeless Arcadian beauty but from the maintenance of constancy within motion. Perdita's role is bolder than that of a pale and passive "girl eternal"; and Florizel, once graced symbolically with the reason of Camillo, will also be prepared to essay a more ambitious role of balanced responsibility to his kingdom and love to his wife, a role that can accommodate the opposed and yet inalienable stresses that make up his predicament. They set out for Sicilia.

Leontes, meanwhile, has passed sixteen years lamenting his betrayal of Hermione. Much more seriously than Florizel, he had lost sight of the sanity-making continuities within his life. But if he could not at the moment of crisis recall his own wooing and idyllic past, he has now had ample time to do so. In the constancy of repentance, in the weaving of all of his experience together within the fabric of memory, Leontes has come to know and cleanse himself. Tried by time, his repentance has not withered into apathy; he has spiritually regenerated. He is ready for the arrival of Florizel.

> Were I but twenty-one,
> Your father's image is so hit in you,
> His very air, that I should call you brother,
> As I did him, and speak of something wildly
> By us perform'd before. Most dearly welcome!
> And your fair princess,—goddess!—O, alas!
> I lost a couple, that 'twixt heaven and earth
> Might thus have stood, begetting wonder, as
> You, gracious couple, do: and then I lost—
> All mine own folly—the society,
> Amity too, of your brave father . . . (V. i. 125-135)

Their arrival has, in an almost Proustian way, resurrected his past life. The "something wildly / By us perform'd before" recalls the lambs frisking in the sun, just as later his "O thus she stood . . . when first I woo'd her!" (V. iii. 34-36) announces the connection that Leontes has made with what was vital in his past. The appearance of the young lovers completes his temporal perspective and enables him to achieve a spatial one. He breaks out of the life-denying prison of grief and glimpses the invigorating climate of pastoral that Florizel's youthful idealism imparts:

> The blessed gods
> Purge all infection from our air whilst you
> Do climate here. (V. i. 167-169)

Finally, Leontes is given his second chance to act in time, and he connects. Ignorant of Perdita's birth and pressed by Florizel:

> Beseech you, sir,
> Remember since you ow'd no more to time
> Than I do now; with thoughts of such affections,
> Step forth mine advocate. (V. i. 217-220)

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Leontes looks at Perdita, recollects his own past, and answers:

> I will to your father:
> Your honor not o'erthrown by your desires,
> I am friend to them and you. (V. i. 228-230)

In this moment of regeneration he symbolically redeems his past inconstancy. His regenerated idealism challenged by untoward circumstances and forced to affirm itself or to disintegrate as before, Leontes rededicates himself in the absence of material "proof".

The fusion of past and present that occurs in such a resolution could not take place until the past actually met the present, until the father saw in the children the constancy he might have maintained and that through the trial of sixteen years he is in a position to reaffirm. Such a resolution, requiring the test of time, could not occur within the few hours of the sheep-shearing feast. Thus the supreme achievement of the Pastoral Scene is perhaps its modesty: its status as both idyll and the inadequacy of idyll. Florizel's idealism is both convincing enough to move Leontes to admiration and inadequate enough to require his support. Bohemia and Sicilia—forest and court—each is incomplete alone, and the play's deepest insights are about the intricacy of their interdependence.

Mention of one last pair of motifs—nature and art—might bring this paper to a close. Perdita has refused to "get slips of" carnations and gillyvors, "nature's bastards", and defended herself, claiming, "There is an art which, in their piedness, shares / With great creating nature" (IV. iv. 87-88). Polixenes wisely grants this, but continues:

> Yet nature is made better by no mean
> But nature makes that mean: so, over that art,
> Which you say adds to nature, is an art,
> That nature makes. You see, sweet maid, we marry
> A gentler scion to the wildest stock,
> And make conceive a bark of baser kind
> By bud of nobler race. This is an art
> Which does mend nature—change it rather—but
> The art itself is nature. (IV. iv. 89-97)

Polixenes' point is well-taken in principle if not actually followed (later he will militantly prohibit the marriage of his "gentler scion" to what he considers "the wildest stock"). His argument suggests a nature that is ideal, one that accommodates both creative energy and rational design; his actions show her as contradictory and mean-spirited. If physical nature is properly nurtured by the various arts, it becomes fully realized, humanized, redeemed nature, all the acts of which are queens.

Such a state of nature made rational by the spiritual discipline of art would be perfection. It would encompass both reason and passion, responsibility and love; it would celebrate the constancy of value despite flux; it would, uncoerced, exhibit moral coherence and artistic beauty. But *The Winter's Tale* is constantly suggesting not that nature is perfectible but that it is at once mysterious and powerful, the source of Leontes' jealousy as well as Florizel's love, of Polixenes' idealistic statement about higher nature and his subsequent con-

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tradictory action that betokens lower nature. And the art that portrays her in this play, if it is to persuade, must show all her facets.

The ambiguity of dreams in *The Winter's Tale* implies a kind of nature that is wild, irrational, uncultivated. Its defining trait is passionate energy, the jealousy of Leontes, and its issue may well be anarchy or madness. But passion (and only passion), when informed by reason, can become creative. The love of Florizel and the jealousy of Leontes are, at bottom, kindred. And they are both related in their irrationality to the fantastic element in Autolycus' ballads, in Hermione's reappearance, and in *The Winter's Tale* itself. To distinguish between the real and apparent value of such dreams or passions is crucial, and it is only through time that their validity is tried. Ultimately, unreasoning faith is required in such a trial along with reason. Paulina correctly maintains that the fulfillment of the prophecy would be "monstrous to our human reason" (V. i. 41). But Hermione's constancy during sixteen years stems from her faith in that very prophecy; supported by neither logic nor evidence, she believes that "great creating nature" moves toward that higher and ultimately rational better nature of which Polixenes speaks. The coherence she seeks does not derive from the incredible events, but from the constant or rebuilt determination within herself to make the events yield a meaning. Without faith in higher nature, Hermione would succumb to despair, Leontes would either collapse or remarry, the entire play would be "hooted at / Like an old tale" (V. iii. 116-117).

Seen with a faithful eye toward higher nature fulfilling itself and achieving a meaningful, artistic form, *The Winter's Tale* enacts a coherent and positive redemption of sin. Yet, seen skeptically, it is "so like an old tale that the verity of it is in strong suspicion" (V. ii. 28-29). But seen comprehensively it is both; the ambiguous element of fancy and improbability is so stressed that the audience is forced to realize that, while there is internal thematic resolution through the regeneration of nature, there is also a potentially chaotic aspect of nature, one that needs nothing less than a "miracle" *imposed* by art to make it rational. Art, then, in *The Winter's Tale* is simultaneously natural (Polixenes' theory) and artificial (Perdita's theory). There is both idealism and realism, art and the mockery (which marks the limitations) of art. The more comprehensive realism effected by this combination is the governing principle of the Pastoral Scene. Ultimately, constancy within time, abiding value that is both proved and used within flux, is the only possible victory that is convincing. Convincing because it admits its loss.

But yet, Paulina,
Hermione was not so much wrinkled, nothing
So aged as this seems. (V. iii. 27-29)

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