Rogue Sexuality in Early Modern English Literature

Desire, Status, Biopolitics

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Roguery, Bastardy, and Biopolitics in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*

Chapter 3 concluded by proposing that the promiscuously reproductive rogue haunts modernity's four "privileged objects of [sexual] knowledge"—the hysterical woman, the masturbating child, the Malthusian couple, and the perverse adult—revealing the politics of class oppression upon which their bodies are constructed.[1] This chapter offers a reading of William Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* that extends this line of argument, demonstrating how that play explores the effects of the early modern biopolitical regulation of the poor on the interpretation of elite sexuality. It thus investigates the historical process that Foucault describes as the "transposition into different forms" of the "caste distinction" of the older aristocracy; according to *The History of Sexuality*, Volume 1, the aristocracy "asserted the special character of its body […] in the form of blood, that is, in the form of the antiquity of its ancestry and of the value of its alliances; the bourgeoisie on the contrary looked to its progeny and the health of its organism when it laid claim to a specific body. The bourgeoisie's 'blood' was its sex."[2] Foucault distinguishes the aristocracy from the bourgeoisie by claiming that the former's bodily privilege, instantiated in the discourse of noble blood, derives from ancestors and alliances, while the bodily privilege of the latter relies on progeny and bodily health, both of which are tied directly to sex. As the preceding chapters have argued, however, the "blood" of early modern rogues, that which makes their bodies unique, was also their sex.[3] *The Winter's Tale* asks whether and to what degree this is true for early modern elites as well. The play's politics hinge on the exact relationship between the aristocracy's blood and its sex: can the Sicilian queen Hermione really be guilty of adultery? Can her banished daughter, raised by the Shepherd, be the sexually

[1] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1: *An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1990), 103–4.

[2] Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 124.

[3] On the social significance of blood in the early modern period, see Daniel Juan Gil, *Before Intimacy: Asocial Sexuality in Early Modern England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), pp. xi–xii; and Jean Feerick, *Strangers in Blood: Relocating Race in the Renaissance* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 3–24.

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manipulative "piece of excellent witchcraft" Bohemia's king, Polixenes, calls her?[4] Leveraging the state's biopolitical interest in rogue reproduction, the play meditates on the bodies of its elite women protagonists to question whether and how elite sexuality and reproduction can or should be regulated. The play seems to portray a moment in the middle of the "transposition" put forward by Foucault: the value of Perdita's eventual aristocratic alliances very much hinge on the question of whether she is viewed as the lower-status progeny of the Shepherd. As a result, Perdita is represented through both biopolitical discourses of rogue sexuality *and* those of the natural purity of noble blood. Rather than resolve the difficult questions it poses regarding elite socio-sexual identity, Shakespeare's play concludes by metatheatrically bidding the audience to decide whether and how to untangle the imbrication of elite and rogue sexualities.

Analyses of *The Winter's Tale* commonly position Leontes and Hermione as archetypal husband and wife, diagnosing the couple's struggle over paternal anxiety and marital fidelity from either anthropological or psychoanalytic perspectives.[5] The predominance of this critical approach may well be a result of Leontes's assertion that his marital troubles stem from a structural flaw in the reproduction of patriarchal power: "No barricado for a belly" (1.2.205). While this is a seductively powerful axiom about the impossibility of controlling female sexuality, it is a less than completely reliable guide to the workings of patriarchy in the play. Indeed, the play frequently indicates that Leontes is blind to the communal regulation of marriage and reproduction in Sicilia. Camillo warns Leontes, for example, that public expression of his jealousy threatens the reputations of his wife and son with "the injury of tongues in courts and kingdoms" (1.2.340). Leontes at first agrees—"I'll give no blemish to her honor," he says (1.2.343)—but later denies his community any role or stake in his marriage: "Why, what need we / Commune with you of this?" Leontes asks his concerned courtiers; "The matter, / The loss, the gain, the ordering on't, is all/ Properly ours" (2.1.163–72). Leontes's insistence on the complete separation between marriage and community is one way the play

[4] 4.4.403. All quotations of Shakespeare's works are from *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. David Bevington (New York: Pearson Longman, 2004). Subsequent quotations are cited parenthetically in the text.

[5] Leontes and Hermione are read as archetypes in many influential treatments of *The Winter's Tale*, especially analyses of gender and sexuality. See Peter B. Erickson, "Patriarchal Structures in *The Winter's Tale*," *PMLA* 97, no. 5 (1982): 819–29; Janet Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 193–238; Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 260–80; Valerie Traub, *Desire and Anxiety: Circulations of Sexuality in Shakespearean Drama* (London: Routledge, 1992), 25-49; and Robert W. Reeder, "Siring the Grandchild in *The Winter's Tale* and *The Fawn*," *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 48, no. 2 (2008): 349–71. Not surprisingly, recent work on Catholic typology in the play also invokes archetypal readings. See Ruth Vanita, "Mariological Memory in *The Winter's Tale* and *Henry VIII*," *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 40, no. 2 (2000): 311–37; Phebe Jensen, "Singing Psalms to Horn-pipes: Festivity, Iconoclasm, and Catholicism in *The Winter's Tale*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 55, no. 3 (2004): 279–306; and Frances Dolan, "Hermione's Ghost: Catholicism, the Feminine, and the Undead," in *The Impact of Feminism*, ed. Dympna Callaghan (New York: Palgrave McMillan, 2007), 213–37.

signals his increasing irrationality, suggesting the extent to which critical accounts that underestimate the significance of this communal dynamic also misrepresent the play's portrayal of patriarchal crisis by viewing it primarily as an affair of the socially elite.[6]

In fact, in Leontes's Sicilia, as in early modern England, there were a number of social and cultural "barricadoes" meant to secure the female womb and assure husbands of their paternity. Both of the play's decisive moments of paternal angst—Hermione's prosecution for adultery and Perdita's abandonment as a supposed bastard—evoke early modern legal institutions that depend on community participation to control the reproduction of the non-elite: the prosecution of sexual immorality by ecclesiastical courts and the communal monitoring of illegitimate reproduction encouraged by the poor laws.[7] Hermione's adultery trial is called a "purgation" (3.2.7), suggesting the legal procedure of the same name employed by church courts in cases of sexual incontinence, including adultery and bastardy, while Perdita's expulsion recalls the local practice of expelling bastards so as to avoid raising parish poor rates.[8] These legal contexts suggest that Leontes's tyranny lies not only in misprizing his wife and defying the Delphic oracle, but also in turning the institutional machinery of sexual regulation against the very community entrusted with its operation. In applying these social institutions to royalty, however, the play also encourages its audience to denaturalize the supposedly "natural" sexual purity of the nobility, to see it as part of the same communal processes that produced sexual order in England's church courts and local parishes.

Yet even as these social contexts demystify the superiority of nobility, the play surrounds Hermione and Perdita with an aura of natural sexual and social purity, which differentiates them from the lower social orders. The tension between these impulses is nowhere more evident than in the abandonment and discovery

[6] The rejection of community is inherent but not always fully explored in analyses of the play that focus on Leontes as a tyrant whose sexual jealousy is framed as a rejection of elite political norms. See Frances Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars: Representations of Domestic Crime in England, 1550–1700* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), 159–70; and Constance Jordan, *Shakespeare's Monarchies: Ruler and Subject in the Romances* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 107–46. An early example of this tradition is Paul N. Siegel, "Leontes a Jealous Tyrant," *Review of English Studies* 1, no. 4 (1950): 302–7.

[7] On the advent of communal participation in early modern criminal proceedings, and its effects on early modern drama, see Lorna Hutson, *The Invention of Suspicion: Law and Mimesis in Shakespeare and Renaissance Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). While Hutson focuses on the increasingly participatory nature of secular justice, my argument primarily concerns the mechanisms of ecclesiastical justice, which had a longer history of communal involvement. On ecclesiastical courts in early modern England, see Martin Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); and Ralph Houlbrooke, *Church Courts and the People During the English Reformation, 1520–1770* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

[8] The way bastardy was treated in early modern England's law courts suggests that economic issues were a paramount concern: most early modern paternity suits and fornication proceedings focused on "the daily costs of maintenance" of illegitimate pregnancies. See Laura Gowing, *Common Bodies: Women, Touch, and Power in Seventeenth-Century England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 181.

of Perdita: as an exposed infant, the purity of her noble blood is effectively erased, and the Shepherd immediately takes her for the bastard of a servant girl. But even before finding the royal treasure abandoned alongside Perdita, the Shepherd assumes her to be not just any bastard, but the daughter of an elite "waiting-gentlewoman" (3.3.70). Here the play simultaneously suggests that nobility is a social construction—coexistent with contextual cues like royal gold—while also insisting that royal blood will out. As we will see at the conclusion of this chapter, the play's political and dramatic power derives from the way it refuses to decide between these contradictory positions.

Perdita's brush with infant exposure, a crime associated with maternal poverty and sexual shame, and Hermione's public trial, more appropriate to a commoner than a queen, evince a connection in the play between sexuality, crime, and social difference that this chapter seeks to recover.[9] To do so, I first explore how the legal discourse of bastard-bearing positions Hermione as a poor, illegitimately pregnant woman, and her daughter as a fatherless bastard. I then turn to the figure of Autolycus, the rogue who appears just after the play saves Perdita from a similar social fate. Autolycus is drawn from the pages of rogue literature, which presented the rogue's desire for "sweet liberty" as both the innate tendency of a disreputable minority and an alluring temptation to all.[10] With Autolycus, the play extends the exploration of the relationship between social difference and sexual crime that Perdita's discovery and adoption might seem to foreclose.[11] Indeed, the play draws conspicuous parallels between the princess and the rogue, so that the former is not so much Perdita's opposite as her dark shadow.[12] It is not an accident that

[9] On the representation of bastards in early modern drama, see Alison Findlay, *Illegitimate Power: Bastards in Renaissance Drama* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1994); and Michael Neill, *Putting History to the Question: Power, Politics, and Society in English Renaissance Drama* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 127–66. On the representation of rogues in early modern England, see Linda Woodbridge, *Vagrancy, Homelessness, and English Renaissance Literature* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001); and William Carroll, *Fat King, Lean Beggar: Representations of Poverty in the Age of Shakespeare* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996). On rogue sexuality, see Bryan Reynolds, *Becoming Criminal: Transversal Performance and Cultural Dissidence in Early Modern England* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 55–63.

[10] See R. H. Tawney and Eileen Power, eds., Edward Hext, "Letter to Burghley on the Increase of Rogues and Vagabonds," in *Tudor Economic Documents* (London: Longman, 1963), 2:339. On Autolycus and Robert Greene, see Barbara Mowat, "Rogues, Shepherds, and the Counterfeit Distressed: Texts and Infracontexts of *The Winter's Tale* 4.3," *Shakespeare Studies* 22 (1994): 58–76.

[11] Steve Mentz argues that Autolycus signals the play's debt to the generic structure of Robert Greene's romances, a category he argues should include Greene's cony-catching pamphlets. While Mentz focuses on the play's appropriation of the romance narrative of repentance and redemption, my chapter places the play's depiction of sexuality and bastardy in dialogue with that of rogue literature. See Mentz, "Wearing Greene: Autolycus, Robert Greene, and the Structure of Romance in *The Winter's Tale*," *Renaissance Drama* 30 (2001): 73–92.

[12] The doubling of Perdita and Autolycus is rarely commented on in criticism of this play. Critics have tended to focus on the more prominent doublings of the royal fathers, Polixenes and Leontes, the royal children, Perdita and Florizel, and the courtly advisors, Paulina and Camillo. The only critic to argue for a doubling relationship between Perdita and Autolycus is David Kaula, who argues that Autolycus is a "counterpart to Perdita," in the sense that Perdita signifies Protestant spirituality and chastity, while Autolycus embodies a supposedly Catholic tendency toward materialism and promiscuity. See Kaula,

Perdita's name is related not only to the Latin *perdere*, which in its past participial form, *perditus*, can mean not only "lost" but also "depraved" or "abandoned.". This latinate association likely signified in English as well, since the *Oxford English Dictionary* records the adjective "perdite" as meaning "debauched, abandoned, wicked" by 1625.[13] The similarities between Perdita and Autolycus suggest that the Bohemian countryside is not, as countless critics have portrayed it, "a place of healing"[14] but a site fractured by the socio-sexual disorder produced in Sicilia.[15] In addition to linking her with Autolycus, the play connects Perdita's romance with Florizel to the shame of her birth by making her the object of sexual scandal. This chapter does not dismiss the sexual suspicion cast on Perdita in Bohemia as dramatic irony simply meant to underscore her purity; rather, it takes seriously the play's investment in portraying the princess as both naturally, manifestly chaste, and yet utterly subject to quite different communal assumptions about the meaning of her sexuality. Perdita's evident purity is not a comic counterpoint to Hermione's tragic prosecution but a doubling down on the play's interest in the communal construction of sexual meaning and social difference. The conclusion of *The Winter's Tale*, in which two pairs of royal lovers unite despite all odds, has often been read as a capitulation to a naturalizing ideology that links noble birth to sexual purity.[16] Yet, the earlier invocation of the social institutions that regulate and construct the discourse of reproduction in early modern England finds an

"Autolycus' Trumpery," *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 16, no. 2 (1976): 287–303, esp. 293. Aaron Kitch sees the play's representation of illegitimate paternity and illegitimate printing as related, causing him to consider Perdita and Mamillius's alleged bastardy in the context of Autolycus's cheap ballads. See Kitch, "Bastards and Broadsides in *The Winter's Tale*," *Renaissance Drama* 30 (2001): 43–72. On Autolycus's relationship to the Bohemian court, see Carroll, *Fat King*, 168–79. In thinking through the connection between Perdita and Autolycus, I have been influenced by Carroll's analysis of "Shakespeare's interest throughout the play in whether a 'gentleman' is 'born' or made" (174).

[13] *OED Online*, "perdite, adj.," www.oed.com/view/Entry/140641, accessed 20 February 2021.

[14] The introduction to the play in *The Norton Shakespeare* states, "Although Bohemia is a place of healing, it is not a paradise." See Jean E. Howard, "*The Winter's Tale*," in *The Norton Shakespeare*, eds. Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean Howard, and Katherine Maus (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), 2873–81, esp. 2879. The interpretation of Bohemia as a healing "green world" originates in Northrop Frye's *A Natural Perspective: The Development of Shakespearean Comedy and Romance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), 141–5. Though critics have modified Frye's characterization, critics still often endorse Bohemia's restorative properties. Examples include Anne Sutherland, "Mapping Regeneration in *The Winter's Tale*," in *Science, Literature, and Rhetoric in Early Modern England*, eds. Juliet Cummins and David Burchell (London: Ashgate, 2007), 37–52; Amy L. Tigner, "*The Winter's Tale*: Gardens and the Marvels of Transformation," *ELR: English Literary Renaissance* 36, no. 1 (2006): 114–34; and David N. Beauregard, "Shakespeare against the Skeptics: Nature and Grace in *The Winter's Tale*," in *Shakespeare's Last Plays: Essays in Literature and Politics*, eds. Stephen W. Smith and Travis Curtright (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2002), 53–72.

[15] Many scholars have noted the presence of sexual scandal in Bohemia, but most have dismissed it as a thematic extension of Leontes's misplaced suspicions. On sexual and social scandal in Bohemia, see Lindsay M. Kaplan and Katherine Eggert, "'Good Queen, My Lord, Good Queen': Sexual Slander and the Trials of Female Authority in *The Winter's Tale*," *Renaissance Drama* 25 (1994): 89–118; and Barbara Mowat, "Rogues, Shepherds, and the Counterfeit Distressed."

[16] Cf. Tigner's argument that "by the end of the play … the garden has become a microcosmic representation of the larger geo-political state, and all is regenerated." See Tigner, "*The Winter's Tale*: Gardens and the Marvels of Transformation," 134.

echo in the play's closing scenes of social and sexual reconciliation, highlighting the social construction and reproduction of the practice of biological succession and troubling the play's attempt to reintegrate Perdita into the natural line of royal succession.[17]

1. Hermione's Purgation and Leontes's "Female Bastard"

In the face of mounting court criticism over his accusations against Hermione, Leontes consents to a public trial for his wife despite his insistence that it will prove "no more than what I know" (2.1.190–1). Not surprisingly, the overwrought Leontes takes this gesture to an extreme, "so openly/ proceeding in justice" with a trial whose publicity, it seems, is more appropriate for a commoner than a queen (3.2.5–6). The social incongruity of the trial is foregrounded by Hermione's complaint that Leontes has forced "a great king's daughter […] To prate and talk for life and honour, 'fore/ Who please to come and hear" (3.2.37–40).[18] In early modern England, a private trial before a queen's aristocratic peers would have been more legally and culturally appropriate, as in Anne Boleyn's trial for adultery and treason. Shakespeare's source-text, Robert Greene's *Pandosto*, has the accused queen specifically ask for a jury of her peers, emphasizing the injustice of the denial of this privilege: "for seeing shee was a Prince shee ought to be tryed by her Peers."[19] In adding a trial scene to his adaptation of *Pandosto*, however, Shakespeare retains the jealous king's unjust refusal of his queen's royal prerogative but refashions it so that the trial evokes the communal context and participatory procedures of English ecclesiastical justice. Significantly, ecclesiastical courts were crucial to the regulation of bastardy and reproduction, crimes that were especially threatening when perpetrated by the poor, whose offspring were likely to drive up parish poor rates. The play's evocation of laws regulating adultery, bastardy, and parish poor rates both foregrounds the communal construction of sexuality and social difference in Sicilia and foreshadows its later thematic exploration in Bohemia.

Ecclesiastical courts were the most common public venue for sexual crimes in early modern England. Unlike secular courts, church court proceedings did not revolve around argumentation and deliberative juries, but rather relied upon the

[17] Viewing the play's penultimate scene as crucial to the text's larger meaning runs counter to the common critical impulse to see the penultimate scene as merely "preparation" for the reanimation of Hermione. For an example of this view, see Jeffrey Johnson, "'Which 'longs to women of all fashion': Churching and Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*," *Early Theatre* 7, no. 2 (2004): 75–85, esp. 79. Richard Meek questions this teleological reading of the play in "Ekphrasis in *The Rape of Lucrece* and *The Winter's Tale*," *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 46, no. 2 (2006): 389–414.

[18] This is the second time Hermione objects to the public nature of Leontes's accusations. Earlier, when first confronted by her husband, she warns him, "How will this grieve you/ When you shall come to clearer knowledge, that/ You thus have published me" (2.1.98–100).

[19] Robert Greene, *Pandosto*: *The Triumph of Time*, 1588, in *Three Elizabethan Romance Stories*, ed. James Winny (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), 83.

oaths of the accused and their neighbors. If a defendant maintained her innocence, she was often compelled to undergo an ecclesiastical procedure known as purgation, in which she swore an oath of innocence before the court.[20] Usually this was accompanied by a complementary procedure called compurgation, which forced her to gather community members, termed "compurgators," to swear confirmatory oaths. Purgation and compurgation procedures were employed in cases with much circumstantial evidence but little proof of guilt, and thus were especially relevant in presentments of sexually suspect married women whose marriages afforded them an alibi for pregnancy, the most commonly cited proof of female sexual incontinence. It therefore is not surprising that a majority of convictions for adultery were obtained through the failure of the accused to muster the required number of compurgators.[21] Compurgation was a way of displacing responsibility for questions over marital fidelity and the related question of the next generation's paternity from wives and midwives to the broader community.[22] By filtering women's testimony through communal testimony, husbands did not have to rely solely on their wives' honesty for reassurance that their children were their own. The public nature of these compurgation trials thus was crucial: the community was pressed not just to observe but also to participate in establishing a socially sanctioned judgment on the paternity of potentially illegitimate children.

When Leontes opens his trial of Hermione for adultery and treason, he claims to "proceed in justice, which shall have due course/ Even to the guilt or the *purgation*" (3.2.6–7, emphasis added).[23] The scene justifies this appellation when Hermione performs her innocence via a purgative oath, swearing that on "her honor, which [she] would free," it would be "rigor and not law" were she to be "condemned" (3.2.107–11). Furthermore, two courtiers, Cleomenes and Dion, act the part of compurgators and "swear upon this sword of justice" that they have brought from Delphos the "sealed up oracle" that confirms Hermione's purgation (3.2.121–7). It is significant that the two courtiers do not simply deliver the oracle's pronouncement, but instead participate in the trial proceedings through an elaborate testimonial ritual in which a sword is produced for them to swear upon. With these oaths, the oracle, often seen as extrinsic to early modern practice, becomes integrated into a communal compurgation procedure.[24] At least one

[20] On compurgation in the ecclesiastical courts, see Ingram, *Church Courts*, 51–2, 240–58, and 331–4.

[21] Ingram, *Church Courts*, 250.

[22] On the role of midwives in establishing the paternity of illegitimate children, see Gowing, *Common Bodies*, 177–203, as well as Bernard Capp, *When Gossips Meet: Women, Family, and Neighbourhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 301–6.

[23] Michael Schoenfeldt examines grief and purgation in *The Winter's Tale* through the lens of contemporary theories of Galenic physiology. See Michael Schoenfeldt, "'Give Sorrow Words': Emotional Loss and the Articulation of Temperament in Early Modern England," in *Dead Lovers: Erotic Bonds and the Study of Premodern Europe*, eds. Basil Dufallo and Peggy McCracken (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), 143–64.

[24] Julia Reinhardt Lupton analyzes the relationship between the oracle and early modern understandings of both Hebraic and Christian religious traditions in *Afterlives of Saints: Hagiography, Typology, and Renaissance Literature* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 175–220.

seventeenth-century reader seems to have interpreted these lines this way, noting in the margins of this scene that the "oracle *purges* the Queen and condemes the king" (emphasis added).[25] Its rejection by Leontes is not only counter to the gods, but also, crucially, counter to the communal processes through which divine justice is made manifest in Sicilia. The tragic culmination of Leontes's tyrannical rule thus is that he both substitutes his irrational jealousy for the wisdom of the oracle and destroys the communal structures of justice inherent in the ecclesiastical procedures of purgation and compurgation.[26]

Hermione's purgation trial, and the lower legal social strata to which it belongs, is in a sense an extension of Leontes's insistence that his infant daughter be treated like any other unwanted "female bastard" (2.3.175). The abandonment of Perdita in Bohemia, her reputed father Polixenes's kingdom, implicitly echoes the practice of palming off illegitimate children onto another man in a different parish, so as not to have to raise the parish rates to pay for them.[27] It is suggestive that Leontes decides Perdita will be "returned" to Bohemia at the same time that he singles out her "rearing" as an unjust burden (2.3.182–93). Perdita's expulsion deviates from earlier Shakespearian representations of aristocratic bastardy, in which elite men father illegitimate sons who prove either unnaturally deviant, as does Edmund in *King Lear*, or naturally courageous, as does the Bastard in *King John*.[28] Leontes entertains the possibility of raising Perdita as a royal bastard, only to dismiss it:

> Shall I live on to see this bastard kneel
> And call me father? Better burn it now
> Than curse it then. But be it; let it live.
> It shall not neither.
>
> (2.3.155–8)

[25] William Shakespeare, *The First Folio of Shakespeare: A Transcript of Contemporary Marginalia*, ed. Akihiro Yamada (Tokyo: Yushodo, 1998), 89.

[26] My argument thus differs from that of Michelle Ephraim, who argues that the play validates Leontes's paternal insecurity. See Ephraim, "Hermione's Suspicious Body: Adultery and Superfetation in *The Winter's Tale*," in *Performing Maternity in Early Modern England*, eds. Kathryn McPherson and Kathryn Moncrief (London: Ashgate, 2007), 45–58.

[27] Critics have differed in their interpretations of the cultural resonance of this expulsion. Paster argues that it is a reflection of anxieties surrounding the early modern practice of wet-nursing. Dolan argues that the exposure of the baby in the wilderness of Bohemia is derived from contemporary popular pamphlet tales describing notorious cases of infanticide. See Paster, *Body Embarrassed*, and Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars*. More recently, in an analysis of the play's thematic emphasis on economic redemption and the value of loss, Valerie Forman reads Perdita as "the embodiment of expenditure sent out either to prosper or to become naught." See Forman, *Tragicomic Redemptions: Global Economics and the Early Modern English Stage* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 85–109, esp. 94. I argue here that an underappreciated aspect of this expulsion is perhaps its most obvious cultural context: the social marginalization of children born out of wedlock.

[28] Findlay discusses the dramatic representation of bastards as unnaturally evil in her chapter "Bastardy and Evil," and as naturally good in "Heroic Bastards." See Findlay, *Illegitimate Power*, 45–84, and 170–212. Michael Neill analyzes the dramatic representation of bastards as monstrous and counterfeit in *Putting History to the Question*, 127–66.

The Winter's Tale may follow a different path than earlier plays because the alleged bastard in question is the mother's child, not the father's.[29] The financial burden of single mothers and their illegitimate children was the greatest fear of local authorities concerned with holding down the cost of the poor rate.[30] Leontes's familiar reaction to cuckoldry—"No, I'll not rear/ Another's issue"—takes on a specific socio-economic meaning when read against the material context of the poor laws.[31] Expelling a perceived bastard, Leontes creates the possibility that the royal child will grow up to be a pauper—unwittingly threatening to "mannerly distinguishment leave out/ Betwixt the prince and beggar," which is the very result he fears from Hermione's supposed infidelity and subsequent pregnancy (2.1.87–8).

Given Leontes's efforts to isolate Hermione and Perdita from their courtly community, it is not surprising that the language used to describe their situation parallels the language used to depict bastard-bearers and their illegitimate children. Leontes explicitly connects Perdita's expulsion to her alleged bastardy, telling Hermione: "You had a bastard … Thy brat hath been cast out, like to itself" (3.2.80–5). Yet Leontes goes further than this, using language that references the larger cultural connection between the social marginality of bastards and rogues. The expulsion and abandonment of bastards was closely associated with roguery in early modern England, and as far as the characters onstage or the spectators in the audience know, if she survives exposure, Perdita could easily end up a poor vagrant.[32] Indeed, the dramatic function of Perdita's exile, after all, is not to kill her—this could be accomplished by burning her, which Leontes considers and

[29] Perdita's predicament thus evokes contemporary city comedies that dramatize the social consequences of unmarried women's illegitimate pregnancies. McNeill argues that, in addition to the figure of the male aristocratic stage bastard, there is another, almost opposite, widespread trope of stage bastardy that features the illegitimate pregnancies of poor single women. While aristocratic stage bastards often clash with their fathers, poor pregnant single women have trouble establishing the paternity of their children. See Fiona McNeill, *Poor Women in Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 80–114.

[30] In such a case, parish authorities would often attempt to shift the responsibility onto a neighboring parish by claiming the child was fathered elsewhere or that the father resided somewhere else. Illegitimate children could and did easily become pawns in these local disputes, to the extent that bastards were sometimes shifted from one parish to another in the middle of the night, to be left on their reputed father's doorstep. G. R. Quaife documents multiple instances in which illegitimate children were shifted about by parishes unwilling to accept financial responsibility for them in *Wanton Wenches and Wayward Wives: Peasants and Illicit Sex in Early Seventeenth Century England* (London: Groom Helm, 1979), 202–42.

[31] On the relationship between the poor laws, marriage, and the sexuality of the poor, see Steve Hindle, *On the Parish?: The Micro-Politics of Poor Relief in Rural England, c.1550–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 337–60.

[32] This argument is supported by the fact that there actually was a practice of binding unwanted bastards on the backs of passing rogues, as well as the commonly held belief that bands of rogues stole children to use them to gain sympathy and charity. Robert Allen claimed that rogues "cary about the base-born, to hide them in farre remoued places, or to leade them about, as their owne naturall children!" *A treatise of christian beneficence* (London: Iohn Harison, 1600), A2v. Bastard-binding and kidnapping is discussed in Keith Wrightson, "Infanticide in Earlier Seventeenth-Century England," *Local Population Studies* 15 (1975): 10–22. On vagrants' reputed use of young children as props to gain sympathy, see A. L. Beier, *Masterless Men: The Vagrancy Problem in England, 1560–1640* (London: Methuen, 1985), 57–8.

rejects—but to keep her social fate uncertain, to allow her to grow up as the bastard her father believes her to be. Leontes's language of "casting out" also may have signaled to early modern audiences a connection to Cain, the biblical exemplar of vagabondage. The Bishops' Bible (1568) renders Cain's lament at his enforced wandering in language similar to that of Leontes's orders: "Beholde, thou hast *cast me out* this day from the upper face of the earth, & from thy face shall I be hyd, fugitive also and a *vacabounde* shall I be in the earth: and it shall come to passe, that every one that fyndeth me shal slay me" (emphasis added).[33] The earlier Coverdale Bible (1538) and the subsequent Geneva Bible (1576) both use the same language, with Cain referring to himself in both texts as an "outcast" and a "vagabunde" who fears that he will be at the mercy of whomever "fyndeth" him.[34]

This biblical language of exile resonated in contemporary popular depictions of rogues and vagabonds, such as Robert Greene's *A Noteable Discovery of Coosenage*, which warns against "base rogues […] being outcasts from God […] and an excremental reversion of sin."[35] Cain's description of vagabond rogues as hostages to fortune was also widely popular in early modern English art and literature, with the poor symbolizing the extreme cruelties of fortune, in contrast to the king, whose fortune was considered the best.[36] *The Winter's Tale* references this linkage of roguery and fortune when Autolycus claims he is a dishonest rogue because "Fortune would not suffer" it otherwise (4.4.767). Perdita's "casting out" thus begins the process of connecting her to Autolycus. The rogue's reliance on fortune is a trait shared by the infant Perdita, of whom Leontes remarks "As by strange fortune it came to us," so it should be brought to "some place where chance may nurse or end it" (2.3.179–83).[37] Like Autolycus, Perdita is portrayed as a child of fortune, who is to survive only "if fortune please[s]" (3.3.47).

But there is an even stronger cultural link that is set up by this particular representation of Perdita, one which has ramifications for the subsequent representation of her own sexuality in Bohemia. *The Winter's Tale*'s representation of illicit sexuality and social marginality springs from a cultural terrain that understood bastardy, roguery, and poverty as inextricably linked. Describing the barns in which vagrant rogues often found temporary lodging, Thomas Dekker writes, "here growes the Cursed *Tree* of *Bastardie* that is so fruitfull."[38] To take an example discussed in Chapter 3, in 1616 the preacher John Downame warns

[33] *The holie Bible conteynyng the olde Testament and the newe* (London, 1568), Gen. 4:14.

[34] *Biblia the Byble, that is, the holy Scrypture of the Olde and New Testament, faithfully translated in to Englyshe* (London, 1535), Gen. 4:B; and *The Bible that is, the Holy Scriptures contained in the Olde and Newe Testament* (London, 1576), Gen. 4:14.

[35] Robert Greene, *A Noteable Discovery of Coosenage* (London, 1591), C2v.

[36] Carroll, *Fat King*, 14–15, discusses the representation of king and beggar on opposite ends of the symbolic wheel of fortune.

[37] John Donne ruminates on the connection between bastards and fortune in the essay "Why Have Bastards Best Fortune?" See John Donne, *Paradoxes and Problems*, ed. Helen Peters (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 31–3.

[38] Thomas Dekker, *Lanthorne and Candlelight* (London, 1609), D3v.

his readers that vagrant rogues are "a promiscuous generation," practicing "a licentious life and lawless condition, [with] no knowne father or mother, wife or children. [They] are all kin yet know no kindred […] no law but their sensuall lust."[39] Downame envisions the supposed social disorder practiced by rogues as inextricably linked to their supposed sexual disorder, including the refusal of marriage and the consequent production of illegitimate children. Downame's comments index widespread theological association between idleness, sensuality, and poverty, which early moderns often traced back to the parable of the Prodigal Son's association of poverty with lechery.[40] In *The Booke of Matrimonie* (1564), the influential Anglican theologian Thomas Becon argues that the Prodigal Son's idleness and lechery caused God to punish him with destitution: "What shall I speak of that prodigall and wastful sonne, of whome we rede in the Gospelle? Was not he so plaged for his riotous and luxurious life with whores & harlots that he fell into beggerye?"[41] That Autolycus claims to have "compassed a motion of the Prodigal Son" shows that this understanding of rogue sexuality is very much alive in *The Winter's Tale* (4.3.80). It is a short cultural and theological step from Dekker's bastard family tree to Shakespeare's prodigal rogue.

Both the language of bastardy and roguery surrounding Perdita's expulsion and the ecclesiastical context of Hermione's trial suggest that considerations of socio-economic order and processes of communal authority are crucial to a consideration of the play's treatment of elite women's sexuality. The context of bastardy and roguery and the role of the community in interpreting sexual meaning and enforcing social order provide the terms in which the play's subsequent explosion of sexual energy in Bohemia needs to be understood. The pastoral scenes of the Bohemian countryside, with their wily rogues, gossipy maids, and communal festivities, are not so much a break from the elevated yet claustrophobic setting of the Sicilian court as they are the culmination of the play's exploration of how royal bodies and elite sexuality might fare under the social processes that regulated sexuality and reproduction for the vast majority of people living in early modern England.[42]

[39] John Downame, *The Plea of the Poore* (London, 1616), 38, original emphasis.

[40] On the cultural significance of the parable of the prodigal son in early modern England, see Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 202–10. On the connections between religious views of poverty and the vagrant poor, see Beier, *Masterless Men*, 1–8. On the relationship between rogue literature and religion, see Jeffrey Knapp, *Shakespeare's Tribe: Church, Nation, and Theater in Renaissance England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 61–79.

[41] *The Worckes of Thomas Becon* (London, 1564), fol. 654.

[42] For the past thirty-five years, some critics of the *The Winter's Tale* have bristled at Tillyard's notion that Shakespeare's romances conclude with a "complete regeneration" of the social world. See E. M. W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's Last Plays* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1951), 22. Early critics to dissent include Philip Weinstein, "An Interpretation of Pastoral in *The Winter's Tale*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 22, no. 2 (1971), 97–109; and Thomas McFarland, *Shakespeare's Pastoral Comedy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972). Montrose's work on the political valence of the pastoral genre has also

2. A Scandal in Bohemia

The cultural script that the play follows in its first acts might predict a second half in which the infant Perdita dies or, in the unlikely event of her survival, grows up as an ideally virtuous but destitute ward of a generous parish, or worse, a lecherous wandering rogue. Upon finding Perdita in Bohemia, the Shepherd seems to follow just such a script, supposing her the illegitimate child of a maid lacking the means to raise her: "Sure some scape. Though I am not bookish, yet I can read waiting-gentlewoman in the scape" (3.3.67–8). Furthermore, he recognizes that the illegality of illegitimate pregnancy and infanticide makes abandonment a necessarily secret task: "This has been some stair-work, some trunk-work, some behind-door-work" (3.3.68–9).[43] For the Shepherd, Perdita's abandonment marks her as an illicitly forsaken bastard, whose meager prospects earn her the Shepherd's "pity" (3.3.70). Yet, after the Shepherd agrees to adopt her, the play dispatches her penury as suddenly and absolutely as the play's famous pursuing bear does Antigonus. The gold that accompanies Perdita allows the shepherd to reap the rewards as well as the burden of rearing another's issue.[44] His generous adoption of the orphaned bastard and his subsequent financial success repudiate the destructive socioeconomic logic of the poor laws, with their insistence that childcare outside of marriage is a losing investment. Further, the Shepherd's generosity heralds an emotional and psychic expansion beyond Leontes's paranoia, one which begins mending the play's torn social fabric.[45] But while the play insulates the adult Perdita from the taint of bastardy and destitution in order eventually to unite her with Prince Florizel of Bohemia, it introduces her shadow in the figure of Autolycus, the wandering rogue. A "theef by generation," as a seventeenth-century reader called him, Autolycus is an example of Downame's "promiscuous generation" of rogues, and his life can be read as a parallel counter-history that reveals, in understated counterpoint, the life that the infant Perdita could have been expected to live.[46] Reading Autolycus this way helps us see that Perdita's social and sexual propriety in Bohemia is just as much a product of social processes as is

been influential. See esp. Louis Montrose, "'Eliza, Queene of Shepheardes' and the Pastoral of Power," *ELR: English Literary Renaissance* 10 (1980): 153–82.

[43] Pregnant single women like the one the Shepherd imagines faced serious social and economic stigma: legally considered criminals, many also became vagrants in order to avoid prosecution, or because their lovers and families refused to support them. McNeill, *Poor Women*, 94, discusses how some of these women hid their pregnancy and either gave their children up for adoption or abandoned them, and observes that this practice is mentioned in Thomas Heywood's *The Wise Woman of Hogsdon*. See also Amy Froide and Judith Bennet, eds., *Singlewomen in the European Past* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 35–41.

[44] Cf. Laura Gowing's observation that "child abandonment in early modern England remained, as it had historically been, something of a gesture of faith in charity." Gowing, *Common Bodies*, 194.

[45] For a discussion of the dynamics of adoption in this and other Shakespeare plays, see Marianne Novy, *Reading Adoption: Family and Difference in Fiction and Drama* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 56–86.

[46] *The First Folio of Shakespeare*, ed. Yamada, 90.

her mother's in Sicilia, and just as vulnerable to the vicissitudes of communal interpretation.

Educated audience members may have recognized an allusion to bastardy in his mythological namesake, since the original Autolycus was the bastard child of an affair between Chione and Mercury.[47] Through him, the play illustrates the life Perdita has been spared: that of the lecherous vagabond, thief, and con artist, whose "traffic is sheets" and whose "revenue is the silly cheat" (4.3.23). Autolycus sings of "tumbling in the hay" with his "aunts," a slang term for prostitutes, and tells the audience that he wears rags because of two vices: the "die and drab," or gambling and whoring (4.3.25–6). Although he does not make any mention of his children, the possibility that Autolycus has knowingly or unknowingly fathered bastards during his sexual "tumbling" through the brothels of the Bohemian countryside is ever present. Similarly, his claim to marriage raises more questions about his family life than it answers. Autolycus states that he "married a tinker's wife," but no wife appears in the play, nor is she mentioned again (4.3.80). Itinerant laborers, tinkers, and their families were often grouped together with bastard rogues, an association seemingly at work here, since it is only after marrying this tinker's wife that Autolycus "settled in rogue" (4.3.82).[48] His apparent abandonment of his wife, and presumably whatever children they produced, is the kind of behavior that made local officials treat bastardy and roguery as related social ills. Autolycus seems to exude, in the words of John Fortescue, the "certain corruption and stain from the sin" of their conception that was thought to characterize bastards.[49]

Autolycus's cozening of the Shepherd's son, the Clown, while the latter is on his way to Bohemia's sheep shearing festival, contains linguistic and dramatic elements marking him as both a professional rogue and Perdita's doppelgänger. Mimicking the robbery victim in the Good Samaritan parable, Autolycus distracts the Clown with a tale of woe while he picks the Clown's pocket. Autolycus's false cry: "O, that ever I was born!" (4.3.43) indicates that this scene is an ironic parallel of the earlier scene in which the infant Perdita is found by the Clown's father, who plays the Good Samaritan by adopting the helpless foundling.[50] Coming so soon after the "newborn" Perdita is found and ministered to by the Shepherd, this pitiful refrain

[47] The mythological story of Autolycus is relevant to this play in other ways. Chione had affairs with both Mercury and Apollo, and bore twin sons as a result, Autolycus and Philammon. Chione's sexual liberty does not result in genealogical confusion: the affair produces a clearly identifiable son for each father. The story enacts a patriarchal fantasy in which paternity does not depend on the control of female sexuality, a utopian solution to the social problem *The Winter's Tale* dramatizes. In terms of Autolycus, his twin birth suggests that he is a character given to doubling.

[48] On the early modern tendency to interpret itinerant laborers as idle rogues, see Patricia Fumerton, *Unsettled: The Culture of Mobility and the Working Poor in Early Modern England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 3–46.

[49] John Fortescue, *A Learned Comendation of the Politique Laws of England* (London, 1567; facsimile edn., Amsterdam and New York: Theatrum orbis Terrarum, 1969), fols. 95v–97v.

[50] Hartwig points out that Autolycus's scam parodies the previous scene between the Shepherd and Perdita, arguing that Autolycus, as a victimizer, is a double for Leontes. See Joan Hartwig, "Cloten, Autolycus, and Caliban: Bearers of Parodic Burdens," in *Shakespeare's Romances Reconsidered*, eds. Carol Mcginnis Kay and Henry E. Jacobs (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978), 91–103. G. Wilson

is a ghostly echo of what the infant might have said in the previous scene, had she the power of speech (3.3.98). The play neatly presents this as a parallel. Perdita, a helpless newborn, is saved from a life of roguery and licentiousness by a Good Samaritan; Autolycus, mimicking a newborn's helplessness, practices the tricks of the life Perdita escaped on that Good Samaritan's son.

Ironically, Florizel's poetic description of Perdita's "singular" perfection during the sheep-shearing festival likewise creates an echo effect between the reputed bastard and the rogue (4.4.144). Rhapsodizing over the excellence of her performance as Flora, goddess of flowers, Florizel says to 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; When you do dance, I wish you
> A wave o'th'sea, that you might ever do
> Nothing but that …
>
> (4.4.135–42)

Florizel offers a reassuring response to Perdita's fear that her pastoral playing is too similar to the immodest celebrations at Whitsuntide, which often included Robin Hood plays featuring literary characters not unlike Autolycus.[51] He insists that any action Perdita performs, including the flirtatious bestowal of flowers upon all the men at the festival, is perfect and fitting, even for holy prayer. This defense and celebration of Perdita's virtue, however, focuses on singing, almsgiving, and dancing—all subjects that recall the musical performance of the unemployed rogue in the previous scene, where Florizel introduces himself to the audience by singing a canting ballad. These lines also foreshadow the Shepherd's Servant's admiring description of Autolycus's skills, occurring less than fifty lines later:

> Oh, master, if you did but hear the peddler at the door, you would never
> dance again after a tabor and pipe; no, the bagpipe could not move you […]
> Why, he sings [his goods] over as they were gods or goddesses; you would
> think a smock were a she-angel, he so chants to the sleevehand and the
> work about the square on't. (4.4.181–204)

Knight notes the parallels between Autolycus's ruse and the Good Samaritan story in *The Crown of Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1947), 101–2.

[51] On Robin Hood plays at Whitsuntide celebrations, see Katherine L. French, Gary G. Gibbs, and Beat A. Kümin, eds., *The Parish in English Life, 1400–1600* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 182.

The Servant seems as seduced by Autolycus's singing as Florizel is by Perdita's, and his excited descriptions recall the intensity, if not the poetry, of Florizel's remarks. The Servant's description of Autolycus's peddling comically mirrors Florizel's acclamation of Perdita: he sings as he sells, and his songs seem worthy of prayers to the gods.

The mirroring effect of these descriptions seems at odds with the play's attempt to represent the princess's natural sexual purity as consonant with her innate noble purity—a consonance most commentators assume to be self-evident, for good reason. Her royal bearing is apparent to everyone who meets her: although no one in Bohemia knows she is a princess, she is thrice called a queen, and Polixenes himself asserts that she is "Too noble for this place" (4.4.5, 146, 161, 159). Her apparently innate social superiority is also signaled by the repeated description of her skin as "fair" (a term applied to Perdita on nine separate occasions by seven different characters) and "as white as […] the fanned snow" (4.4.341–2). In this passage, fair skin functions as an ideological sign of natural bodily difference between socially distinct groups of people. Kim Hall has argued that fairness could also communicate a racialized sexual purity, a characteristic associated with Perdita through her rejection of grafted flowers, or "nature's bastards" (4.4.84).[52] Perdita's defense of genealogical purity has been read as a sign of her innate understanding of her place as the true heir to the kingdom of Sicilia, as well as the play's naturalization of noble blood. Her rejection of the "streaked gillyvor" is equally important, however, in signaling her supposedly natural chastity: not only is she not a bastard, but she would also never bear one.[53] While the sexual scandal of Perdita's alleged bastardy is made present through the figure of Autolycus, the play makes a concomitant effort to elevate her beyond moral reproach. These elements combine to represent Perdita as both Autolycus's opposite *and* his double, rendering her sexual status overdertermined in distinctly contradictory ways.[54]

The tension between her apparent inborn chastity and the sexual disrepute of her origins culminates in the discovery of her betrothal to Florizel. Once that romance is common knowledge, the sexual purity that was so apparent earlier immediately seems to desert her. Polixenes accuses her of being a "fresh piece of

[52] Perdita is called "fair" twice by Florizel (4.4.42, 492) and Polixenes, (4.4.78, 367), and once by each of the following characters: Camillo (4.4.544), a Servant (5.1.87), Leontes (5.1.131), a Lord (5.1.190), and Paulina (5.3.119). My understanding of how the word "fair" implies a relationship between whiteness and sexual purity is indebted to Kim Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), 69–71.

[53] Amy Tigner also reads Perdita's dislike of gillyvors in light of her "potential bastardy," although her argument does not connect this moment to the play's other invocations of the discourse of illegitimate sexual reproduction. Tigner, "*The Winter's Tale*: Gardens and the Marvels of Transformation," 123. See also Claire Duncan, "'Nature's Bastards': Grafted Generation in Early Modern England," *Renaissance and Reformation* 38, no. 2 (2015): 121–47; and Francois LaRoque, "'Nature's Bastards': The Hybridity of *The Winter's Tale*," *Shakespeare Studies: The Shakespeare Society of Japan* 55 (2017): 1–12.

[54] On the relationship between overdetermination and contradiction, see Louis Althusser, *For Marx* (London: Verso, 2005), 87–128.

excellent witchcraft" with designs on Florizel's royal inheritance (4.4.438, 402–3). The king subsequently warns Perdita to keep her desires in check, saying "if ever henceforth thou these rural latches to his entrance open,/ Or hoop his body more with thy embraces," she will be tortured and executed (4.4.417–21).[55] Perdita's cross-class engagement makes the social context of her upbringing more salient to determining her sexual reputation than her apparent natural "nobility." The social disparity between Perdita and Florizel is no doubt one of the major reasons their tryst appears sexually suspicious, but this suspicion is also caused by the changeable definition of marriage in the early modern period. Depending on the situation, a valid marriage could be made through a consensual agreement, the act of reproductive sex, a vow in front of witnesses, or a written contract.[56] In this context, the relationship between Perdita and Florizel raises the specter of the common figure of the fallen maid, whether a "lowborn lass" like Perdita or a "waiting gentlewoman," seduced into premarital sex by the promise of marriage or agreeing to sex in the belief that the act alone constituted marriage (4.4.156).[57]

One reason to consider Perdita and Florizel's relationship in the context of illicit premarital sexuality is that the play has already explored the sexual dangers of engagement through the gossip surrounding the Clown's romantic entanglement with two shepherdesses, Mopsa and Dorcus. When Mopsa reminds the Clown that he owes her "certain ribbons and gloves," which were "promised [her] against the feast," Mopsa's friend Dorcas responds by teasing her about a rumor that Mopsa and the Clown have agreed to get married, saying, "He hath promised you more than that, or there be liars" (4.4.224–8). In a culture where promises of marriage could emerge from a verbal contract or a sexual tryst, saying to an unengaged maid that her lover has promised marriage could imply that they had engaged in premarital sex.[58] Indeed, Mopsa seems to interpret Dorcas's teasing comment about their romantic engagement as sexual slander, since she retorts, "He hath paid you all he promised you. Maybe he has paid you more, which will shame you to give him again" (4.4.229–30). Implying that the Clown already had sex with Dorcas, Mopsa turns the tables on her accuser, taunting her with the "shame" of bastardy—a return of the Clown's seminal "payment" to her. This passage may

[55] In its metaphorization of female genitalia as an open door, Polixenes's instructions evoke Leontes's earlier anxiety over the notion that there is "no barricado for a belly" (1.2.204).

[56] For a discussion of the different legal definitions of marriage in Shakespeare's plays, see B. J. and Mary Sokol, *Shakespeare, Law, and Marriage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). There is a great deal of social history that analyzes the flexibility and mutability of marriage in early modern England, including Ingram, *Church Courts*; David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); and Diana O'Hara, *Courtship and Constraint: Rethinking the Making of Marriage in Tudor England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).

[57] McNeill, *Poor Women*, 80–114, discusses the unstable definition of marriage and female chastity.

[58] In early modern England, bridal pregnancy rates were extremely high, from anywhere between 10 and 30 percent. Wrightson has argued that sexual restraint routinely "crumbled with marriage in view." Keith Wrightson, *English Society, 1580–1680* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1982), 85. Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death*, 277–81, also examines premarital sexuality.

seem like playful teasing, but the Clown's reaction to their gossip suggests that it hits a nerve: "Is there no manners left among maids? […] must [you] be tittle-tattling before all our guests? 'Tis well they are whisp'ring. Clamor your tongues, and not a word more" (4.4.231–5). Berating their manners while accusing them of "tattling," or slander, the Clown takes the maids' exchange seriously enough to try to silence them. The strained exchange between the members of this love triangle highlights how the promise of marriage could turn into the threat of fornication and illegitimate pregnancy.

Such is the hold of the tight link between nobility and chastity—and their naturalization through discourses of "blood"—however, that no critic of the play has explored how Perdita's adoptive brother's promises should affect our interpretation of her own promises. King Polixenes seems to have no trouble worrying over his royal son's chastity, anxiously asking Camillo, "Is it not too far gone? It is time to part them" (4.4.322). Polixenes knows the couple has not yet been publicly married, having just discussed the matter with Perdita's adoptive father, the Shepherd, yet he worries that he may be too late to prevent Perdita from opening her rural latch and "hooping" Florizel. When Florizel boasts that "the gifts [Perdita] looks from me are packed and locked/ Up in my heart, which I have given already/ But not delivered," this description could be read to mean that he has "given" himself to Perdita sexually, but not formally "delivered" himself in a marriage ceremony (4.4.338–9). This interpretation is supported by the fact that it is this kind of marital vow that Florizel consequently attempts to "deliver" to Perdita, asking the Shepherd to "Contract us 'fore these witnesses" (4.4.336–8). Through such intimations, the suspicion of premarital fornication and the specter of illegitimacy shadows Florizel's and Perdita's romance. My point is not that the play definitively represents the couple as fornicators, but that the play makes Perdita's chastity an interpretive crux, not at all taken for granted as natural, but open to the suppositions of the community on stage and in the audience.

The play's invocation of the socioeconomic context of vagrancy and bastardy thus encourages us to see something about Perdita that critical insistence on her status as chaste princess prevents us from seeing: she is not, cannot be, the solution to the problem of securing elite reproduction that the first half of the play dramatizes. Like all early modern women, she never would be able to prove who fathered her child, leaving her potentially vulnerable to accusations of bastard-bearing in much the same way that her pregnant mother was vulnerable to accusations of adultery. Her chastity is therefore a very live issue even into the fifth act—one that Shakespeare exploits when Leontes finally meets his long-lost daughter. Florizel begs the Sicilian king to support his engagement: "At your request," he insists, "My father will grant precious things as trifles" (5.1.221–2). Distracted by the beauty of Florizel's fiancée, Leontes replies, "Would he do so, I'd beg your precious mistress,/ Which he counts but a trifle" (5.1.223–4). Critics have questioned whether Leontes's unconscious desire for his own daughter should affect our perception of

him as "the penitent King," but the effect of this passing incestuous moment on the audience's view of Perdita has received less attention (4.1.5).[59] In trying to extol Perdita's value, Leontes also draws attention to the fact that during her time in Bohemia Perdita is a "lowborn lass" described by Polixenes as a "knack," which, like "trifle," was an early modern term for a frivolous plaything (4.4.156, 408).[60] The comparison of valuable mistress to sexualized trifle only highlights the way in which Perdita is both these things: simultaneously an innocent, chaste princess and a bastard foundling whose desire threatens to destroy a kingdom.

As we have seen, such sexual disorder is more typically associated with Autolycus, and it is appropriate that he is the only other character in the play to use the word "trifle," euphemistically describing his criminal profession as "snapper-up of unconsidered trifles" (4.3.25). The linguistic trace of Autolycus's self-description in Leontes's comment about Perdita recalls her history as an "unconsidered trifle" that was indeed found and snapped-up by the Shepherd. This "trifling" connection between princess Perdita and the cozener Autolycus is strengthened by the etymology of "trifle," a word adopted from the Old French *trufle*, a parallel form of *truffe*, which Randall Cotgrave translates in 1611 as "gullerie," and the Italian *truffo*, which John Florio translates in 1598 as "cozening, cheating, conicatching."[61] Rematerializing on the brink of the revelation of Perdita's royal lineage, the word "trifle" reminds us how close she came to being like Autolycus.

When news of Polixenes's arrival reaches the Sicilian court, the couple's chastity becomes politically crucial with Leontes's friendly warning: "Your honor not o'erthrown by your desires,/ I am friend to them and you" (5.1.230). The legitimacy of the royal line depends on their avoidance of sexual immorality, particularly bastard-bearing. To withstand such suspicion, Perdita, whose "origin" in bastardy and whose propitious engagement mark her as vulnerable, requires a solution to her quandary that is not so much romantic as socially efficacious. The eventual revelation of her royal birth clears the way for her to marry Florizel, but it cannot alone

[59] Carol Thomas Neely discusses incest in *The Winter's Tale* in *Broken Nuptials in Shakespeare's Plays* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 164–209. The introduction to a recent edition of the play refutes the scene's incestuous charge, calling it "healthy rather than incestuous." See William Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, eds. Susan Snyder and Deborah T. Curren-Aquino (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 124. On Shakespeare's use of *Pandosto*, see Stephen J. Lynch, *Shakespearean Intertextuality: Studies in Selected Sources and Plays* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing, 1998), 83–112. On Leontes's repentance, see Sarah Beckwith, "Shakespeare's Resurrections," in *Shakespeare and the Middle Ages*, eds. John Watkins and Curtis Perry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 45–67. I am grateful to Professor Beckwith for providing me with a copy of her essay prior to publication.

[60] *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines "trifle" as "a toy, trinket, bauble, knick-knack," citing Jehan Palsgrave's *Lesclarcissement de la langue françoyse* (1530), which defines "Tryfell" as "a knacke, *friuolle*." See *OED Online*, "trifle, n.," https://www-oed-com.umiss.idm.oclc.org/view/Entry/205961, accessed 20 February 2021.

[61] See Randall Cotgrave, A *Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* (London: Printed by Adam Islip, 1611), K4v; and John Florio, *A worlde of wordes, or Most copious, and exact dictionarie in Italian and English* (London: Arnold Hatfield, 1598), Q2r.

place her Bohemian engagement beyond suspicion. To do this, the communities of both Sicilia and Bohemia must affirm that the coming marriage is valid.

3. Seeing, Hearing, Swearing

The arrival of Perdita and Florizel in Sicilia in need of communal approval of and witnesses to their marriage provides an opportunity to heal the injury to communal authority that occurred during Hermione's trial. The play's investment in dramatizing the lovers' dilemma suggests that the royal family reunion should be the centerpiece of the play's resolution. Instead, the play glosses over what could have been its denouement: the restoration of the long-lost Perdita's royal inheritance, which clears the way for her marriage to proceed. Occurring offstage, the reunion is described by three nameless Lords, the last of whom introduces his narration by claiming that despite its apparent outlandishness, the story is "most true, if ever truth were pregnant by circumstance. That which you hear, you'll swear you see; there is such unity in the proofs […] many other evidences proclaim her with all certainty to be the King's daughter" (5.2.22–9). This passage distinguishes the ocular proof provided by Hermione's mantle from the hearsay and "surmises" characterizing the preceding sexual suspicion in both Sicilia and Bohemia. Perdita's parentage thus is established with a degree of certainty that proved elusive in the earlier judicial proceedings. But even more important than the kind of "proofs" offered is the fact that these "evidences" convince the community of the court, and that the community itself is allowed to stand as witnesses. In proving that Perdita is after all the lost princess, what Shakespeare allows us to see onstage is not a tearful family reunion, but the processes of communal affirmation that produce, and are reproduced by, women's sexual honor and men's sexual certainty. It is only after the community is portrayed as accepting this amazing reunion that the courtly advisor Paulina can refer to Florizel and Perdita as "these your contracted/ Heirs of your kingdoms" (5.3.5–6).

The indirect representation of this reunion is often taken as a consequence of the play's perceived need to speed to the showstopping final scene: the reanimation of Paulina's statue of Hermione.[62] But while this offstage reunion may not be same kind of dramatic spectacle as Hermione's apparently miraculous resurrection, it does have the important thematic effect of resolving the play's earlier portrayal of Leontes's subversion of purgation and compurgation. Even more significantly, it complicates the play's portrayal of sexuality by implying that chastity is neither an inborn quality nor an easy corollary to social status. Instead, the play demonstrates

[62] For a powerful analysis of "reporting" as a dramatic resource in this scene, see Holger Syme, *Theatre and Testimony in Shakespeare's England: A Culture of Mediation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 205–56.

that elite chastity is the product of social processes of discussion, reflection, and communal affirmation that are not entirely different from proto-biopolitical institutions like the church court and the poor laws. The lord quoted above calls attention to the importance of social regulation of the elite body in his promise, appropriate to both his neighbors and the theatrical audience, "That which you hear, you'll swear you'll see, there is such unity in the proofs" (5.2.23). The argument that circumstantial proof exceeds or substitutes for visual confirmation recalls Leontes's earlier insistence that Hermione's guilt is so certain because it "lacked sight only, naught for approbation/ But only seeing, all other circumstances/ Made up the deed" (2.1.178–80). The difference here is that the circumstances have convinced not a jealous husband, but both the courtly and theatrical audiences. In calling on the audience of his tale to swear to its truth, this anonymous gentleman metatheatrically marshals his neighbors onstage, as well as the audience in the theater, to stand as *compurgators* on behalf of the resolution of the play's earlier uncertainty over sex and genealogy.

Like the other literary texts analyzed in this book, *The Winter's Tale* uses metarepresentation to examine the power of rogue sexuality. But unlike the rogue pamphlets, *The Roaring Girl*, or *Epicoene*, the play does not marshal the readerly desire to imagine oneself as a rogue. Instead, it plays on what we might call the audience's *writerly* desire, the desire to author the rogue's story themselves, to manage the biopolitical processes regulating early modern sexual bodies. Given the opportunity to act as compurgators, the audience is offered the seductive power of the police. Like the biopolitical tracts discussed in Chapter 3, then, the ending of *The Winter's Tale* focuses on the desire to administer rather than practice rogue reproduction. This is not too dissimilar from the audience's usual role as arbitrator—reflected in early modern epilogues' common appeal for applause. But unlike that conventional dramatic gesture, Perdita's metatheatrical compurgation occurs during the middle of the diegesis in order to displace a particularly difficult social quandary on to the audience. What kinds of oaths are they willing to swear on her behalf? Do they believe Hermione was chaste because she was noble? Do they believe Perdita to be promiscuous because she is roguish? Perhaps they refuse to participate in the politics of this moment altogether, like the silent Shepherd, whom the gentlemen describe as simply "stand[ing] by like a weather-bitten conduit of many kings' reigns" while the aristocrats fawn over themselves celebrating Perdita's return (5.2.40–1). The play uses metatheatricality to displace the biopolitical quandaries of rogue sexuality from the narrative to the audience, thus asking them to see, hear, and swear according to their beliefs, or perhaps their desires.

The play's penultimate scene therefore is just as metatheatrically charged as the play's final scene is often taken to be. The famous statue scene can be thought of as another compurgation that continues and expands the themes of the preceding scene, an interpretation underlined by Paulina's use of the phrase "old tale"

to describe Hermione's resurrection, the same phrase employed by the previous scene's courtiers to describe Perdita's survival in exile (5.2.20, 5.3.118). In a certain sense, the statue scene provides what that scene denies: the performance of a miracle that needs to be witnessed to be believed. Yet the statue scene denies its audience what the previous scene delivers: the explanation for how such a miraculous event could have possibly occurred. It is a lack that is acutely felt by those on stage, to the extent that it fairly dominates the response of the court to Hermione's return. Polixenes insists Hermione speak, while the courtier Camillo demands she "make it manifest where she has lived, / Or how stol'n from the dead" (5.3.115–16). Hermione denies them their request, instead asking Perdita for a retelling of the play's first old tale: "Tell me, mine own, / Where hast thou been preserved? Where lived? How found / Thy father's court?" (5.3.124–6). Hermione's desire for a recapitulation of the previous scene, in which the court is unified around the tale of Perdita's homecoming, and the way it frustrates the desire for narrative closure in this scene, are both signs that despite the wonder of Hermione's reanimation, something is missing from the play's conclusion.

The lack of narrative closure may be caused by the old wounds that Hermione's resurrection opens, wounds that had seemed closed for good in the previous scene. With Hermione alive, the penitent Leontes faces not the attainable forgiveness of God, but a potentially difficult reconciliation with his wife. The court also faces uncertain political times, as factions loyal to the Queen may perhaps once again be pitted against those loyal to the King. The importance of the courtly acceptance of Hermione's resurrection is evident in Paulina's almost too insistent suggestion that everyone "Go together, / You precious winners all; your exultation / Partake to everyone" (5.3.132–4). The absence of Hermione's story, and Paulina's consequent insistence on the collective performance of joy, suggests that the spirit of community may prove harder to attain than it was to destroy, and that, like the sexual status of its lost princess, the unity of Sicilia's court cannot be magically produced or taken for granted as natural. This is not to undercut the power of the dramatic resolution of the play. It is to suggest, however, that the scene's power is not dependent on whether it posits a solution to the social contradictions it stages. It is no easier to distinguish faithful wives from unfaithful wives, or honest citizens from rogues, or elite children from base bastards than it was at the beginning of the play. Rather, like the affirmation of Perdita's patrimony, the statue scene's power derives from how Shakespeare displaces rather than solves these problems: through the metatheatrical mechanism of audience compurgation.

Paulina's concern about whether Hermione's reanimation is "unlawful," and Leontes's response, "If this be magic, let it be an art / Lawful as eating," frames Hermione's restoration in terms of the play's earlier concern with the legal regulation of adultery, bastardy, and roguery (5.3.96, 111–12). Pointing out the Marian aspects of Hermione's reanimation, a number of critics have viewed Leontes's pronouncement as a reference to that most mystical of Catholic rituals, the

Eucharist.[63] His assertion is just as important, however, for the way it emphasizes the interconnectedness of daily life and the law, seeking to enfold the play's magic, such as it is, within those quotidian bounds. If there is a miracle in the sexually disgraced Hermione's seemingly serene return, it is not only a religious one, or even a dramatic one, as so many critics insist. Rather, it is what we might call a biopolitical miracle. It is perhaps especially miraculous given the reintroduction of the stain of promiscuous sexuality suggested by the statue's supposed maker, Julio Romano, who collaborated on the popular pornographic images called *I Modi*.[64] Critics have puzzled over the inclusion of Romano's name in this scene, asking why Hermione is stained with the "red herring" of pornographic sexuality at the moment the play introduces what will become her second sexual compurgation.[65] But Hermione's sexualization represents the residue of sexual risk that the period's biopolitical institutions cannot obliterate, the ineluctable aleatory nature of life that neither parish officials, nor religious courts, nor theatrical audiences can fully defend against.[66] In a world where royal and marital alliances fall apart at the slightest provocation, and where the institutions that secure their supposedly natural superiority have been exposed as inadequate, it indeed would require an awakening of faith to believe in the possibility of an enduring socio-sexual reconciliation.

[63] On the Catholic connotations of this scene, see Vanita, "Mariological Memory in *The Winter's Tale and Henry VIII*"; Jensen, "Singing Psalms to Horn-pipes"; Dolan, "Hermione's Ghost"; Knapp, *Shakespeare's Tribe*, 181–2; Lupton, *Afterlives of Saints*, 210–18; and Gareth Roberts, "'An art lawful as eating'? Magic in *The Tempest* and *The Winter's Tale*," in *Shakespeare's Late Plays: New Readings*, eds. Jennifer Richards and James Knowles (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 126–42.

[64] Two excellent recent treatments of Romano's appearance in the play are Eric Langley, "Postured Like a Whore? Misreading Hermione's Statue," *Renaissance Studies* 27, no. 3 (2013), 318–40, and Tom Rutter, "Shakespeare, Serlio, and Giulio Romano," *English Literary Renaissance* 49, no. 2 (2019), 248–72.

[65] See Andrew Gurr, "The Bear, the Statue, and Hysteria in *The Winter's Tale*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 34, no. 4 (1983), 420. On pornography in early modern England, see Ian Moulton, *Before Pornography: Erotic Writing in Early Modern England* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 2000).

[66] For a related observation regarding Hermione's sexuality, see Will Stockton, *Members of His Body: Shakespeare, Paul, and a Theology of Nonmonogamy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), 99–100.