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The Winter's Tale: An "Old Tale" Begetting Wonder

Two modern scholars have redirected attention to the ancient commonplace that fictitious narratives arouse in those that read or hear them the passion of wonder. J.V. Cunningham, writing on the emotional effects of Shakespearean tragedy, and Dennis Quinn, explicating the obscurities of Donne's sermons and love poems,¹ have made clear that at least until the end of the Renaissance, poets and rhetoricians could be sure that their audiences would respond in wonder to a mysterious or marvellous story and would not demand that such a story be rationalized by a clear and distinct explanation. But wonder is nowhere more conspicuous in Renaissance literature than in Shakespeare's late romances, and of those most mysterious plays none is more suffused with wonder than *The Winter's Tale*. An examination of this play will illustrate in miniature that the Renaissance remembered very well Aristotle's dictum that "the lover of myth is in a sense a lover of Wisdom, for the myth is composed of wonders" (*Metaphysics*, 982b).²

The Renaissance inherited the tradition of wonder from a long line of classical and medieval thinkers. Philosophers, moralists, and poets, including Plato, Aristotle, Plutarch, Augustine, Aquinas, and Boccaccio,³ affirmed that wonder was a primary stimulus to knowledge, that, indeed, without wonder men might never have sought the causes of the world's phenomena: "it is owing to their wonder that men both now begin and at first began to philosophize" (Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 982b). Or as Socrates declared in Plato's dialogue *Theaetetus*: "Philosophy begins in wonder and Iris [the messenger of heaven] is the child of Thauman [wonder]" (155d).⁴ The classical tradition regarded wonder as both the origin and permanent companion of all rational inquiry. Wonder was not considered merely an inarticulate, emotional response of the childlike to the glories of nature—this is a later, romantic view of the subject—but was rather considered a truly rational movement of the mind towards fresh knowledge.

Wonder is prominent in *The Winter's Tale* because of the way in which providence complicates and then simplifies the lives of the characters in the play. Leontes, King of Sicily, decides that his noble wife Hermione has committed adultery with his visiting friend Polixenes, King of Bohemia, and he proclaims therefore that the child that his wife is expecting cannot be his. When the child (Perdita) is born, he orders it to be exposed in the wild kingdom of Bohemia, where Polixenes and Leontes' trusted counselor Camillo have already secretly gone to escape Leontes' mad wrath. But Leontes has been told in the meantime by the oracle of Apollo that his jealous suspicions are totally unfounded and that his wife, whom he had sent to prison, was innocent. The King then decides to seek forgiveness from those that he has wronged, but it is too late: he is told that his wife is dead. The famous last two acts of the play then describe the almost unbelievable ways in which Leontes is reunited with Polixenes, Camillo, Perdita—accompanied by her intended husband Florizel, the son of Polixenes—and, most marvellous of all, his wife. The attendants at Leontes' court who witness these incredible reunions can only describe them by saying that they are like the events in old tales.

"Old tales" in Shakespeare generally means old wives' tales, that is, lies; Mistress Page, for example, in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* speaks of an old tale about "Herne the Hunter" which

The superstitious idle-headed eld
Received and did deliver to our age
. . . for a truth. (IV, iv, 36-38)

In noting the likeness of events in *The Winter's Tale* to those of old tales, therefore, some critics have concluded that the play is one, as G. B. Harrison says, "in which no one expects any probability."⁵ But as I have noted, some of the characters in the play are also aware of the improbability of the events in which they participate, and it is this very improbability that forces them to the astonishing conclusion that old tales may not in this case be merely ancient fictions but also help reveal the true significance of experience.

Thus, one of the Gentlemen who tells about the scenes of reunion at Leontes' courts says, "Such a deal of wonder is broken out within this hour that ballad makers cannot be able to express it . . . This news which is called true is so like an old tale that the verity of it is in strong suspicion" (V, ii, 23-25, 27-29). Another Gentleman, when asked about the fate of Antigonus, the carrier of Perdita to Bohemia (and subsequently killed by a bear), says that this story is indeed like an old tale

"which will have matter to rehearse, though credit be asleep and not an ear open" (62-64). When Leontes meets Camillo, they were said to be "very notes of admiration"⁶ and there appeared in them "A notable passion of wonder" (15-16).

This coming true of old tales is indeed amazing, but such a phenomenon accords with a central theme of the play, which is best expressed by Polixenes when he talks to Perdita about mixing various kinds of flowers:

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

These famous lines describe very well the way in which Shakespeare constructed the plot of this play. He transforms through his artistic genius, given to him by nature, the fictions of old tales so that they become the matter of contemporary experience. "Old tales" is now not merely a cliché used to denote the fanciful imaginings of the "superstitious idle-headed eld" but has been awakened from its verbal "sleep of the dead," to use an expression of Cleanth Brooks,⁷ so that it is now the only adequate metaphor by which three sober gentlemen can relate the events that they have seen. But we must now look more closely at the wonder that their tale begets.

The Gentlemen who report the reunion of the King with his daughter (the scene itself is not shown on stage) also observe that both joy and sorrow seem to compete for domination in these noble persons. It is said that the King "being ready to leap out of himself for joy of his found daughter, as if that joy were now become a loss, cries 'Oh, thy mother, thy mother' " (V, ii, 50-53); it is further noted that "There might you have beheld one joy crown another, so and in such manner that it seemed sorrow wept to take leave of them, for their joy waded in tears" (44-47). Another observer noticed the mixed emotions of Paulina, the widow of Antigonus: "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" (72-76). Such fluid emotions have been correctly regarded by some commentators⁸ as vital to an understanding of this scene, but the connection between joy, sorrow, and wonder must be specifically understood.

Aristotle comments in the *Rhetoric* that "Dramatic turns of fortune and hair-breadth escapes from perils are pleasant, because we feel all such things are wonderful" (1371b). Certainly the lives of Leontes, Per-

Perdita, Hermione, Polixenes and his son Florizel are filled with these elements, and their response to them, as Aristotle had perceived it would be, is wonder and then joy. But the sorrow, the pain, which almost immediately succeeds Leontes' joy results from his seeing the likeness of Hermione, whom he still supposes to be dead, in Perdita, and from his then remembering the great evil he had committed against his wife. Aquinas supplies the relevant text to describe this: "Not every amazement and stupor are species of fear; but that amazement which is caused by great evil, and that stupor which arises from an unwonted evil."⁹ In this scene, then, Leontes not only rejoices at the providence that had preserved his daughter but also grieves at the folly, the "great evil," that had killed his wife; both emotions, as Aristotle and Aquinas point out, are associated with wonder.

Shakespeare's intention to arouse wonder by making the truth sound like an old tale also helps explain his presenting this reconciliation at secondhand through the reports of the Gentlemen rather than through the words and actions of the characters involved, a procedure which has puzzled many critics. Dr. Johnson suggested that it was "to spare his own labor that the poet put this whole scene into narrative."¹⁰ Some modern critics have not been even this generous: Frank Kermode, for example, says Shakespeare "boldly throws away the Perdita recognition in a scene of gentlemanly chatter."¹¹ That Shakespeare has been neither lazy nor profligate in this scene should be clear from what I pointed out above about the way he brilliantly makes use of the traditional associations of joy and sorrow with wonder. Closer to the truth about the form of the scene is G. Wilson Knight's comment that its style is effective because the prose "strikes a realistic and contemporary note, using the well-known trick of laying solid foundations before an unbelievable event: we are being habituated to impossible reunions."¹² But this still does not go quite to the heart of the matter. It must also be seen that, as the connection between wonder and joy is essential in understanding the content of the scene, so the Gentlemen's emphasis on the likeness of the events to an old tale is essential in understanding the way in which Shakespeare presents those events. Thus it is appropriate that in order to highlight the turning of old fictitious tales into current experience Shakespeare uses not only the matter but also the form of old tales. Tales are not tales when they are seen; rather, they must be heard. The audience's only hearing what has happened increases its wonder and it consequently desires to see and to know directly what is occurring; and this in turn increases the suspense and the drama of the final scene when

the supposed statue of Hermione becomes a living woman. For as Aristotle had pointed out, "wondering implies the desire of learning" (*Rhetoric*, 1371a).

And it is also true that this suggestion of the Perdita recognition scene makes excellent dramatic sense. Geoffrey Bullough points out that in *Pericles* Shakespeare had constructed a "double denouement" such as *The Winter's Tale* also required and that the portraying of both scenes on stage had caused the second reunion in *Pericles* to seem "somewhat hastily contrived." Bullough suggests that in *The Winter's Tale* Shakespeare wished "to make the meeting of Leontes and Hermione both ethically and dramatically the climax. So he not only lengthened that incident so as to allow free play to the emotions involved, but also 'played down' the conventional long-lost-child scene in order to make more of the lost wife's 'resurrection.'" ¹³ It is of course only another instance of Shakespeare's genius that what makes "good theatre" should also make for the best possible development of the play's major themes.

Scene iii of Act V presents the restoration of Hermione, an event which certainly must be seen to be believed; as Paulina says, "Were it but told you, [it] should be hooted at/ Like an old tale" (116-17). One of the Gentlemen, just prior to his exit from the stage in the preceding scene, had urged his comrades to see the wonders that would undoubtedly occur in Paulina's chapel: "Who would be thence that has the benefit of access? Every wink of an eye, some new grace will be born" (109-11); and his last statement, given our knowledge of what will occur in the play's last scene and of who will be the presiding mistress of those ceremonies, is a startling echo of St. Paul's discussion of resurrection: "Behold I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Cor. xv. 51-52). This final scene, then, will complete the theme of the transformation of old tales into living realities, and it will do so accompanied by the now familiar passions of wonder, joy, and sorrow.

Paulina notices Leontes' amazement upon first seeing the statue and says, "I like your silence, it the more shows off/ Your wonder" (21-22). The King is then struck anew with sorrow and pain as he considers the comfort which Hermione could have provided him in place of the grief which now pierces his soul (32-34). But when Paulina offers to cover the statue because "My lord's almost so far transported that/ He'll think anon it lives" (68-69), Leontes stops her and says, "No settled senses of the world can match/ The pleasure of that madness" (72-73), and he then adds, "For this affliction has a taste as sweet/ As any cordial comfort" (76-77). Both the pleasure and the pain which Leontes experiences as a result of his wonder at the statue are caused by his memories of his wife, the person whom the statue imitates.

The experience that Shakespeare is portraying in this last scene is very dense. The classical-Christian tradition concerning wonder maintained that one marvels at, and is therefore pleased by, sculpture and poetry because of the surprising likeness one notes between the imitation and the object imitated (see Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1448b, and *Rhetoric*, 1371b). This accounts for Leontes' silence and wonder when the statue is unveiled, as he notices its extraordinary likeness to his wife's appearance. The way in which a mixture of pleasure and pain then succeed his wonder is most helpfully illuminated by a passage in Aquinas: "Pain itself can be pleasurable accidentally in so far as it is accompanied by wonder, as in stage plays; or in so far as it recalls a beloved object to one's memory, and makes one feel one's love for the thing, whose absence gives us pain. Consequently, since love is pleasant, both pain and whatever else results from love, forasmuch as they remind us of our love are pleasant" (*S.T.*, II. i. 35.3., Reply Obj. 2). Thus, Leontes is struck with wonder at the likeness of the statue to his wife; he then is overwhelmed by his memories of the person who is being imitated, and this leads him, by the process which Aquinas describes, to both pain and joy. Shakespeare himself was also surely mindful in writing this scene of the experience of Ovid's Pygmalion, who upon confronting his suddenly pliable ivory statue of a beautiful woman, "amazde stood wavering too and fro/ Tweene joy and fear to bee beeguyld."¹⁴

In addition to these classical and medieval texts concerning pleasure, pain, and wonder, there were also available in the Renaissance contemporary accounts of the same kind of passionate experience that afflicted Shakespeare's noble persons. Robert Petersson has reminded us that as a result of the Council of Trent's reaffirmation of the doctrine of transubstantiation, "many new works of art revealed body and spirit in a high degree of unity. The body is now more human and palpable, the spirit more intensely sublime."¹⁵ As a consequence, many of the mystical writers of the time write accounts of ecstatic experiences that express quite specifically the close relations between pleasure and pain. Petersson cites some passages from the autobiography of St. Teresa of Avila that are strikingly similar to the sweet afflictions of Leontes at the end of *The Winter's Tale*. St. Teresa says that in an ecstatic experience her pain is "severe enough to kill me . . . yet it is so delectable and the soul is so conscious of its worth, that it desires it." Such an experience "is a martyrdom" where the pain is beyond endurance but nonetheless "I should like to spend the rest of my life suffering in that way."¹⁶

The events in Paulina's chapel have many of the aspects of such an ecstasy: Paulina herself has to deny that she is using any black magic, as she says that her "spell" is lawful; she notices also that Leontes is "transported" and he in turn says to her that he could stand "twenty years together" looking at the statue; and Perdita, Leontes' "admiring daughter," is observed to have so lost her "spirits" that she appears the same kind of stone as the sculpture. Another great writer of the Counter-Reformation, St. Francis de Sales, provides a concise account of the means by which wonder may indeed lead to this kind of ecstatic contemplation:

Admiration is aroused in us when we encounter anew truth which we neither knew nor expected to know. If the new truth we meet is joined to beauty and goodness, the admiration that desires from it is full of delight. . . . Admiration of pleasing things firmly attaches and fastens the mind to the admired object, both by reason of the excellence of the beauty it finds there and also by reason of the novelty of such excellence. The intellect can never be sufficiently satisfied in looking at something it never saw before but which is very agreeable to see.¹⁷

Leontes' admiration, his wonder, is indeed aroused by that "new truth" which he "neither knew nor expected to know"; and that new truth is also for him "joined to beauty and goodness" (for Leontes recalls in this final scene that Hermione "was as tender/ As infancy and grace" [26-27]).¹⁸ When he then refers to the "pleasure of that madness" that the statue inspires in him, we know also that his admiration is, as St. Francis said, "full of delight." Finally, both Leontes' and Perdita's rapt gazing at the statue, in which they say they could spend twenty years, illustrates St. Francis' description of the intensity of ecstatic admiration.

Before Paulina commands the statue to descend from its pedestal, she tells Leontes he must be resolved for "more amazement" (87) and she also issues one final direction to her audience: "It is required/ You do awake your faith. Then all stand still" (94-95). She then tells the statue to descend and "Strike all that look upon with marvel" (100). This is the final moment of wonder in the play, for Paulina immediately tells her astonished spectators to "Stir . . . / Bequeath to death your numbness, for from him/ Dear life redeems you" (101-103). There only remains now for everyone to go to a place where each may

. . . demand and answer to his part
Performed in this wide gap of time since first
We were dissevered. (153-55)

Wonder, then, is the passion which accompanies the recognition that old tales are like actual experience and that a statue may turn into a living woman; it is the effect of nature changing herself, using art as her instrument. Wonder in *The Winter's Tale*, however, does not suddenly erupt in Act V but has been present throughout the play, and it has served in considerable part to prepare the audience and the characters for the amazing climax.

When Leontes first meets Florizel and Perdita in Sicily, where the young couple have fled from Florizel's father because of his opposition to their marriage, he exclaims:

... oh, alas!
 I lost a couple that 'twixt heaven and earth
 Might thus have stood begetting wonder as
 You, gracious couple, do. (V, i, 130-33)

The King is struck by the likeness of the young couple to Polixenes and Hermione, and his wonder is aroused. Aristotle had noted, in passages in the *Poetics* and *Rhetoric* to which I have already referred, that in acts of imitation wonder is excited because of the unexpected similarities one sees between the imitation and that which is imitated. Similarly, since a child is to some degree an imitation, or representation, of its parent, wonder results from the comparison of offspring and parent. Wonder here, then, operates similarly to metaphor, as Leontes is led towards something which is known (Polixenes and Hermione) by that which is unknown (Florizel and Perdita). Indeed, wonder and irony, which is also of course present in this scene, frequently lie at the very heart of metaphor. As Cleanth Brooks has noticed, when a poet writes metaphorically, he does so in one of two ways:

The tone of the poet's utterance may amount to *this*: although we had not thoughts them to be so, A is indeed B; or, painful as it is to accept the fact, it is true But the poet may, on the other hand, discover, in awe and wonder, the emergence of a pattern not noticed before, and exclaim: 'Wonderful to tell, A is B.'¹⁹

The tone of Shakespeare's "utterance" here, let me repeat, includes both of these alternatives, and hence the whole scene is intensely metaphorical and therefore full of wonder.

Part of the horror of Leontes' jealousy in the first part of the play, then, is his disregard of, his failure to wonder at, the likenesses between himself and his newborn child. Montaigne had said that "among the

things we see ordinarily there are wonders so incomprehensible that they surpass even miracles in obscurity. What a prodigy it is that the drop of seed from which we are produced bears in itself the impressions not only of the bodily form but of the thoughts and inclinations of our fathers."²⁰ But Leontes can see none of himself in Perdita because he allows an abstract and unfounded jealousy to overcome a more natural response of wonder and delight. When Paulina holds up the new baby to the assembled lords at Leontes' court, she says, "Although the print be little, the whole matter/ And copy of the father," and she invokes the "good goddess Nature, which hast made it/ So like to him that got it" to keep the child from the disorders of its father's mind (II, iii, 98-99, 104-08). Leontes, however, is unmoved, and he later tells Hermione that "Thy brat hath been cast out, like to itself,/ No father owning it" (III, ii, 87-88).

G. Wilson Knight has noted that in *The Winter's Tale* "children are nature's miracles,"²¹ and his observation is supported by the veneration which the princes Mamillius and Florizel received from their fathers and their subjects and by the "holy" concern (V, i, 31-34) with which Leontes' subjects urge him to remarry so that there will be an heir to the throne. Children are nature's miracles²² because they keep alive the past in the present and because they insure that the passage of time will not mean a destruction of continuity in a family or a kingdom. But Leontes will not acknowledge the paternity of his daughter and substitutes his proud and jealous certainties about her origin for the wonder he should have experienced in seeing his own image reflected in her. It is one of the ironies of the play that the baby whom Leontes at first declared should be exiled "like to itself/ No father owning it" becomes the young girl who will most affectingly revive his love for his wife.

A substitution of premature, egotistical knowledge for reverential wonder also leads Leontes to his tragic disregard of Apollo's oracle, to whom he had appealed for confirmation of his suspicions of an affair between Polixenes and Hermione. But the oracle replied that Hermione is chaste; Leontes immediately labels this a "mere falsehood" (III, ii, 141), and it is this folly which precipitates his downfall. Shakespeare had emphasized the atmosphere of solemnity and awe which pervaded Apollo's temple at Delphos. Dion, one of Leontes' messengers to the oracle, describes his journey as something "rare, pleasant, speedy" (III, i, 13) and hopes that through Apollo's judgement "something rare/ . . . will rush to knowledge" (20-21). In Shakespeare's late plays the word "rare" is often connected to "wonder"; Ferdinand, for example, says of

Prospero in *The Tempest*, "So rare a wond' red father and a wise/
Makes this place Paradise" (IV, i, 123-24). Cleomenes, Leontes' other messenger, says that

the ear-deafening voice o' the oracle,
Kin to Jove's thunder, so surprised my sense
That I was nothing. (III, i, 8-10)

This passage illustrates well a text of Albert the Great, who says that wonder is a "constriction and suspension of the heart caused by amazement at the sensible appearance of something so portentous, great, and unusual, that the heart suffers a systole. Hence wonder is something like fear in its effect on the heart."²³ Leontes' failure to respond similarly in wonder and respect to the majesty of the gods leads directly to his son's death and to his wife's disappearance for sixteen years.

Central to Leontes' tragedy in these first three acts, then, is his blindness to two of the most fundamental mysteries of experience, generation and divinity. St. Augustine, in comparing birth and resurrection, decided that the former should arouse the greater wonder: "A dead man has risen again; men marvel: so many are born daily, and none marvels. If we reflect more considerately, it is a matter of greater wonder for one to be who was not before, than for one who was to come to life again."²⁴ If Leontes, then, is to be in a fit condition for the "resurrection" of his wife in Paulina's chapel, he will first have to recover his ability to wonder at children and at the gods.

Leontes' remark to Florizel and Perdita, when he first meets them in Sicily, that they are a couple which beget wonder signifies, therefore, that after many years of penitence he no longer believes that "All's true that is mistrusted" (II, i, 48). He can now recognize the miraculousness of generation, for he tells Florizel that

Your father's image is so hit in you,
His very air, that I should call you Brother,
As I did him. (V, i, 126-28)

And when he turns to Perdita and exclaims, "And you fair Princess—goddess!" (130), he indicates his awareness that the gods are not liars but rather begetters of beauty. When Paulina warns him that "Your eye hath too much youth in 't" (223) he says it is because he was thinking of Hermione "Even in these looks I made" (226-27). Paulina does not yet realize that Leontes no longer lusts to make reality conform to his desires, but is content to admire the surprises which it presents to him.

He now recognizes the wonder of a father's image "hit" in his son, and he marvels at being reminded by a stranger of his wife. And when he calls upon "The blessed gods" to "purge all infection from our air" (167-68) while Florizel and Perdita are in Sicily, it is clear that the passion which led him into tragedy has been changed into a wonder which will direct him into Paulina's chapel.

It is at this point, too, that one can see not only how much Leontes has changed but also how radically Shakespeare has departed from the "old tale" that was his principal source, Robert Greene's *Pandosto*,²⁵ a tale whose main events are the same as those of *The Winter's Tale*. When Fawnia and Dorastus (Greene's Perdita and Florizel) arrive in Sicily, *Pandosto*—Greene's Leontes—was indeed "amazed at the singular perfection" of Fawnia, and he "stood halfe astonished, viewing her beauty, so that he had almost forgot himself what hee had to doe" (p. 192). But *Pandosto*'s amazement is short-lived, for he decides to throw Dorastus into prison so that he may attempt the immediate seduction of Fawnia; *Pandosto* was, in Greene's words, "broyling at the heat of unlawfull lust" (p. 195). The only hint of this in *The Winter's Tale* is the words of Paulina (a character not present at all in *Pandosto*) to Leontes that I cited above, "Your eye hath too much youth in 't." To this, of course, Leontes replied that he had no lustful desire whatever, that he was only thinking of his wife.

Wonder or admiration in *Pandosto*, then, lasts only for a moment; it in no way permeates the attitudes of the characters or the actions of the plot. Shakespeare's play, on the other hand, participates in the central Western tradition of wonder where, again in the words of St. Francis de Sales, "Admiration of pleasing things firmly attaches and fastens the mind to the admired object . . . by reason of the excellence of the beauty it finds there." But there is no such firm attachment in *Pandosto*; an object of wonder becomes rapidly an object to be possessed. *Pandosto* and Egistus (Shakespeare's Polixenes) do recognize and are ultimately reunited with their children (before, fortunately, *Pandosto* can commit incest with his daughter), but *Pandosto*'s wife is irretrievably in the grave: one joy does not crown another in this story. Finally, in a fitting climax, *Pandosto* recalls all the grievous sins he has committed and hence, Greene says, "to close up the Comedie with a Tragicall stratageme, he slewe himselfe" (p. 199). *Pandosto* is an old tale that remains an old tale.

A final source of wonder in *The Winter's Tale* concerns its plot. Aristotle, to cite this central passage again, had said that "Dramatic turns of fortune and hair-breadth escapes from peril are pleasant,

because we feel all such things are wonderful" (*Rhetoric*, 1371b). Such turns of fortune are abundant in the play. When Florizel decides to abandon his destiny to fate and to leave Bohemia with Perdita because of his father's rage at his love for a country girl, Camillo advises him that this is too desperate a plan and that a better one might be devised whereby he could make a secure marriage and also perhaps placate his father. Florizel answers, "How, Camillo, / May this, almost a miracle, be done?" (IV, iv, 535). The unravelling of the destinies of the persons in the play does seem miraculous, especially because events do not unfold by mere chance but rather by a mysterious design. Aristotle says in the *Poetics* that incidents arousing pity and fear "have the very greatest effect on the mind when they occur unexpectedly and at the same time in consequence of one another; there is more of the marvellous in them than if they happened of themselves or by mere chance" (1452a). The "dramatic turns of fortune" in the events at Leontes' court in Act V certainly do "occur unexpectedly and at the same time in consequence of one another." The scheme of Camillo which Florizel had thought miraculous appears to be only a trap when the news arrives that Polixenes has come to Sicily in pursuit of his errant son, but this in turn becomes the means through which the final reconciliations take place. These wonderful reunions produce not only joy but also, as I have noted, pity and fear, for the notes of tragedy do not leave the play until the last scene.

Wonder in *The Winter's Tale*, then, operates in many different circumstances and is one of the important means by which Shakespeare addresses himself to some of the central intellectual concerns of his age. In the Renaissance the traditional notion of the decay of nature was exceptionally vital; in Hamlet's famous words, the world is "an unweeded garden, / That grows to seed, things rank and gross in nature / possess it merely" (I, ii, 135-37).²⁶ In this play, however, Shakespeare protests against this by allowing nature and dramatic experience to reclaim from art the experiential affectiveness of old tales and church sculptures. Sidney had said that one of the great virtues of art is that it makes natural, particular things universal; poetry makes not only the particular man Cyrus, "as nature might have done," but also bestows "a Cyrus upon the world, to make many Cyruses, if they [i.e., mankind] will learn aright why and how that maker made him."²⁷ That is to say, then, that nature may copy art, or that the particular may copy the universal, or that, in the context of *The Winter's Tale*, the actions of a sophisticated drama may imitate those of fictitious old tales. Like Sidney's Cyrus, old tales may be a model by which providence guides the

destinies of many contemporary persons, and the emotional response to such a process is fear, joy, sorrow, and wonder.

Thus, *The Winter's Tale* well represents the catholic taste of the Renaissance, as there was no part of experience, not even stories which on hasty inspection might appear incredible, which could not arouse an Elizabethan man's wonder and hence lead him to investigate previously unsuspected levels of experience. In the hands of a master, myths and wonders were once again found to be the handmaidens of wisdom, and as a result one could know that he did not have to embrace a fashionable rationalism in order to be either wise or contemporary.

NOTES

1. Cunningham, *Woe or Wonder* (1951; rpt. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1964); Quinn, "Donne and the Wane of Wonder," *ELH*, 36 (December, 1969), pp. 626-47.
2. All of the texts from Aristotle are taken from the Oxford translations. Specific citations are included in my text.
3. Wonder is commented upon by these writers in the following places: Plato, *Theaetetus*, 155d; Aristotle (in addition to those texts cited in my essay), *Ethics*, 1125a, *Poetics*, 1460a, *Mechanics*, 1, 847a; Plutarch, *Moralia*, "On Listening to Lectures," 44B; Augustine, *On the Gospel of St. John*, VIII, 1; Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*, I, 3, 54-55 and I, 3, 66-67; Boccaccio, *Genealogy of the Gods*, XIV, 8.
4. I have used the Jowett translation of Plato.
5. "'The Winter's Tale': Introduction," *Shakespeare: The Complete Works* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1952), p. 1431.
6. The English derivatives of the Latin word *admiratio*, including "admire" and "miracle," are equivalents of "wonder," which is a form of the Greek "thauma"; to be "astonished," literally "thunder struck," is also frequently a synonym for wonder in the Renaissance.
7. Brooks states that it is the context in which one is speaking that determines whether a statement will be truly a metaphor or only a cliché and that the context should be one "in which the key metaphors can be heard, not drowned out by the impertinent voices of competing metaphors or by the audible yawns of awakening metaphors" ("Metaphor, Paradox, and Stereotype," *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 5 [1965], 328).
8. See, for example, Derek Traversi's essay in *Shakespeare: The Last Phase* (London: Hollis and Carter, 1954), pp. 105-92.
9. *Summa Theologica*, II. i. 41. 4. Reply Obj. 4. I have used the translation of the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brother, 1947). Subsequent references will be incorporated into the text.
10. Quoted in *A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: The Winter's Tale*, ed. Horace Howard Furness (1898; rpt. New York: American Scholar Publications, 1966), p. 278.
11. "Introduction," *The Winter's Tale* (New York: New American Library, 1963), p. xxviii.
12. *The Crown of Life* (London: Methuen, 1948), p. 116.
13. *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), VII, 149.
14. Trans. Arthur Golding (1567). The passage may be found in Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, p. 233.
15. *The Art of Ecstasy: Teresa, Bernini, and Crashaw* (New York: Atheneum, 1970), p. 11.
16. Quoted in Petersson, p. 33.
17. *On the Love of God*, trans. John K. Ryan (New York: Doubleday, 1963), vii. 4.

18. In the play grace is especially associated with Hermione (when Leontes sends her to prison, she comments, "This action I now go on/ Is for my better grace" [II, i. 121-22]; also, when Leontes first sees the "statue" of her, he recalls that she "was as tender/ As infancy and grace" [V, iii. 26-27]) and with Perdita (Time says she is "Now grown in grace/ Equal with wondering" [IV, i. 24-25]; see also V, iii. 122).
19. "Metaphor, Paradox, Stereotype," p. 322.
20. "Of the Resemblance of Children to their Fathers," *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*, trans. Donald M. Frame (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1958), p. 578.
21. *The Crown of Life*, p. 115.
22. In *The Tempest* Ferdinand says of Miranda: "Admir'd Miranda!/ Indeed the top of admiration, worth/ What's dearest to the world" (III, i. 37-39). Wonder is important in all of Shakespeare's late romances; an essay surveying this subject needs to be written.
23. *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*, II, 6.
24. *On the Gospel of St. John*, VIII, 1.
25. The text of *Pandosto. The Triumph of Time* (1588) is in Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, pp. 156-199. My references are to this edition.
26. Renaissance views about this subject are summarized by Victor Harris in *All Coherence Gone* (London: Cass, 1966), pp. 1-7.
27. *An Apology for Poetry*, ed. Geoffrey Shepherd (London: Nelson, 1965), p. 101.