'I that do speak a word may call it again': Reimagining Text, Self, and
Progress in Shakespeare

An Honors Thesis for the Department of English

Isaac Goluboff

Advisor: Judith Haber
Second Reader: Julia Genster

My sone, if thou no wikked word hast seyd,
Thee thar nat drede for to be biwreyd;
But he that hath mysseyd, I dar wel sayn,
He may by no wey clepe his word agayn.
Thyng that is seyd is seyd, and forth it gooth,
Though hym repente, or be hym nevere so looth.

—Chaucer, *The Manciple's Tale*, **IX.351-56**

Make hast therefore sweet love, whilest it is prime,
For none can call againe the passèd time.

—Spenser, *Amoretti*, **70.13-14**

Too late? Why, no. I that do speak a word
May call it again.

—Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, **2.2.58-59**

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I.

Introduction

Stephen Greenblatt, in his influential book *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*, writes of the complexity of the structured systems in which Shakespearean characters must live and with which they must contend. In discussing characters' immersion in and removal from these systems, he writes:

> If there are intimations in Shakespeare of a release from the complex narrative orders in which everyone is inscribed, these intimations do not arise from bristling resistance or strident denunciation—the mood of a Jaques or Timon. They arise paradoxically from a peculiarly intense *submission…*[1]

The interconnectedness and negotiation that Greenblatt identifies between "inscri[ption]," "*submission*," and "release" elucidate the intricate interplay that occurs between Shakespeare's characters and the "narrative," spatial, syntactic, phonetic, orthographic, and metrical systems that they create and by which they are created.[2] Shakespeare's plays endow various narrative, formal, and visual structures with the power to create, retract, and re-create characters and the physical, social, and temporal worlds they live in, a power that enacts Isabella's assertion that one can "speak a word" and subsequently "call it again" (*Measure for Measure* 2.2.58-59),[3] or

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[1] Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 254.

[2] The orthography I consider in this thesis belongs to the editions of the plays I cite and may not always reflect Shakespeare's. However, it does have powerful effects on the cited texts and can, I argue, still contribute to our understanding of how important formal and structural systems function in the plays I discuss.

[3] All quotations of *Measure for Measure, Othello,* and *The Winter's Tale* are from *The Norton Shakespeare: Later Plays and Poems,* ed. Stephen Greenblatt, et al. 3rd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2016). All quotations of *Twelfth Night* are from *The Norton Shakespeare: Early Plays and Poems,* ed. Stephen Greenblatt, et al. 3rd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2016).

retract, reformulate, and re-utter it. In the same play, though, Angelo claims that he "can speak / Against the thing [he says]" (2.4.58-59), re-conceptualizing the plays as capable not only of retraction and reformulation but also of simply replacing old systems with new ones without explicitly taking the old ones back.

The interplay between characters and the systems in place around them and between Isabella's and Angelo's models of systemic revision may manifest itself in particularly nuanced ways in Shakespearean genres that themselves challenge, amend, and append others. The problem plays and romances, for instance, not only consciously take back and rework their own internal systems as other Shakespeare plays do, but also engage with and rework the other Shakespearean dramatic categories that surround them, like festive or romantic comedy and tragedy. This thesis will consider the ways that two plays in the more nuanced categories, the problem play *Measure for Measure* and the romance *The Winter's Tale*, rework the formal, spatial, and temporal systems that constitute them internally while also reworking other Shakespearean genres, using both Isabella's and Angelo's conceptualizations of revision to carry out both types of reworking.

In the first chapter, I examine the way *Measure for Measure* strives to rework, by way of physical inversion, its own spatial, formal, textual, and social world. I conceptualize the Duke's desire to reform Vienna's functioning as an effort to invert the current internal and external physical make-up of its citizens and institutions, in which non-living text, rather than humanity and human selfhood, constitutes the internal center of the city and its characters. The Duke and the play, then, use both larger spatial techniques of inversion as well as formal (metrical, syntactic, and orthographic) inversion to undo and recreate the city's and its citizens' spatial configurations, bringing the text that populates the center out onto the border and freeing up the

center for population by humanity and human selfhood. I examine not only how this inversion is itself a retraction and reformulation of the play's spatial and formal constitution but also how the play achieves this inversion to varying degrees of success at different points in the play, at times taking back, or "call[ing] again," the inversion and compromising its functioning, and at other times simply "speak[ing] against" it by leaving it alone but simultaneously putting forward alternative systems that compromise it.

In the second chapter, I identify and track the syntactic, phonetic, orthographic, and occasionally metrical systems of time that govern the world of *The Winter's Tale*. These systems change across time and location; the play modifies, or "call[s] again," its own systematic temporal functioning as it begins in Sicilia, moves sixteen years forward to Bohemia, and finally returns to Sicilia. However, as in *Measure for Measure*'s imperfect success in performing its intended inversions, *The Winter's Tale* does not always retract and reformulate its temporalities perfectly but instead "speak[s] against" both the Sicilian temporal system of Acts 1 to 3 and the Bohemian temporal system of Act 4 by combining them in Act 5, leaving both of them in play and refusing to "call" either one "again." Furthermore, while the initial Sicilian system allows characters to retract and reformulate their *own* temporality, constantly moving backward and forward in time, the later Bohemian system magnifies Polixenes's early image of a continuous chain of "cipher[s]" (1.2.6-9), creating a system in which time moves strictly forward, each subsequent "cipher" "speak[ing] against," or moving beyond while not explicitly destroying or compromising, the prior "cipher[s]" in the larger chain of time and progress.

I conclude by discussing the ways in which the nuanced structural characteristics of *Measure for Measure* and *The Winter's Tale* retract and reformulate those of Shakespeare's perhaps more structurally explicit and clear-cut comedies and tragedies. I address not only these

plays' efforts to rework Shakespeare's comedic and tragic structures but also their place in a larger, Bohemian-like chain of Shakespearean progress in which, rather than reformulating other Shakespearean works by "call[ing] [them] again," they "speak against" the other works, claiming their own place in the Shakespeare canon and presenting their own unique structures and systems.

II.

'Thou art the list': Formal Inversion and Textual 'Se[a]ming' in *Measure for Measure*

Sylvia Plath, discussing the difficulties associated with describing minute details and everyday "paraphernalia" in poetry, said in a 1962 interview: "Poetry, I feel, is a tyrannical discipline. You've got to go so far, so fast, in such a small space that you've just got to burn away all the peripherals."[4] The idea of favoring a literary text's core over its "peripherals," and of the complicated relationship between these two components of a literary text, raises pressing questions when considered in the context of Shakespeare's problem plays, particularly *Measure for Measure.* What happens when, in the Vienna that Shakespeare creates, text that is spatially, formally, or socially peripheral to the play's characters is "burn[ed] away," or modified at all? What happens when it is left untouched? What kinds of spatial, formal, and social consequences ensue when the "peripherals" find their way into the center, into the "abyss of inwardness" that Harold Bloom sees as constituting each character[5] and into the textual and social "composition and spirit of the community" that Marjorie Garber describes?[6] What happens when center and border, person and text, combine with one another in a way that is, to use Shakespeare's version of Plath's word, "tyrannous" (*Measure for Measure* 2.2.108, 4.2.81)?

Comparing Shakespeare's earlier comedies to the problem plays, Richard P. Wheeler writes that "Trust in the self's inner resources and their compatibility with an external world,

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[4] "Sylvia Plath Interview." YouTube, uploaded July 1, 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g2lMsVpRh5c.

[5] Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1998), 361.

[6] Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare After All* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2004), 568.

which sustains the festive comedies, becomes problematic in the problem comedies."[7] *Measure for Measure* enacts a drawn-out negotiation between characters' "inner resources" and their "external world," or between inner character and external physical text, human center and textual border. The spatial configuration toward which the play seems to move, and toward which the Duke wants to move the world of Vienna as he governs the action of the play surreptitiously, places characters in internal spatial positions and important texts in external positions, often circumscribing the people with text. This configuration may seem particularly "problematic," or confused, in *Measure for Measure* precisely because the characters do not begin in it. They move gradually, and often unsuccessfully, toward it over the course of the play.

Perhaps most immediately "problematic" at the beginning of the play is that, when the desired configuration *is* visible, it is immediately undone. In 1.2, we get a glimpse of the way this configuration looks in an ordered society, but we get that glimpse only in the context of its undoing:

> LUCIO: Thou conclud'st like the sanctimonious pirate, that went to sea with the ten commandments but scraped one out of the table.
> SECOND GENTLEMAN: Thou shalt not steal?
> LUCIO: Ay, that he razed.
> FIRST GENTLEMAN: Why, 'twas a commandment to command the captain and all the rest from their functions. They put forth to steal! There's not a soldier of us all that, in the thanksgiving before meat, do relish the petition that prays for peace.
>   (1.2.7-15)

The spatial and textual configuration that Lucio and the gentlemen depict here establishes the ten commandments, a written list of laws, as circumscribing the hypothetical pirates. "Raz[ing]" one of the commandments from the list opens up the textual border, "burn[ing] away" part of the peripheral, surrounding text and allowing the pirates to "put forth to steal." "Put[ting] forth,"

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[7] Richard P. Wheeler, *Shakespeare's Development and the Problem Comedies: Turn and Counter-Turn* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 16.

then, allows them to carry out their "functions," as remaining within the border of the

commandments holds them back "from their functions." Various elements of the teasing and

joking that follow reinforce this configuration, and problematically reinforce its undoing. First,

the characters' language makes it clear that circumscription by the commandments, or

alternatively by grace, is a location in space:

> SECOND GENTLEMAN: I never heard any soldier dislike it.
> LUCIO: I believe thee, for I think thou never wast where grace was said.
> SECOND GENTLEMAN: No, a dozen times at least.
> FIRST GENTLEMAN: What? In meter?
> LUCIO: In any proportion, or in any language.
> FIRST GENTLEMAN: I think, or in any religion!
> (1.2.16-22)

Evidently, regardless of whether grace is said "In meter," "In any proportion," "in any

language," or "in any religion," the text of grace borders around a physical, internal *place* in

which a person can exist. The playfully biting dialogue continues:

> LUCIO: Ay, why not? Grace is grace, despite of all controversy. [to FIRST
>   GENTLEMAN] As, for example, thou thyself art a wicked villain, despite of all
>   grace.
> FIRST GENTLEMAN: Well, there went but a pair of shears between us.
> LUCIO: I grant, as there may between the lists and the velvet. Thou art the list.
> FIRST GENTLEMAN: And thou the velvet.
> (1.2.23-30)

While the first gentleman's statement that "there went but a pair of shears between us" is most

straightforwardly an assertion of his and Lucio's similarity, one might also interpret it as a

statement that "a pair of shears" separated the gentleman from the textual border of grace, from

the "list" of words and phrases that constitute grace and are intended to circumscribe the human

being who says them. Lucio's calling the gentleman "the list" would then allow Lucio to

playfully and teasingly ascribe to the gentleman qualities that he would find undesirable,

qualities of the texts that "command" them "from their functions," the texts that enclose them in

socially accepted lives they do not want.

After understanding 1.2 this way, one can conceptualize 1.1 as the beginning of the

Duke's attempt to push the characters toward the socially acceptable spatial configuration that

Lucio and the gentleman establish but resist. In 1.1, the Duke begins by presenting a

configuration in which important texts make up the core, or the *internal* world, of the characters,

and the characters' external physical or social selves seem only to serve as borders for the

internal texts. The Duke appraises Angelo, identifying the text of which he is composed and

catalyzing its "unfold[ing]," its movement through Angelo's human frame from a central

position to an external or peripheral one:

> There is a kind of character in thy life
> That to th'observer doth thy history
> Fully unfold. Thyself and thy belongings
> Are not thine own so proper as to waste
> Thyself upon thy virtues, they on thee.
> Heaven doth with us as we with torches do,
> Not light them for themselves. For if our virtues
> Did not go forth of us, 'twere all alike
> As if we had them not.
>   (1.1.26-35)[8]

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[8] The Duke's appraisal of Angelo's inner and outer spatial orientation here is certainly
not the only one of its kind in the Shakespeare canon, but it is distinct from those found in other
plays because of its focus on the appraised person's textual nature. See, for example, Viola's
appraisal of the Captain:

> There is a fair behavior in thee, Captain.
> And though that nature with a bounteous wall
> Doth oft close in pollution, yet of thee
> I will believe thou hast a mind that suits
> With this, thy fair and outward character.
>   (*Twelfth Night* 1.2.50)

There is no indication here that the "behavior," "nature," or "character" that Viola describes is in
any way textual. Furthermore, while Angelo's possibly textual "character" exists "in [his] life,"

The Duke locates a written "character" and "history" inside Angelo and opens them up. In doing

so, he attempts to invert Angelo's physical, spatial, and textual orientation, striving to bring the

text outside and push the human inside. We learn more about the Duke's desire to push text out

when he describes the nature of the law under his rule:

> We have strict statutes and most biting laws,
> The needful bits and curbs to headstrong jades,
> Which for this fourteen years we have let slip,
> Even like an o'ergrown lion in a cave
> That goes not out to prey. Now, as fond fathers,
> Having bound up the threatening twigs of birch
> Only to stick it in their children's sight
> For terror, not to use, in time the rod
> More mocked than feared becomes; so our decrees,
> Dead to infliction, to themselves are dead,
> And liberty plucks justice by the nose,
> The baby beats the nurse, and quite athwart
> Goes all decorum.
>   (1.3.19-31)

As "a lion in a cave / That goes not out to prey," and as a "bound up" bunch of "twigs," the law

has been placed internally, circumscribed by the outside, human world, though perhaps trying to

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the Captain's non-textual "character" exists on the "outward" side of his person. See also Iago's appraisal of Othello:

> The Moor is of a free and open nature
> That thinks men honest that but seem to be so,
> And will as tenderly be led by th' nose
> As asses are.
>   (*Othello* 1.2.377-80)

As with the Captain's, Othello's "nature" has no textual association here. His boundaries are also much more fluid, "free and open," less spatially segregated than anyone's in (at least the first half of) *Measure for Measure*. Another appraisal in *Measure for Measure*—the Duke's observation that "There is written in your brow, Provost, honesty and constancy" (4.2.147-48)— reaffirms the uniquely textual nature of appraisals and of human physicality in general in this play.

break through the boundary between the inner and outer world in its "o'ergrown" state. As the

Duke temporarily relinquishes his leadership role in Vienna, then, his goal is to bring the law out

of enclosure, and it seems that his primary method for doing so involves inverting Angelo's

spatial orientation, bringing the textual law that exists within him out into the world.[11]

This inversion, of Angelo's and of Vienna's spatial and textual orientation, plays out over

the course of the rest of the play. It is not at all effective within the bounds of 1.1, nor is it

completely effective within the bounds of the first three acts. In their first encounter with one

another in 2.2, Isabella and Angelo carry out an interaction seemingly under the assumption that

Angelo is, himself, unquestionably, the law, or inwardly composed of legal text:

> ANGELO: The law hath not been dead, though it hath slept.
>   Those many had not dared to do that evil
>   If the first that did th'edict infringe
>   Had answered for his deed. Now 'tis awake,
>   Takes note of what is done, and like a prophet
>   Looks in a glass that shows what future evils
>   Either new, or by remissness new-conceived
>   And so in progress to be hatched and born,
>   Are now to have no successive degrees,
>   But ere they live to end.
> ISABELLA: Yet show some pity.
> ANGELO: I show it most of all when I show justice…(2.2.91-101)

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[11] It is noteworthy that Angelo's textual inner make-up is not intuitively problematic or threatening. See Northrop Frye's brief discussion of biblical strains in *Measure for Measure* in *Northrop Frye on Shakespeare* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986). In a biblical reading, Frye frames a person's merging with textual law as positive:

> In the framework of assumptions of Shakespeare's day, one was the doctrine in the New Testament that the law, as given in the Old Testament, was primarily a symbol of the spiritual life. The law in itself can't make people virtuous or even better: it can only define the lawbreaker. You're free of what Paul calls the bondage of the law when you absorb the law internally, as part of your nature rather than as a set of objective rules to be obeyed. (p. 142)

Despite this positive portrayal, Angelo's "absor[ption]" of "the law internally, as part of [his] nature" does not make Angelo or anyone else "free" of the law's negative ramifications over the course of the play.

The switch from Angelo's discussing the law to his and Isabella's discussing *him*, the switch from "law" to "I," is seamless, unnoticed by the characters who verbalize it. Many moments in the remainder of the second and third acts reaffirm that Angelo's inner self is not human but textual, composed of lists of laws and other important written items. He calls himself "the voice of the recorded law" (2.4.60); the Duke tries to help Isabella "redeem your brother" not from "Angelo" but from "the angry law" (3.1.196-97); Mariana was, five years before, "affianced to her oath" (3.1.207-08), with the verbal or written "oath" as a stand-in for Angelo; and, after the death of Mariana's brother and the loss of her dowry, Angelo "swallowed his vows whole" (3.1.219), filling his internal self with a list of written or (un)spoken vows.

The first three acts of the play to some extent enact the movement outward of text, and eventually the creation of an inner human self, that the Duke hopes will take place for Angelo and in Vienna. This spatial and textual reorientation begins in subtle syntactic ways even in 1.1. Reversals in word order enact the movement outward of text, as the characters often invert the standard English subject-verb-object configuration, replacing it with a subject-object-verb sequence. The Duke explains, speaking of Angelo, that he has "Elected him our absence to supply" (1.1.18), shifting "absence" to the center of the sentence, evacuating any physical text or other matter from the center and making room for a more human self to populate that space. Furthermore, the Duke's confidence in Escalus's leadership abilities is perhaps exemplified in the Duke's recognizing that "I do bend my speech / To one that can my part in him advertise" (1.1.40-41), bringing the Duke's "part in him" to the center, which, while not Escalus's own "part" or self, is a human self rather than a non-human text.[12]

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[12] These syntactic inversions, while usually a subtle solution that the Duke uses to move text outward, also at times represent the problematic placement of texts as inner selves for Angelo and others. See Claudio's statement that he and Juliet "do the denunciation lack"

The most powerful moment of textual evacuation and inner self-making comes in 2.2, when Isabella, in effect, makes Angelo, shifting the law away from his internal space and giving him an inner, human self. The "moving graces" (2.2.37) that the Provost hopes Isabella will have seem to work, as Isabella's persuasion soon facilitates the movement outward of Angelo's inner text and establishes a potential open space for Angelo's human inner self. Frye writes that, as the scene progresses, "Angelo and Isabella start manoeuvering around each other like a couple of knights who are in such heavy plate armour that they can't bend a joint."[13] Indeed, the characters seem to begin their conversation by talking in circles around one another as they try to identify the legal solution to Claudio's dilemma, circumscribing with dialogue an empty space on the page in which Angelo might be able to exist:

> ISABELLA: Must he needs die?
> ANGELO: Maiden, no remedy.
> ISABELLA: Yes. I do think that you might pardon him,
>   And neither heaven nor man grieve at the mercy.
> ANGELO: I will not do't.
> ISABELLA: But can you if you would?
> ANGELO: Look, what I will not, that I cannot do.
>   (2.2.48-53)

Their dialogue here, which is almost nonsensical and certainly unproductive, almost exists in orbit around the idea that Angelo does not intend to pardon Claudio, but Angelo does not explicitly assert his position in these lines, leaving the space around which the dialogue moves open for Angelo to populate with a human self. Furthermore, the two characters' completing

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(1.2.136) to make them innocently married. While they concededly do not have the textual "denunciation," Claudio purposefully moves that hypothetical, non-human text to the center of the sentence, a potentially problematic shift in the Duke's mind. Similarly, Angelo later threatens Isabella with the idea that various aspects of his position "Will so your accusation overweigh" (2.4.154), populating the sentence's inner, central space with Isabella's verbal, or textual, "accusation".

[13] Frye, *Northrop Frye on Shakespeare*, 146.

each other's lines provides visual open spaces on the page, depicting the evacuation of dense

text, and especially the dense prose that makes up much of the play, again providing a space in

which Angelo might exist as a human being.

Isabella soon proceeds to point Angelo toward this space so that he can inhabit it. She

attempts to turn his focus inward:

> …authority, though it err like others,
> Hath yet a kind of medicine in itself
> That skins the vice o'th' top. Go to your bosom,
> Knock there, and ask your heart what it doth know
> That's like my brother's fault; if it confess
> A natural guiltiness such as is his,
> Let it not sound a thought upon your tongue
> Against my brother's life.
> (2.2.135-42)

She first shows him the "medicine" he already has within him, and while "skin[ning] the vice

o'th' top" may be read as a way to seal off a wound or opening with skin, it might also be read as

a peeling off of the skin on the periphery of the body, thus opening Angelo's internal space

further. Even her use of contraction in "o'th'", coupled with Lucio's "perceive't" (2.2.126),

"i'th' right" (2.2.130), "o'that" (2.2.133), and "on't" (2.2.133) depict in subtle visual ways the

evacuation of certain textual spaces so that Angelo may populate them.

Over the course of this scene, Isabella, by way of her persuasive speech, is able to fill

these open spaces and create a more human self for Angelo. Putting aside the masturbatory

implications of the bodily images in this scene, the appearance of the "vein" that Lucio pushes

Isabella to "touch" (2.2.71) as she speaks to Angelo, and the idea that "He's coming" (2.2.126)

as she begins to successfully convince him, illustrate the gradual creation of a human body and

the arrival of a human self within Angelo. The new-made man soon explicitly states that "She

speaks, and 'tis such sense / That my sense breeds with it" (2.2.142-43). Garber contrasts two

types of "sense" he may be experiencing: "the senses" as connoting "the first onslaught of

[sexual] passion," as opposed to "'reason'—good sense."[14] Perhaps, though, Angelo's "sense" is

even simpler than sexual arousal or well-reasoned thinking; perhaps it simply connotes

consciousness, the very existence of a human selfhood, of which Angelo may have been devoid

only moments before. Mary Thomas Crane likens the essential method of human creation, sexual

intercourse and pregnancy, to the kind of creation that Isabella carries out by way of language,

describing this kind of creation as ultimately "unavoidable":

> Just as sexual penetration is necessary to produce biological pregnancy, linguistic and
> visual penetration is necessary to bring a human subject into being and into discursive
> exchange…Here Shakespeare also thinks about the means through which discourse is
> produced and the ways in which it shapes human subjects. Despite attempts to imagine
> the production of [in this case, Isabella's] language as walled off from current and
> collaborative contamination within an impermeable metallic container, the vulnerability
> of the human brain to penetration by the language of others seems unavoidable. Indeed,
> the very formation of the self…depends on fertilization from external sources.[15]

Evidently, Angelo's new "sense" need not be sexual or rational in nature but is simply the result

of language's capacity to "bring a human subject into being," simply "the very formation of the

self." Angelo now has, or at least approaches having, a human selfhood. His "filth within" has

been "cast," and an anxious and sexually curious human being now exists in this "within"

(3.1.92).

Of course, he struggles greatly with this new selfhood, afraid of "confrontation with

apparently alien forces within himself,"[16] as Wheeler writes. Angelo's idea to "raze the sanctuary

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[14] Garber, *Shakespeare After All*, 570.

[15] Mary Thomas Crane, "Male Pregnancy and Cognitive Permeability in *Measure for Measure*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 49, no. 3 (Autumn 1998): 288-92, https://doi.org/10.2307/2902259. If, as Crane argues, generation by way of language is akin to generation by way of sexual intercourse and pregnancy, then Isabella is perhaps in a mother-like position to Angelo, and sexual intercourse between the two characters would most certainly be "a kind of incest" (3.1.139).

[16] Wheeler, *Shakespeare's Development*, 16.

/ And pitch our evils there" (2.2.173-74) can perhaps be read not only as an attempt to rid himself of his new inner being but also as parallel to Lucio's and the gentlemen's defiance of Vienna's ideal spatial orientation, a defiance that involves their "raz[ing]" the ten commandments in order to "put forth" and perform their "functions." Doing so comes with anxiety for Angelo, though, while it is the modus operandi for Lucio and the gentlemen.

Angelo continues to struggle with his new configuration in 2.4, bemoaning the nature of spatial and textual configurations that seem to govern the world of the play:

> O place, O form,
> How often dost thou with thy case, thy habit,
> Wrench awe from fools and tie the wiser souls
> To thy false seeming! Blood, thou art blood.
> Let's write "good angel" on the devil's horn;
> 'Tis not the devil's crest.
>   (2.4.12-17)

Perhaps Angelo preferred his prior configuration, a human frame with text inside, to his current one, a human being enclosed in a "place," a "form" that feels unnatural and "false." Interesting, too, is Angelo's phrasing that allows a "place" or a "form" to "tie the wiser souls / To [its] false seeming." When replaced with its homophone "seaming," the expression "false seeming" recalls 1.2's "list," a seam, a textual edge that, if left intact by Lucio and the gentlemen, would be a deceptive "false" representation of their (dis)obedience of the law and of their (in)tolerance of texts that "seam" them and keep them circumscribed. The Duke's desire to see "If power change purpose, what our se[a]mers be" (1.3.54) may be, then, a desire to bring out the texts that lurk within characters like Angelo, place them correctly as the external "lists" and "seams" they should be, and discover their true nature and the characters' true spatial relationships with them.

While Angelo is left struggling to adjust to his new inner self and external textual "seam" at the end of the second act, the third and fourth acts shift to some extent away from Angelo and

toward the Duke, Isabella, Claudio's fate, and (in the fourth act) Mariana. Regardless of whether

or not Angelo accepts his new configuration, the third act presents evidence that the Duke's

effort at inverting the inner placement of text and outer placement of human frames has worked

to a certain degree. There is considerable formal evidence that text has been evacuated from the

center, and that space has been exposed in which human characters can dwell. As with Lucio's

orthographic contractions as indicators of newly evacuated space in 2.2, the Duke's speech at the

start of 3.1 presents a large amount of open space in the form of contractions as he describes the

nature of human life:

> A breath thou art,
> Servile to all the skyey influences
> That dost this habitation where thou kee**p's**t
> Hourly afflict. Merely thou art death's fool,
> For him thou labo**r's**t by thy flight to shun,
> And yet run**n's**t toward him still. Thou art not noble,
> For all t**h'a**ccommodations that thou bea**r's**t
> Are nursed by baseness. Tho**u'r**t by no means valiant,
> For thou dost fear the soft and tender fork
> Of a poor worm. Thy best of rest is sleep,
> And that thou oft provo**k's**t, yet grossly fea**r's**t
> Thy death, which is no more. Thou are not thyself,
> For thou exists on many a thousand grains
> That issue out of dust. Happy thou art not,
> For what thou hast not, still thou stri**v's**t to get,
> And what thou hast, forge**t's**t. Thou art not certain,
> For thy complexion shifts to strange effects
> After the moon. If thou art rich, tho**u'r**t poor,
> For like an ass whose back with ingots bows,
> Thou bea**r's**t thy heavy riches but a journey,
> And death unloads thee.
>   (3.1.8-28)

All of these vocalic omissions are open spaces that did not exist in such abundance in the first

two acts. Bloom describes this speech in its entirety as "in context greatly empty,"[17] and it seems

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[17] Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*, 369.

it is just as empty in its orthography. Lucio's later observation that Angelo "puts transgression

to't" (3.1.342), immediately followed by the Duke's assertion that Angelo "does well in't"

(3.1.343), accomplishes similar orthographic goals.

Despite the evidence for an opening up of space over the course of the first three acts, the

third and subsequent acts question the amount of progress that has been made toward the Duke's

desired configuration. Many critics have noted reversals, or retractions of previous patterns,

within 3.1. Frye notes that "the rhythm abruptly switches from blank verse to prose" upon the

Duke's entrance at approximately line 150, a formal shift that he claims leads the play to split

into two parts, and that leads him to call the play "a play within a play…a half play that

eventually swallows and digests the other half."[18] This image of one half's textually engulfing

the other resembles the textual circumscription toward which the play has moved aggressively in

the first half. Perhaps more in line with the reading I present in the remainder of this chapter,

though, is Ira Clark's argument, in his detailed study of chiasmus in the play, that 3.1 contains

"the highest concentration of chiasmus, a signal that it serves as a fulcrum of problems."[19]

Instead of reading 3.1 as this "fulcrum," I find the point on which the play pivots to be in the

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[18] Frye, *Northrop Frye on Shakespeare*, 148-49.

[19] Ira Clark, "Chiasmus, Justice, and Mercy, *Measure for Measure*," in *Rhetorical Readings, Dark Comedies, and Shakespeare's Problem Plays* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007), 46. Clark helpfully explains the spatial relationships that constitute chiasmus, as well as the ability of chiasmus to expose whatever is at a phrase's center. Very relevant to the approach I take in this chapter is Clark's argument that "In *Measure for Measure* chiasmic expressions repeatedly display and invert one central difficulty so as to anatomize the relationship of judgment and mercy, legality and clemency that the play requires…" (p. 54). The word "anatomize" here, while perhaps simply connoting the clarification of the "relationship[s]" Clark refers to, also implies that, once the "central difficulty" is exposed and expelled, human anatomy can take shape and fill the space. The sudden appearance of Angelo's physical anatomy as Isabella uses her speech to open up space within him in 2.2, as discussed above, supports this reading of Clark.

bridge between 3.1 and 4.1, a bridge that reveals the extent to which the Duke's ideal

configuration is able to come to fruition.

The Duke's abrupt movement at the end of 3.1 into a sing-song tetrameter connects with

the Boy's brief tetrameter at the start of 4.1, bridging the gap between the acts, between the first

and second halves of the play, and between the initial hollowness of Angelo and the compliantly

receptive "vessel of cure"[20] that Mariana embodies. Substantial amounts of text, especially

uncommonly large blocks of dense prose, exist in this play and surround the less dense

tetrameter center. But that center is still there, populated by a particular kind of rhythmic, sing-

song text that might exist only on the periphery in non-problem comedies like *Twelfth Night,*

which begins with Orsino's poetic discussion of "music" (*Twelfth Night* 1.1.1) and ends with

Feste's artificially cheerful poetic song (*Twelfth Night* 5.1.375-94). In short, *Measure for*

Measure may grant the Duke some success in evacuating dense text from the center of the play,

but it still leaves a less dense kind of text there that might normally occupy an opposite position

in other Shakespeare plays. There is little humanity at the center of the play, only artificially

metered and rhymed poetry and song, a nameless Boy who proceeds to leave and never return,

and a new principal character that critics have described as "unsubstantial"[21] and, in certain

moments, "undecipherable."[22]

If the play as a whole contains a textual center, one might expect it to be symmetrical in

relation to that center. However, while the play as a whole works toward bringing text out and

pushing personhood in, and while the first half of the play carries out that work fairly steadily

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[20] Janet Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays,* Hamlet *to* The Tempest (New York: Routledge, 1992), 101.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Garber, *Shakespeare After All*, 583.

and even achieves it in Angelo to some extent, the second half is much more erratic in its spatial

and formal functioning. The second half does not completely continue the process of inversion

that the first half began, nor does it fully retract and reformulate, or "call again," that process of

inversion. It may instead "speak against" the first half, putting forward a new, in some ways

similar but largely confused, system adjacent to the first half's system. Thus, while the metrical

bridge between 3.1 and 4.1 may be the play's "fulcrum," the play is not at all successful in

organizing itself chiastically around that "fulcrum." The second half does not balance out the

first, measure does not balance out measure, and center and border, text and person, become

highly confounded.

Claudio's speech on death in 3.1, shortly before the play's midpoint, predicts some of the

confusion in the play's latter half:

> Ay, but to die, and go we know not where,
> To lie in cold obstruction and to rot,
> This sensible warm motion to become
> A kneaded clod; and the delighted spirit
> To bathe in fiery floods or to reside
> In thrilling region of thick-ribbèd ice
> To be imprisoned in the viewless winds
> And blown with restless violence round about
> The pendent world, or to be worse than worst
> Of those that lawless and incertain thought
> Imagine howling—'tis too horrible!
>   (3.1.118-28)

This speech presents contradictions about the physical and spatial nature of death. While Claudio

first establishes the location of the deceased as uncertain ("we know not where"), he immediately

counters that uncertainty by explicitly placing the deceased "in cold obstruction." He then turns

the deceased into a compacted, inwardly-forced "kneaded clod," but also gives them outward

movement "in the viewless winds," allowing them to be "blown with restless violence." Notable,

too, though, is that this freer outward movement is framed as "imprison[ment]," which predicts

the Provost's contradictory description of "the liberty of the prison" (4.2.142), and Pompey's

attempts to entice Barnardine to contradictorily "rise and be put to death" (4.3.25) and to "awake

till you are executed and sleep afterwards" (4.3.28-29).[23]

After the play passes over its midpoint, the bed-trick it enacts follows similar

contradictory, though not life-and-death, logic. While the trick itself populates "the heavy middle

of the night" (4.1.33) with human beings, inverting the problematic occupation of texts in the

"heavy middle" of other spaces in the play, the trick also allows for more streamlined,

unidirectional movement, as Isabella and Mariana first enter the outermost "garden circummured

with brick" and proceed to move from space to space in order to reach Angelo's bed (4.1.26-34).

The trick, then, reformulates the nature of spatial movement entirely in a pivotal moment of the

play.

Angelo's spatial movement and configuration has also changed drastically and taken on

new forms. "His life is paralleled / Even with the stroke and line of his great justice" (4.2.76-77).

The "stroke and line" may refer to weaponry, but it may also suggest written or drawn "stroke[s]

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[23] This conflation of freedom and imprisonment in 3.1 and beyond elucidates a similar
conflation that results from the crackdown on suburban brothels in 1.2. This crackdown—"All
houses in the suburbs of Vienna must be plucked down" (1.2.87-88)—resembles the "raz[ing]"
of the ten commandments in order to break through the textual border, the "list," that bars pirates
from their "functions," as well as the image of Angelo's "raz[ing] the sanctuary / And pitch[ing]
[his] evils there." This "raz[ing]" is, to varying extents, liberating both for the
Lucio/gentlemen/pirates group and for Angelo, but it is quite different when applied to the
brothels. If parallel to the other images, the destruction of peripheral suburban brothels would
liberate and afford more space to the inner, urban brothels. But the image is not quite parallel,
and what should be the liberation and expansion of the inner urban brothels after the removal of
the outer suburban ones leads only to Froth's chastisement in 2.1, the Clown's arrest and
imprisonment beginning in 3.1, and Mistress Overdone's arrest in 4.1. Thus, Claudio's and the
Provost's later blurring the distinction between freedom and imprisonment mirrors the brothels'
compromised ability to experience spatial expansion and liberation the way other groups do after
the destruction of a border.

and line[s]" that make up a textual border, a border that exists peripheral to, or "parallel" to, Angelo's human inner self, quite a change from the textual inner selfhood he began with in 1.1. In contrast, though, the fourth act itself fails to be circumscribed within a textual "list" and instead contains a literal, textual "list" in the center of the act, in the form of Pompey's satirical list of the people who used to work in the brothel with him (4.3.1-17). In yet another reversal, though, the Duke, who is, in my conceptualization, responsible for the entire progression of spatial movements over the course of the play, comes to strongly dislike the verbal "reports" (4.3.153) in which Lucio describes him, claiming (as the friar) that the Duke "lives not in them" (4.3.153). While the Duke seems to want human beings to "live in" central areas by replacing the text that is currently there, he suddenly finds himself not wanting to live in or be circumscribed by the textual "reports" that Lucio has established.

In addition to presenting spatial configurations that contradict or rework those of the first three acts, the fourth act enacts many quick reversals of its own within the bounds of the act. While the Duke's and the Boy's tetrameter fills the space between 3.1 and 4.1, the space between 4.1 and 4.2 involves a quick contradiction and directional reformulation. The Duke's calling Isabella and Mariana to move outwardly, to "Come, let us go" (4.1.75) at the end of 4.1, is immediately reversed at the beginning of 4.2, when the Provost calls Pompey to move inwardly, to "Come hither, sirrah" (4.2.1). The somewhat systematic orthographic representation of evacuated inner spaces by way of contraction is now also reversed at a moment's notice: in comparing Barnardine and Claudio, the Provost notes that "T**h'o**ne has my pity, not a jot **the oth**er" (4.2.55), depicting a purposefully opened space and then immediately undoing that depiction. These subtler reversals perhaps predict Escalus's subsequent observation that "Every letter [the Duke] hath writ hath disvouched other" (4.4.1).

The end of the fourth act and the duration of 5.1 depict one last attempt on the Duke's part to bring Vienna's spatial orientation in line with his original concept, with humanity at the center and texts or "lists" around the perimeter. The Duke's insisting on the city gates as the location of 5.1 in some ways works toward his goal: he stands with a "list" of governmental figures peripheral to the play's plot; we have heard of none of them before, and none of them speak in act 4 or in 5.1. This "list" of officials that join the Duke on the Viennese border consists of Flavius, Valencius, Rowland, Crassus, and Varrius, the last of whose homophone, "various," may even increase the range of people on the "list". The Duke even notes that "There's other of our friends / Will greet us here anon, my gentle Varrius" (4.5.12-13), perhaps referring to Isabella, Mariana, Angelo, and Escalus, but also perhaps further lengthening his "list" of peripheral officials.

Problematically, though, while the Duke succeeds in occupying an arc of the city's perimeter with a "list," this "list," of course, consists of human beings, not text. Notably, the characters never hold back from making reference to their own location on the edge of the city, consistently using locational terms like "here" to draw attention to their human interaction on Vienna's border. Isabella begs the Duke to "Hear me, oh, hear me, *here*" (5.1.35, italics mine). Isabella's "here" exists among many other instances of the word "here" in the scene (5.1.276, 5.1.285, 5.1.287, 5.1.382, 5.1.503, 5.1.523), multiple references to the scene's "place" (5.1.364, 5.1.503), and Escalus's harsh question to the Duke disguised as a friar: "How? Know you where you are?" (5.1.295). The emphasis on the scene's location, and the humanity of those who occupy this peripheral space, make Clark's assessment of 5.1 very apt when he writes that "In

the trial scene the figure and theme of seeming/being, outer/inner, public/private reach a climax of concentration and complexity."[24]

The confusion between humanity and text, between human and textual "lists" and where they belong in relation to the city's center and border, becomes even more apparent when the Duke pretends to observe that Isabella's madness "hath the oddest frame of sense" (5.1.66). A person's external "frame," in the Duke's ideal conceptualization, would consist of text and not of "sense." After all, "sense" is the word Angelo uses in 2.2 to describe the human *internal* self that Isabella creates *within* him. Isabella's human "sense" in 5.1 exists not within her but as an external surface that circumscribes her, reversing the configuration toward which the play strives and perhaps replicating the image of humanity on the perimeter of the city, rather than in the city's center, in this scene. Thus, Isabella's and the whole cast's spatial configuration in 5.1 reaffirms the confused distinctions between person and text, center and border in the scene and the play.

This final scene seems not to move toward any greater clarity on the distinction between person and text. While the Duke began to successfully facilitate this distinction in the first three acts of the play, the establishment of text at the center of the play (connecting 3.1 and 4.1), and the erratic and contradictory nature of the fourth and fifth acts, essentially undo any progress toward clarity that the first three acts achieved and leave the characters and readers without clear conclusions. Any attempt to evacuate text from a central position in the latter half of the play is vague and unsuccessful. Mariana orders the Boy to "Break off thy song" (4.1.7) after he bridges the gap between 3.1 and 4.1 by continuing the Duke's tetrameter, but it is spatially impractical to "break off" matter that exists in the center, rather than on an edge. Angelo claims that this

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[24] Clark, "Chiasmus, Justice, and Mercy," 54.

impractical task is, in fact, possible to achieve, revealing of his past relationship with Mariana that "five years since there was some speech of marriage / Betwixt myself and her, which was broke off…" (5.1.223), allowing for the "break[ing] off" of speech or texts that exist in the center, "betwixt" two halves. But neither Angelo nor Mariana makes it clear exactly how one would physically go about doing this "break[ing]."

In short, after undoing its own progress from the first three acts, the play does not provide explicit methods for remaking that progress. The play seems to afford Isabella little opportunity to find the necessary methods and answers. While "Initially self-enclosed,"[25] both as a person planning to enclose herself tightly in a convent and as a person who seems to have a much more cohesive inner human self than Angelo (the man she makes),[26] she eventually becomes a more ambiguous unit. Her status as human with textual binding, text with human binding, neither, or both, is unclear, and critics offer varying interpretations of her final spatial orientation. Bloom asserts that, by the end of the play, "Nothing is alive in Isabella, and Shakespeare will not tell us why and how she has suffered such a vastation. Pragmatically mindless, she need not respond to the Duke's proposal, and her nullity means that presumably he will have his way with her."[27] Frye, on the other hand, sees something very different from "vastation" and "nullity" in Isabella.

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[25] Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers*, 102.

[26] Note the fact that Isabella laments to Angelo in their first encounter, "I would I had your potency / And you were Isabel" (2.2.68-69). She describes herself as a cohesive, "self-enclosed" person, simply as "Isabel," while she does not ascribe unified personhood to Angelo and instead refers simply to his "potency." Even Isabella's and Angelo's differing conceptualizations of verbal reformulation depicts Isabella as more of a human agent than Angelo is. Isabella has enough control over her own language, and over the boundary between her own self and the world into which she speaks, to be able to reach out and take back, or "call again," a word she has uttered. In contrast, Angelo, in being able only to "speak against" a word he has already uttered, rather than being able to take it back, lacks authority over his own language and is incapable of identifying and traversing the boundary between his own self and the space into which he speaks.

[27] Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*, 379-80.

Writing of her pleading for Angelo's life near the end of 5.1, Frye argues that "if one's essential humanity can be made to speak, even once in one's life, one has a centre to revolve around ever after," affording Isabella a human "centre."[28] While Frye argues that it is Isabella's "essential humanity" that leads the Duke to be "so pleased that he announces that he is going to marry her,"[29] the Duke may also be pleased with Isabella's human "centre," as it is in line with the spatial configuration toward which he tries to push Angelo and Vienna as a whole in the play.

Frye's configuration of Isabella is tempting, as it subscribes to the Duke's goals for the play. More than Isabella's desire to have a human "centre" from which she can express her "essential humanity," though, is her desire for justice in 5.1, a desire that challenges Frye's conceptualization and leads her to utter her fierce assertion that she will not rest until the Duke has "heard me in my true complaint / And given me justice, justice, justice, justice" (5.1.26-27). She evidently works here to populate the metrical feet of line 27 with "justice," to bring justice to the center of the "place" that each metrical foot provides.[30] Notably, though, "justice," while essential to her and Claudio's wellbeing in the play, is itself neither human nor textual in nature, and her population of open metrical spaces with "justice" leaves unclear the question of her

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28 Frye, *Northrop Frye on Shakespeare*, 152.

29 Ibid.

30 For a detailed discussion of metrical feet as spaces or "positions" (p. 247) that can be populated with text and meaning in Shakespeare, see Jennifer Roberts-Smith, "'Time is their master': Men and Metre in *The Comedy of Errors*," in *Shakespeare's World of Words*, ed. Paul Yachnin (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2015), 237-62. Using concepts from "generative metrics" (p. 250), Roberts-Smith thoroughly maps out the relationships between the accentual verse and iambic pentameter verse that Shakespeare uses in *The Comedy of Errors*. She describes metrical phenomena using language of spatial configuration that is very relevant to this chapter. For instance, she discusses meter's ability to "[exert] an external pressure on words" (p. 253); the ability of "metrical time" to be "perceptually expanded at the centre" of pivotal acts and scenes (p. 255), scenes that can perhaps "[form] the borders between" different verse forms (p. 260); and the power of caesural and caesural-like pauses to "weaken the centre of [a] line" (p. 258).

spatial motives—is she working toward the same spatial configuration that the Duke has tried to

bring about since the start of the play, or is she working toward her own personal goals? Her

silence in response to the Duke's marriage proposals at the end of 5.1, of course, further

contributes to the lack of answers to these questions.[31]

Writing of the play's ambiguous, unsatisfying, and unusual ending, Wheeler argues:

Characters who have been deep centers of conflict earlier are denied the dramatic reality they have acquired; psychological tensions their crises have expressed are neither resolved nor sustained but simply deprived of a location in the play world. Instead of clarifying, either positively or negatively, the relations between individual longings and social order, or between comic art and experience, Shakespeare seeks unearned reassurance in a comic ending that cannot fully acknowledge previous developments in *Measure for Measure*.[32]

In other words, characters who have themselves become "deep centers of conflict" lack their

own inner human centers, nor can they find a center in which to exist in the world. Their

ambiguous spatial configurations at the end of the play essentially leave them placeless. Frye's

note that, regardless of where Isabella is, and regardless of what her spatial configuration is, "the

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[31] Isabella's movement of "justice" to the center of her line is particularly important due to the physically peripheral placement of "justice" throughout the rest of the play. In 2.1, the personified character "Justice" strikingly enters at the onset of the scene and speaks only at the very end of the scene, carrying out an almost comically trivial conversation with Escalus about joining him for dinner and about how "there's no remedy" for Claudio's problem (2.1.250-60). The word "justice" is also placed at the physical end of many lines in the play (e.g., 2.2.31, 2.2.101, 4.2.77). Despite her attempt to change the peripheral position of "justice," though, the extent to which Isabella successfully populates the metrical feet with "justice" at 5.1.27 is itself ambiguous. The line has exactly ten syllables, but reading it in iambic pentameter, and thus affording each "justice" its own iamb, yields the unnatural emphasis "jusTICE." A more natural pronunciation for the line necessitates making "given me" a dactyl and each "justice" a trochee, a clumsier scansion for a line that, on the surface, appears metrically neat. Furthermore, the fact that the four "justice[s]" can be understood as a "list," albeit one in which all the items are identical, implies that Isabella may not in fact have supplied a solid center to the line's metrical feet, but has instead moved a textual list into the line's center, working counterproductively to the Duke's spatial goals.

[32] Wheeler, *Shakespeare's Development*, 12.

convent has vanished from her horizon,"[33] further demonstrates Isabella's lack of a "place" to go,
and all of the characters' lack of "place" and "form." Isabella's and Mariana's status as "informal
women" (5.1.242), while a pejorative designation from Angelo, may devastatingly be their truth
as 5.1 comes to a close. Ultimately, the play is problematic, and somewhat jarring, in its inability
to finish what it starts, its failure to reach the spatial and social ideals toward which it strives.

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[33] Frye, *Northrop Frye on Shakespeare*, 149.

III.

'There lie, and there thy character': Distant Text and Temporal Systems in *The Winter's Tale*

In concluding a chapter on linguistic forms in Shakespeare's last plays, Russ McDonald writes of Shakespeare's "reaching 'beyond the words'"[34] in the romances. He explains,

> Each of the last plays offers its audience the promise of something beyond. Tantalizing verbal patterns, which seem to promise profundity or hint at elusive meaning, faithfully represent the fictional realms of Pericles' Mediterranean or the worlds of Sicilia or Bohemia. Some magical agency, some providential force seems to stand beyond the characters and their actions: there is something numinous about the world of Shakespearean romance. The style points us towards it.[35]

This conclusion follows his argument that "Words, phrases, clauses, and sentences are less significant than the meanings beyond them, and the playwright seems to be pointing us to that mysterious region beyond."[36] In a similar vein, Howard Felperin writes, albeit critically, of the common practice of approaching the romances by focusing on forces external to them, "locating [them]…in something remote, in something universal, in something lofty, in something mysterious, but always in something *else.*"[37] He later acknowledges that "Shakespeare often endows his major characters with a life that extends beyond the confines of the immediate action, and of which we catch fleeting glimpses as they speak or are spoken of by others."[38]

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[34] Russ McDonald, "'You speak a language that I understand not': listening to the last plays," in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's Last Plays,* ed. Catherine M. S. Alexander (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 109.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid., 96.

[37] Howard Felperin, *Shakespearean Romance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 6-7.

[38] Ibid., 218.

Evidently, regardless of whether one wishes to approach the romances from outside and focus on the "beyond" that radiates from these texts, there are inevitably larger, external forces that attach themselves to plot, character, and language in the plays. What are these forces outside? What is this "mysterious region beyond," this "something *else*," toward which the romances gesture, toward which "[their] style points us," and on which they may depend? How exactly does style and the use of "tantalizing verbal patterns" bring the characters, the worlds of the plays, and the readers to these far-off locations and systems?

In beginning to answer these questions, we need to acknowledge that, if language and style are separate from the external forces to which they provide access, they are also separate from the characters who use them. Anne Barton describes the "wedge between dramatic speech and the nature and intentions of the speaker [that] becomes important only in [the] late plays," a "wedge" that is distinct from "ordinary ambiguity" and "implicit, underlying irony."[39] McDonald similarly notes that, later in Shakespeare's career, "language has been separated from speaker," and he quotes Barton in going so far as to assert that "Character becomes less important than…'some general design in the language of the play.'"[40] Therefore, it is essential not only to identify the external forces surrounding the play, but also to chart the linguistic paths that move the characters toward those external forces, as well as to examine how the characters manage to travel along those linguistic paths, paths that themselves are distant from the characters, in order to reach the larger external forces toward which they are gesturing.

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[39] Anne Barton, "Leontes and the Spider: Language and Speaker in Shakespeare's Last Plays," in *Shakespeare: The Last Plays,* ed. Kiernan Ryan, (New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 1999), 26.

[40] McDonald, "'You speak a language that I understand not'," 92.

In the case of *The Winter's Tale,* there is a temptation to locate the most vital external forces surrounding the play in the various mythological and religious figures to whom the characters call or with whom they are associated: Apollo, the oracle, Proserpina, Pygmalion, or Paul, for instance. However, implicit in the characters' relations to all of these external figures, as well as many others that cannot be deified or personified, is the idea of time. Northrop Frye proposes that "perhaps it is he [Time], not Apollo, who controls the action."[41] Expanding upon Frye's proposal, I would propose that the need to reach toward and enter into larger systems of time governs not only the characters' actions over the sixteen-year span of the play but also the syntax, phonetics, and orthography of their speech. Larger temporal systems force characters to shape their language in ways that allow them to engage with these systems, a process that also serves to distance the characters from their own text. These temporal systems have more impact than any other forces surrounding the play, shaping language in ways that at times feel chaotic and at other times feel rigidly ordered. Importantly, if a character refuses to use language to subscribe to the temporal systems that subsume the play, dangerous ramifications ensue, and the world of the play comes close to falling apart.

The first three acts of *The Winter's Tale* present a constantly shifting, somewhat disorienting sense of time and establish time's governance over many characters and their language. Upon introducing the Sicilian court in 1.2, the play prevents many of its characters from acknowledging the present moment. This disregard for the present manifests itself particularly clearly in Hermione and Polixenes, who, over the course of the first three acts, remain in conversation with one another and with time, precisely because of the way time

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[41] Frye, *Northrop Frye on Shakespeare*, 170.

pervades their language. Polixenes's first speech is riddled with entrances into and exits from

spans of time other than the moment in which he is currently living:

> Nine changes of the wat'ry star hath been
> The shepherd's note since we have left our throne
> Without a burden. Time as long again
> Would be filled up, my brother, with our thanks,
> And yet we should for perpetuity
> Go hence in debt. And therefore, like a cipher,
> Yet standing in rich place, I multiply
> With one "We thank you" many thousands more
> That go before it.
> (1.2.1-9)

Because of the way he formulates his language, Polixenes moves through time in multiple

directions. He first creates a future in which he "fill[s] up" time for "as long again" in order to

thank Leontes and Hermione, but he then retracts that idea, taking back that time. That retraction,

though, leads him to "debt" for "perpetuity," taking him on a different temporal journey, which

he then also retracts and extends in yet another direction; this third direction extends "before"

him, in the form of a string of many zeroes, many "rich place[s]," many "We thank you[s]." The

force of time in his speech prevents him from simply saying "We thank you" in the present

moment. Instead, time pushes him to distance himself from the utterance of "We thank you,"

making the utterance its own isolated, distant text and placing it into an abstract, hypothetical

string of time at which Polixenes is able to arrive only after having traveled down and rejected

multiple other strings of time, all within his first nine lines of text.

Quotation, the device that Polixenes uses to put forward his "We thank you," goes hand-

in-hand with distancing, both textual and temporal, in the play. Hermione and Polixenes use

quotations of themselves and one another to enact these forms of distancing. For instance, as

they enter into a lively verbal, textual, and temporal exchange with one another, and as Polixenes

attempts to solidify his departure, Hermione seizes on his word "verily" (1.2.45):

> Verily?
> You put me off with limber vows. But I,
> Though you would seek t'unsphere the stars with oaths,
> Should yet say, "Sir, no going." Verily
> You shall not go. A lady's "verily" is
> As potent as a lord's. Will you go yet?
> Force me to keep you as a prisoner,
> Not like a guest; so you shall pay your fees
> When you depart and save your thanks. How say you?
> My prisoner? Or my guest? By your dread "verily,"
> One of them you shall be.
>   (1.2.46-56)

Hermione's engagement with Polixenes's word is temporally charged, as it determines whether Polixenes will spend future time in Sicilia, or whether his time in Sicilia has ended and will soon be past. More important, though, is that this engagement with the flow of time manifests itself as an engagement with language, with a particular word.

Hermione's relationship to "verily" is nuanced: she begins this relationship not by quoting Polixenes but by using the word herself, free of quotation marks, both in her initial interrogation of the word ("Verily?") and then in using it in her own sentence ("Verily / You shall not go"). Her first usage functions as a halting of time, a moment of metrical stasis that exists wholly outside of the scene's blank verse. Her second usage ends a perfectly metered ten-syllable line ("Should yet say, 'Sir, no going.' Verily"), as she gradually incorporates the word successfully into her lexicon and verse. The word is hers now, and she need not quote it anymore. Doing so proves counterproductive to the meter of the speech: the fifth line of the speech ("You shall not go. A lady's 'verily' is") must compress the quoted "verily" into two syllables in order for the line to have ten. Upon quoting the word again, Hermione stumbles through a longer line ("My prisoner? Or my guest? By your dread 'verily'") in which it is impossible for her to both quote the word and end up with only ten syllables, even if she compresses it.

As the word becomes Hermione's own and solidifies the linguistic exchange between her and Polixenes, quoting the word pushes each line further and further into a distant metrical, temporal space, gradually shifting both language and time forward. Now owning the word and able to do with it what she would like, Hermione uses a derivative of it: "Was not my lord / The *verier* wag o'th' two?" (1.2.66, italics mine). The quoted "verily," then, is an isolated text that both allows Hermione and Polixenes to connect with one another and pushes time forward in the play, both on the level of the line and in predicting future utterances.

Hermione and Polixenes remain in this kind of textual and temporal interaction as Polixenes remembers not what he *did* say, but what he hypothetically would have been able to say, had things gone a different way, during his time as Leontes's childhood companion:

> Had we pursued that life,
> And our weak spirits ne'er been higher reared
> With stronger blood, we should have answered heaven
> Boldly, "Not guilty," the imposition cleared
> Hereditary ours.
>   (1.2.71-75).[42]

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[42] For more on the impacts of verb tense on the types of worlds that can exist in Shakespeare's plays, see Lynne Magnusson, "'What may be and should be': Grammar Moods and the Invention of History in *1 Henry VI*," in Shakespeare's World of Words, ed. Paul Yachnin (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2015), 147-70. Magnusson describes moments in *1 Henry VI* in which verb tense works as a powerful agent that can create "alternative planes of reality," such as through "the apparent facticity of the indicative and the truth-telling supposition of the subjunctive…" (p. 162). Notably, Magnusson finds, and thus focuses on, "projections of future possibility" by way of such auxiliary words as "may, can, might, should, would, ought, and others" (p. 170). Verb tense in *The Winter's Tale* is unique in that it does not simply raise questions about "potential action, projections of and conflicts over what might or can be, what may or ought to be" (p.167), but instead focuses on what *could have been*. See Hermione's cryptic use of the pluperfect in her first lines in the play: "I had thought, sir, to have held my peace until / You had drawn oaths from him not to stay" (1.2.28-29). She may "have thought" to have taken a particular course of action, but has she now chosen to take that course? Does she understand Leontes to have "drawn oaths from [Polixenes] not to stay," and is that understanding what allows her to speak now? Or have those "oaths" not yet been "drawn," and is she speaking at a time she initially thought she would not? The play never answers these questions, making analyses of modal functioning like Magnusson's useful in understanding the power of verb tense

Hermione later echoes Polixenes's "Not guilty" in her speech to the court, a speech that creates a striking syntactic and temporal distance between Hermione and her words:

> Since what I am to say must be but that
> Which contradicts my accusation, and
> The testimony on my part no other
> But what comes from myself, it shall scarce boot me
> To say, "Not guilty." Mine integrity
> Being counted falsehood, shall, as I express it,
> Be so received…
>   (3.2.20-26).

Hermione is simultaneously speaking and not speaking. The subjects of the subordinate clauses with which she begins, and of the main clause at which she eventually arrives, are vague, impersonal terms: "what," "that / Which," "The testimony," another "what," and "it." Hermione is nowhere in these subjects. Has she, herself, in the present moment, actually uttered "Not guilty" for the purpose of claiming her innocence? Is she simply listing a phrase that she has chosen *not* to say in the present moment? Is she calling to Polixenes by quoting his "Not guilty"? All of these questions elucidate the distance between Hermione and the text she speaks here, a distance that has not only to do with her grammatical formulation of the speech but also with her ambiguous relationship to the distant, hypothetical, perhaps nonexistent time in which words like "Not guilty" actually lie.[43]

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in Shakespeare, but also necessitating further study of the pluperfect, and conditional perfect, in plays like *The Winter's Tale.*

[43] See also Marlowe's translation of Ovid's *Amores* (modernized by A. D. Melville), in which the speaker tries to dissuade his lover not from committing adultery, but simply from telling him if she does:

> It's easy beating one who wants to lose;
> Just say 'Not guilty'—they're the words to use.
> With those two words there's victory to be had,
> So win the judge, although the case be bad. (Ovid *Amores* 3.14, p. 82)

These lines come from the Latin:

The prevalence of this quoted, distant text and its potential to move the characters through hypothetical and nonexistent time in the first three acts is often chaotic and disorienting and would seem to suggest a chaotic and disordered Sicilian society. However, it is precisely this textual and temporal distancing that defines and governs the world of the Sicilian court. Perhaps relevant to the implications of this idea is the language that Marjorie Garber uses in her book *Quotation Marks* to describe various forms of quoting.[44] Some forms of quotation allow the speaker "to speak from the vantage point of the ages."[45] Other forms have the opposite impact, an "effect…of distancing rather than incorporation."[46]

Quotations in *The Winter's Tale,* both of the self and of others, allow characters to achieve both of the outcomes that Garber describes. By using quotes, characters like Hermione

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Prona tibi vinci cupientem vincere palma est,
Sit modo 'non feci!' dicere lingua memor.
Cum tibi contingat verbis superare duoobus,
Etsi non causa, iudice vince tuo! (Ovid *Amores* 3.14.47-50)

Perhaps Hermione and Polixenes, and Shakespeare, recall Ovid's "Not guilty," or "non feci!", and use it not only to call to one another across spatial boundaries but also to call to classical antiquity (perhaps ironically, since the play itself takes places in a classical, or classical-like, world). They call in particular to the supposedly adulterous women and their cuckolded partners who preceded Leontes. The fact that Leontes does not respond well to Hermione's "Not guilty" in 3.2, as Ovid would, coupled with the fact that Leontes is not even a cuckold to begin with, emphasizes the irrationality of his suspicions and the preposterousness of the situation in Sicilia in the first three acts. Hermione must use ancient deceptive excuses for wrongdoings she has not even committed, only to have Leontes fail to receive her the way the ancients would have. For further reference, see Ovid, "Amores," in *The Love Poems*, trans. A. D. Melville (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 1-82 and "P. Ovidius Naso, *Amores*: R. Ehwald, Ed.," Perseus Digital Library, http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0068%3Atext%3D Am.%3Abook%3D3%3Apoem%3D14.

[44] Marjorie Garber, *Quotation Marks* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 11. Garber is discussing the differences between quoting important, authoritative figures and quoting lesser-known figures. Most relevant to this chapter's discussion of *The Winter's Tale* are not these particular scenarios of quotation but the language Garber uses to describe their effects.

[45] Ibid.*,* 11.

[46] Ibid.

and Polixenes can, in a sense, "speak from the vantage point of the ages," or from a perspective in which they can observe time moving in all directions and create their own times that may not and may never exist. In doing so, they are also "distancing" themselves from present speech and present time, as well as simultaneously practicing various forms of "incorporation" by integrating themselves into moments of communication and exchange with one another and into the larger passage of time. In Sicilia, distancing *is* incorporation. As counterintuitive as it may seem, movement away from, or "beyond," one's speech and one's present moment fosters stronger membership in the present world of the Sicilian court.

The importance of "distancing" in Sicilia only becomes clearer when Leontes refuses to take part in it. Maurice Hunt aptly writes that "Leontes appears ignorant of the creative linguistic contexts within which his wife and friend achieve harmony."[47] While 1.2 unifies Hermione and Polixenes with playfully shared "creative linguistic contexts," it isolates Leontes in his inability or refusal to partake in this sharing, preventing him from engaging in the kind of movement through time that these linguistic constructions bring about for the other characters. Even when he tries to practice the quoting and temporal movement that the other two characters carry out repeatedly, it does not work the same way. In reminiscing, probably anxiously, with Hermione about his courting of her, he speaks of the time when

> Three crabbèd months had soured themselves to death
> Ere I could make thee open thy white hand
> And clap thyself my love; then didst thou utter,
> "I am yours forever."
>   (1.2.102-05).

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[47] Maurice Hunt, *Shakespeare's Romance of the Word* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1990), 79.

He certainly engages with the past, and he quotes Hermione's past utterance, but his speech is ultimately a straightforward anecdote that expresses no doubt, ambiguity, or movement in its presentation of time. There is no engagement with what could have played out, no proposed hypothetical utterances that may never come to fruition. In short, he does not engage with language and time in the way that Hermione and Polixenes do.

Most of the time, Leontes does not even attempt to engage with language and time in the way that they do. In his intense suspicion of Hermione's infidelity with Polixenes, he repeatedly rejects any look into hypothetical times and realities. In his sudden transition into anger and jealousy, he begins by using solely the present tense:

> Too hot, too hot.
> To mingle friendship far is mingling bloods.
> I have *tremor cordis* on me; my heart dances,
> But not for joy, not joy.
> (1.2.108-11)

He continues by beginning to posit a hypothetical reality that originates in various distant sources:

> This entertainment
> May a free face put on, derive a liberty
> From heartiness, from bounty, from fertile bosom,
> And well become the agent—'t may, I grant—
> (1.2.111-14)

but he immediately retracts this hypothetical reality and reformulates it as a present one:

> But to be paddling palms and pinching fingers,
> As *now* they are, and making practiced smiles
> As in a looking glass; and then to sigh, as 'twere
> The mort o'th' deer—oh, that is entertainment
> My bosom likes not, nor my brows…
> (1.2.115-20, italics mine)

Evidently, Leontes refuses to remain in hypotheticals or to engage fully with times and realities

other than the present.

Other statements that Leontes makes regarding his suspicion of Hermione, such as his

aside of "I am angling now" (1.2.179) and his remark to Mamillius that "Thy mother plays, and I

/ Play, too" (1.2.186-87), are firmly grounded in the present tense and moment. He also

expresses his desire to *remain* in the present: he wishes for servants that would "undo more

doing" (1.2.312), or prevent the movement forward of time, which he subsequently does himself

in cutting off Camillo's "I have loved thee— " with a harsh, terminating command to "Make that

thy question, and go rot" (1.2.324). He even proposes that Camillo may be a "hovering

temporizer" (1.2.302), which could simply reflect Camillo's initially noncommittal responses to

Leontes, but which also carries a sense of disdain for one who might hover in time and evade the

present, as everyone but Leontes seems to do in Sicilia.

In locating himself in the community of cuckolds, Leontes again approaches, but then

rejects, an engagement with the past, with the history of cuckoldry. Janet Adelman describes the

way in which

> …he finds in the culturally familiar fiction of female betrayal in marriage both an
> acceptable narrative for his sense of primal loss and a new adult selfhood. Through the
> self-born delusion of Hermione's betrayal, he thus gives himself a recognizable place to
> stand…[48]

Despite the fact that he may be able to locate himself in a "fiction," a "narrative," a "place"

outside of himself, his grammatical formulation of his position in these locations once again

avoids any engagement with the past and positions him only in the present:

<div align="center">—There have been,</div>

Or I am much deceived, cuckolds ere now,

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[48] Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers*, 224.

> And many a man there is, *even at this present,*
> *Now, while I speak this,* holds his wife by th'arm,
> That little thinks she has been sluiced in's absence,
> And his pond fished by his next neighbor, by
> Sir Smile, his neighbor. Nay, there's comfort in't
> Whiles other men have gates and those gates opened,
> As mine, against their will.
>   (1.2.189-97, italics mine)

He shifts his focus away from the "cuckolds ere now" and toward the men "at this present," the men who are experiencing the same thing he is right now.

Leontes's rejection of the larger historical community of cuckolds also contrasts with other characters' efforts to place themselves in past histories or narratives, as in Camillo's lamentation,

> What case stand I in?...
> ……………………………………………
>   If I could find example
> Of thousands that had struck anointed kings
> And flourished after, I'd not do't. But since
> Nor brass, nor stone, nor parchment bears not one,
> Let villainy itself forswear't…
>   (1.2.351-60)

and in Polixenes's reaction to Camillo's account of Leontes's accusations:

>   Oh, then my best blood turn
> To an infected jelly and my name
> Be yoked with his that did betray the best.
> Turn then my freshest reputation to
> A savor that may strike the dullest nostril
> Where I arrive and my stomach be shunned—
> Nay, hated too—worse than the greatest infection
> That e'er was heard or read.
>   (1.2.415-22)

Both Camillo and Polixenes link themselves to older texts—Camillo to the hypothetical historical archives in which he hopes to locate himself, and Polixenes to both the New Testament and the hypothetical historical accounts of "infection." Adelman also describes Polixenes's

earlier account of his boyhood days with Leontes, cited above, as "a mythologized version of the kings' childhood"[49] and as an explication of the kings' "prehistory,"[50] further indicating Polixenes's engagement with distant, older texts. If Leontes lacks connection to distant and historical communities, then he also lacks connection to the distant texts with which other characters engage. In broader terms, if Leontes's existence is contextless, it is also simply textless.

Multiple characters, particularly Paulina and Hermione, spend much of the second and third acts trying to provide Leontes with texts, some temporally and historically oriented and some not, to which he can attach himself and with which he can engage. These texts include the "wit" that will "flow" from Paulina's tongue (2.2.52-55), as well as Paulina's "words, as medicinal as true, / Honest as either" (2.3.7-8). These "words" turn out to be the infant Perdita herself, whose "print be little" (a stark contrast to Juliet's child as "character too gross" [*Measure for Measure* 1.2.143]) and who is the "whole matter / And copy of the father" (2.3.98-99). In noting Perdita's resemblance to Leontes, Paulina also cleverly attempts to "lay th'old proverb to your charge, / So like you 'tis the worse" (2.3.96-97). She also relies on legal texts and on remaining "lawful" in her conduct with Perdita, Leontes, and Hermione (2.2.11-12, 2.2.61)[51], a reliance that Hermione echoes in her accusation that Leontes has used "rigor and not law" in prosecuting her (3.2.112). Additionally, in the dramatic and tragic events that play out in 3.2, Hermione sends much of what Leontes says back to him as text. She deflects his accusation as "a saying, sir, not due to me" (3.2.56). She formulates Polixenes's love for him as a speaker that

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[49] Ibid., 220.
[50] Ibid., 222-23.
[51] Paulina's reliance on legal texts and lawfulness continues into the fifth act (5.3.96, 5.3.105, 5.3.111) as she defends the lawfulness of her supposed resurrection of Hermione.

"had spoke, / Even since it could speak, from an infant, freely, / That it was yours" (3.2.67-69). She even rejects Leontes's speaking entirely, sending his speech back to him as "a language that I understand not" (3.2.78). She also, of course, points him, herself, and the whole Sicilian court to the oracle's written message ("I do refer me to the oracle" [3.2.113]).

None of these attempts to associate Leontes with some sort of external, distant text is successful by the end of the third act. Even after the sudden and devastating death of Mamillius, which changes Leontes's perspective, Leontes expresses his new understanding as a statement that "Apollo's angry, and the heavens themselves / Do strike at my injustice" (3.2.143-44). Leontes never affirms the truth of the oracle's *text*. He gives only Apollo and the heavens his acknowledgement, which he formulates in the present tense, still not engaging with external sources of text or larger systems of time.

In short, the first three acts establish a system of text and time in Sicilia and position Leontes as an antagonist of that system. Leontes's resistance to the system introduces jealousy, anger, imprisonment, premature birth, and death into the Sicilian court. Important, too, is that the system itself is often chaotic, relying on anything but present speech and present time to function properly. The rest of the play, then, works to reinstate the compromised system by first bringing it to a new place, then simultaneously expanding upon it and operationalizing its functioning in more ordered and legible ways, and finally bringing it back to its original location, where it can resume in earnest.

As the play arrives in Bohemia at the end of the third act, the abstract temporal system of Sicilia begins to literalize itself. Distant texts that were once quotations floating within speeches are now physical texts; distant times and realities now present themselves. Antigonus places Perdita and a note on the ground of the Bohemian seacoast: "There lie, and there thy character"

(3.3.46). Perdita is now visible alongside a physical text—which Antigonus has placed at a short distance from her person—that provides access to an understanding of who she is, or rather, who she might have been, where she might have lived, and how her life might have played out in a different, hypothetical, apparently nonexistent time. Polixenes is suddenly visible alongside his "We thank you," Hermione alongside her "Not guilty." Furthermore, Antigonus attaches Perdita to the text of the note only after bringing her to the Bohemian seacoast, a location that critics have posited may have existed only hypothetically, or only within certain distant historical moments.[52]

The play then distances itself from its own plot, shifting to an interlude in which the personified Time speaks about the very topic of passing time and temporal distance. The speaker in 4.1 may not even be "Time" itself, but instead a man who "take[s] upon [him] in the name of Time / To use [his] wings" (4.1.3-4). This man is, himself, distant from the textual "name of Time," but he adopts the name and uses it as an entrance point through which he can bridge the sixteen-year gap between the third and fourth acts, just as the members of the Sicilian court take their isolated quotations and use them to move through time in the first three acts.

The beginning of the fourth act establishes a dual motion of time, a forward and backward motion, in which Time can "make and unfold error" (4.1.2), work "in one self-born hour / To plant and o'erwhelm custom" (4.1.8-9), as well as

> witness to
> The times that brought them in, so shall I do
> To th' freshest things now reigning and make stale
> The glistering of this present…
> (4.1.12-14).

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[52] *The Norton Shakespeare: Later Plays and Poems,* 1460.

This forward and backward motion, the making and unmaking that Time presents here, recalls the repetitive back-and-forth movement through time in which the characters engage in the first three acts of the play. However, while the fourth act reinstates and reaffirms the importance of this system, it also expands upon it. As Garber eloquently states, "the cumulative effect of *The Winter's Tale* is echoic, a kind of rhythmic mise en abyme, a hall of mirrors in which stories are told and retold…"[53] One could interpret Garber's understanding as implying that the temporal system of the play is not only one of forward and backward movement, making and unmaking, "call[ing] again," but also one of forward and *further* forward movement, making and *re*making, telling and retelling, speaking and "speak[ing] against." This system would recall and apply Polixenes's image of compounding zero upon zero, "rich place" upon "rich place," "We thank you" upon "We thank you," into a temporal, historical chain of event after event after event, tale after tale after tale. This system is perhaps visible in the Sicilia of the first three acts, in such moments cited above as Camillo's attempting to locate himself in a *chain* of repetitive written history, or in Leontes's attempt to "undo more doing" as an attempt to stop the chain from continuing, or even in Paulina's grave image of "A thousand knees, / Ten thousand years together" (3.2.207-08) as an addition of one zero onto another in a numerical chain of hypothetical time. While these kinds of reverberations of Polixenes's initial image may lurk in the background of Sicilia in the first three acts, it is not until the fourth act, when Sicilia's temporal system appears again with new features in Bohemia, that the importance of this chain to the functioning of the system becomes clear. This clarity comes to manifest itself legibly, embedding itself phonetically and orthographically into the text of the fourth act.

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[53] Garber, *Shakespeare After All*, 828.

A "character," as Antigonus calls the written note that he places beside Perdita, may be a historical account of Perdita's hypothetical life; the word can also, as Harold Bloom notes, stand for a single alphabetical letter.[54] If Perdita lies beside a text that explains who she is or could have been, she also figuratively lies beside and takes with her the alphabetical "character" that best approximates Polixenes's "cipher": the letter "o" and its exclamatory derivative "oh." This letter and the short words that carry its sound pervade the fourth act.[55] The fourth act on its own contains 23 lines and speeches that begin with an exclamatory "oh," 17 of which appear in the long 4.4 alone, while there are only 15 of these exclamations in the first three acts combined. If the fourth act, and particularly 4.4, works to move Perdita and Camillo forward toward Sicilia and to promote generational continuance in establishing the desire for marriage between Perdita and Florizel, the prevalence of "o" and "oh" in this act may phonetically and orthographically depict this movement forward of time and progress, this placement of one zero next to another, this grafting—to reference the subject of Perdita's and Polixenes's debate (4.4.79-103)—of one tale onto another.

Perdita uses the "oh" exclamation frequently in 4.4, exclaiming to and at times apostrophizing—and always with an "oh"—such diverse objects as Florizel (4.4.7, 4.4.35, 4.4.146), "the fates" (4.4.20), "Lady Fortune" (4.4.51), and, famously, Proserpina:

> O Proserpina,
> For the flowers now that, frighted, thou lett'st fall
> From Dis's wagon: daffodils,
> That come before the swallow dares and take
> The winds of March with beauty; violets dim,
> But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes
> Or Cytherea's breath; pale primroses,
> That die unmarried ere they can behold

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[54] Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*, 16.
[55] For an extensive discussion of many repeated sounds in the late plays, see McDonald, "'You speak a language that I understand not'."

> Bright Phoebus in his strength—a malady
> Most incident to maids; bold oxlips and
> The crown imperial; lilies of all kinds,
> The flower-de-luce being one. Oh, these I lack
> To make you garlands of and my sweet friend
> To strew him o'er and o'er.
> (4.4.116-29)

The "o"/"oh" exclamation appears twice in the speech, beginning both the first sentence and the last, placing a "cipher" both at the beginning and at the end, and thereby depicting a small portion of the larger chain of zeroes that makes up the play. Additionally, though, the speech employs heavily the temporal system of the first three acts; Perdita uses the "O," the apostrophe to Proserpina, to enter into the mythological world of which she speaks and to gather the flowers that she wants to provide to her guests. Perdita moves through time, finding a moment "before the swallow dares" and "ere [the pale primroses] can behold / Bright Phoebus in his strength," but always returning to the present in which there are no flowers. As Hunt writes of Perdita's speech, "Such messages…can only come from the offered flowers themselves; despite her exquisite poetry, Perdita's portrayal of the effects of the flowers amounts to a translation—a reduction—of the ideas that only the flowers themselves can convey."[56] The speech, then, both reinstates the temporal system of Sicilia and expands upon it; both the text of the "exquisite poetry" and the text of the first exclamatory "O" lead Perdita on a journey into and out of mythological and hypothetical time, but the two "O's" also visibly bookend the speech, replicating Polixenes's temporal chain and moving the entire play forward.

Florizel's speech to Perdita accomplishes a similar goal of reestablishing Sicilian time while also adding to it:

> What you do
> Still betters what is done. When you speak, sweet,

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[56] Hunt, *Shakespeare's Romance of the Word,* 96.

> I'd have you do it ever. When you sing,
> I'd have you buy and sell so, so give alms,
> Pray so; and for the ordering your affairs,
> To sing them too. When you do dance, I wish you
> A wave o'th' sea, that you might ever do
> Nothing but that, move still, still so,
> And own no other function. Each your doing,
> So singular in each particular,
> Crowns what you are doing in the present deeds,
> That all your acts are queens.
>   (4.4.135-46)

Florizel's syntax in saying "I'd have you…," "I wish you…," and "that you might…" brings him into and out of hypothetical times and realities; it is not clear that Perdita will "do it ever," or that she will ever "buy and sell so" or have "A wave o'th' sea." At the same time, though, strings of text like "sell so, so give alms" and "move still, still so" may serve other purposes. Of these chains of text, Hunt writes, "The arresting phrase imitates the movement of the sea wave (motion crests with the first 'still,' suspends itself at the caesural pause, and sweeps downward again with the second 'still' and ensuing 'so'—an adverb suggesting the repetition of the process indefinitely)."[57] While Florizel's lines certainly lend themselves to the upward and downward motion that Hunt describes, they may also function as chains of words and acts that follow one after the other and move only forward, not upward and downward or backward and forward through hypothetical time. The text forgoes a chiastic formulation of "sell so, so *sell*" or "move still, still *move*" in favor of asymmetry, introducing new words after the caesura that Hunt notes. The "so's" bridge the gap between "sell" and "give," the "still's" between "move" and "so." Furthermore, the "still's" straddle iambs, linking one metrical foot to the next. After traversing the bridge of "move still, still so," Florizel then punctuates his chains of text with what is perhaps an additional forward-moving chain of "o's," hoping that Perdita will "**o**wn n**o o**ther

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[57] Ibid., 99.

function." The possibility that Hunt presents of "the repetition of the process indefinitely" may apply, then, to all of these chains in their entirety, not only to "the ensuing 'so.'" Evidently, Florizel's syntax allows him to participate in backward and forward temporal movement, while he also engages in strictly forward temporal movement through his chains of text and "o's." Therefore, Florizel, too, participates in the hybrid system of time that the fourth act creates.

Perdita's response to Florizel's speech is yet another reflection of this new-and-improved system of time, incorporating the syntactic, phonetic, and orthographical elements that comprise it:

> **O** Doricles,
> Your praises are t**oo** large. But that your youth
> And the true bl**oo**d which peeps fairly through't
> Do plainly give you out an unstained shepherd,
> With wisdom I might fear, my Doricles,
> You w**oo**ed me the false way.
> (4.4.146-51)

The exclamatory "O" and multiple pairs of "o's" that Perdita grafts onto one another again recreate Polixenes's perpetuating chain of zeroes. With this chain, though, comes the syntactic formulation ("But that…I might…") of Perdita's hypothetical worry about the truth of Florizel's past courting of her, a worry that she soon crosses out given the evidence she feels she has. Thus, Perdita both moves time forward by compounding it in her orthography and moves *through* time in her syntax.

Upon returning to Sicilia in the fifth act, the play establishes both the resumption of the Sicilian temporal system and the installation of its new Bohemian components in the Sicilian court. Strikingly, Leontes has assimilated to the Sicilian system over the sixteen-year gap in which the play has not presented him, and he speaks quite differently now. In one speech, he employs the kind of textual and temporal distancing that he was unable or unwilling to carry out

in the first three acts. In complying with Paulina's demand that he not remarry anyone but

Hermione herself, Leontes says,

> No more such wives, therefore no wife. One worse
> And better used would make her sainted spirit
> Again possess her corpse, and on this stage,
> Where we offenders now appear, soul-vexed,
> And begin, "Why to me?"
>   (5.1.56-60)

Not only does Leontes engage with a hypothetical time of remarriage and the renewal of

Hermione's life, but he also presents an isolated quotation that is perhaps more distant than any

quotation presented in the first three acts, given the supposed impossibility of Hermione's ever

being alive to utter it.

In the new Sicilia, the exclamatory "oh" plays the two distinct temporal roles that the

fourth act established for it. At times, it is a textual window into distant, hypothetical time:

Leontes calls to a hypothetical world in which he had complied with Paulina ("Oh, that ever I /

had squared me to thy counsel!" [5.1.51-52]), and one of the gentlemen reports Leontes's

lamentation of Hermione's supposed death and his wish that she had not met the fate she did

("Oh, thy mother, thy mother!" [5.2.48-49]). At other times, the "oh" is a way of grafting one

time, or one reality, onto the next: when Perdita, Florizel, and the others arrive from Bohemia,

Paulina uses an "O" to describe the links that comprise the chain of time, saying,

> O Hermione,
> As every present time doth boast itself
> Above a better, gone, so must thy grave
> Give way to what's seen now.
>   (5.1.95-98)

The two temporal systems have been integrated with one another and have comfortably

established themselves in the Sicilian court.

If 5.1 serves mainly to indicate the presence of the new-and-improved temporal system in Sicilia, 5.2 steps away from the system and from the principal characters, distancing the reader from the entire plot and systematic functioning of the play. Asserting that the first recognition scene, to which readers are not privy, is "so like an old tale" (5.2.26-28) and "Like an old tale still" (5.2.58), the gentlemen take the action of the play and seal it off as a closed story, a moment in time, a single link in a chain of "rich place[s]."

The third and final scene of the fifth act, then, works to graft this neatly sealed and packaged-up "rich place" onto the next one. Readers do not know anything about what the next tale holds, only that it will follow the one that the play has told. 5.3 begins much like 1.2; as Polixenes thanked Leontes and Hermione for their generous hosting, Leontes now thanks Paulina for her guidance over the past sixteen years: "O grave and good Paulina, the great comfort / That I have had of thee!" (5.3.1-2). As Polixenes apologetically called his time in Sicilia "a charge and trouble" (1.2.26) to Leontes and Hermione, Leontes now apologizes to Paulina: "O Paulina, / We honor you with trouble" (5.3.8-9). Leontes apostrophizes Paulina twice more with the exclamatory "oh" in this scene (5.3.70, 5.3.135), which occurs alongside many other uses of the exclamatory "oh" in rapid succession (5.3.29, 5.3.34, 5.3.38, 5.3.46, 5.3.109); these exclamations perhaps allow Paulina and others to facilitate phonetically and orthographically the grafting of the present tale onto the next one.

The scene then removes any obstacles to this grafting. Once Paulina has released Hermione from the obligation of remaining in the likeness of a statue, Perdita asks for Hermione's hand, grafting one generation onto another, recognizing that Hermione "ended when

I but began" (5.3.45), and positioning them in the larger chain of time.[59] Leontes soon after

forgives Hermione and Polixenes, regretting "That e'er I put between your holy looks / My ill

suspicion" (5.3.148-49). He removes any gap that might exist "between" them, any "vast" over

which they would have had to join hands (1.1.45-46) as Hermione and Perdita have now done,

and allows them to "look upon" one another (5.3.147), giving them direct access to each other

and linking them together in the chain. The scene, and the play, ends with "Hastily lead away"

(5.3.155); the links have adhered themselves to one another, and the chain of time can move

forward.

In short, if 1.2 opens with the end of the nine-month tale in which Polixenes has stayed in

Sicilia, 5.3 opens with the end of the play's sixteen-year tale and ends with the beginning of the

next, unknown tale. The difference between the outcomes of 1.2 and 5.3, and perhaps the striking

durational difference between the tales that end in 1.2 and 5.3, lies in Leontes's refusal to

subscribe to the temporal system in the early part of the play. As Adelman writes of Leontes in

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[59] Hand-joining figures prominently in this play as a means of moving time and progress forward, not only in Leontes's and Polixenes's figurative handshake in 1.1 and Hermione's and Perdita's joining hands in 5.3, but also in various contexts within the pivotal fourth act. References to Perdita's and Florizel's joining hands with one another in 4.4 abound (e.g., 4.4.154, 4.4.353, 4.4.374, 4.4.381-82) as they, perhaps unwittingly, prepare to move forward toward Sicilia, marriage, and a temporal space beyond the sixteen-year gap of separation. Similarly, the "O" that denotes temporal continuance at times manifests itself in moments of hand-joining. While deceptive on Autolycus's part, the following exchange between Autolycus and the Clown provides an example:

> CLOWN: …Lend me thy hand; I'll help thee. Come, lend me thy hand.
> AUTOLYCUS: **O** g**oo**d sir, tenderly. **Oh!**
> CLOWN: Alas, p**oo**r s**o**ul.
> AUTOLYCUS: **O** g**oo**d sir; s**o**ftly, g**oo**d sir…
>   (4.3.65-69)

The dense concentration of the "o" here, coupled with exaggerated hand-joining, exemplifies the link between joining hands and continuing the flow of time in this play.

1.2 and the first three acts, "blotting out the world, making it nothing, can lead only to the stasis of Leontes's winter's tale."[61] Rendering his own tale static means also rendering the whole temporal system static; if he prolongs the present tale, it will never seal itself off as finished, and the next tale will never be able to link itself onto the current one. In finally accepting Hermione's fidelity, Leontes, sixteen years too late, "opens up a space for the female narrative—specifically the mother-daughter narrative—his work has thus suppressed."[62] He "opens up" the "cipher," the "rich place," in which Hermione and Perdita can finally stand and allow their own tale to play out after Leontes's prolonged one has ended.

Of Leontes's self-absorption in the first three acts, Hunt writes:

> In his spiritual isolation, Leontes believes that his autocratic words create their own private contexts for understanding, or that, in their "truth," they need no accompanying settings for interpretation. Leontes' words often exist as malign forces in the void created by his withdrawal from human community.[63]

Notably, the "void" that Leontes creates as he halts time is predicated on the *present.* Leontes's unwillingness to engage with other times, his staunch focus on the present world that exists in his own mind, stops time by forcing it to linger on his own tale, but also paradoxically creates a "void," a "wide gap of time" (5.3.154), lengthening the space between one tale and the next. Perhaps this paradox in the play's temporal system is yet another indication of the temporal chaos that can result from refusing to take part in the system, a temporal chaos that is more extreme than the already chaotic system itself. Evidently, divorcing oneself from this kind of system is dangerous and destructive and will not allow one to transcend the workings of time. In a similar vein, Greenblatt's idea that a character's "release" from powerful systems

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[61] Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers,* 231.
[62] Ibid., 234.
[63] Hunt, *Shakespeare's Romance of the Word,* 81-82.

"paradoxically" requires "*submission*" to those very systems, while an idea he expresses in a larger discussion of interpersonal submission in plays like *Othello,* is very apt here. In trying to "release" himself from the temporal system that governs his court, Leontes works counterproductively; he is able to achieve temporal stability and peace, both for himself and for his court, only when he submits to the systematic functioning of time in the world of the play.

If a focus on the present can only halt and counteract time in *The Winter's Tale,* then a devotion to any single tale, even with an acknowledgement that the tale exists as a "rich place" in the larger chain of time, is not enough to allow time to function properly in the play. After all, Polixenes embodies his hypothetical "rich place" with a "cipher," a zero, a nothing. Remaining on one tale, then, will dwell on nothing and get one nowhere. What matters, what moves time along and maintains temporal and societal peace in the play, is a constant engagement not with any particular tale, either one's own or a distant one, but with the chain itself, the linking of tale to tale, the joining of hands "as over a vast."

IV.

Conclusion

If plays like *Measure for Measure* and *The Winter's Tale* present both back-and-forth and exclusively forward spatial and temporal movement, then it is interesting to consider the participation of the plays in both kinds of movement, in both "call[ing] again" and "speak[ing] against," as they engage with the works that exist peripherally to them in the Shakespeare canon. Critics have most explicitly written of the location of *Measure for Measure* in the canon, or "the transitional place these [problem] plays occupy between the festive comedies and the late romances,"[64] in the larger chain of Shakespeare's works and progress. Frye writes explicitly of this middle-ground location:

> The problem plays stand midway between the romantic comedies and the romances in more than a chronological sense. The resistance they offer to the wishes of the romantic imagination is greater than anything in the early comedies and comparable to much in the final romances; to increase [the resistance] further is to enter the world of tragedy. At the same time they lack figures of vision and resourcefulness adequate to overcome that resistance; to provide them is to enter the world of the last plays.[65]

Perhaps, then, with the problem plays occupying their own place in a linear canon and "defy[ing] absorption into the traditional categories of romantic comedies, histories, tragedies, and romances,"[66] lacking both the comedic "wishes of the romantic imagination" and existing wholly outside of "the world of the last plays," the problem plays can "speak against" the early

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[64] Wheeler, *Shakespeare's Development*, 13.
[65] Frye, *Northrop Frye on Shakespeare*, 96.
[66] Vivian Thomas, "Shakespeare's Problem Plays: Concepts and Perspectives" in *Shakespeare's Problem Plays: All's Well That Ends Well, Measure for Measure, Troilus and Cressida*, ed. Simon Barker (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 28.

comedies, and the romances can "speak against" the former groups of plays, each group putting forward new structures and forms as it adds itself into the canon.

While Shakespeare's works can be understood in this linear way, critics also depict much more nuanced movement between the problem plays and other sets of plays, as well as movement within each set. After all, the fact that the problem plays' central placement elucidates contrasts between later and earlier plays mirrors the progression that occurs within *Measure for Measure* itself, as the "fulcrum" of poetry that exists at the play's center ultimately does not promote symmetry in the play but instead allows the second half of the play to "speak against" the first, rather than "call[ing] again" the first half chiastically. Felperin presents what is perhaps a nice complement to this conceptualization of *Measure for Measure* as enacting Angelo's model of revision. Felperin conceptualizes the inner make-up of earlier comedies in a way that recalls Isabella's model:

> There, in any case, is the equipoise between romantic and anti-romantic sentiment characteristic of Shakespearean comedy, the fulcrum of which is usually centered in his witty heroines. Their romantic genre is established, mildly threatened, and reestablished stronger for the testing.[67]

Not only does Felperin depict the balancing out, the retraction and reformulation, of the romantic strains that exist within comedy, but he also depicts this balancing as having a "fulcrum," suggesting its potential for symmetry, for smoothly and symmetrically moving from court to pastoral countryside and back to court. *The Winter's Tale*, of course, approximates this movement, but the hybridization of the Sicilian and Bohemian temporal systems in the fifth act, rather than a clear return to the original Sicilian system, as well as the play's ultimate push toward forward temporal movement, rather than symmetrical back-and-forth movement, makes it

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[67] Felperin, *Shakespearean Romance*, 75.

more difficult to conceptualize the fourth act as a perfectly effective "fulcrum." Notable in

Felperin's argument, too, is that the "fulcrum" that he identifies in the comedies is decidedly

human, consisting of the plays' "witty heroines," rather than of non-human texts. Thus, *Measure*

for Measure, while perhaps a linear stepping stone in the larger chain of Shakespeare's works,

also works to invert the spatial and textual configuration of the earlier comedies, moving the

characters that served as central "fulcrum[s]" in the comedies to the perimeter of the play and

moving non-human text to the center, ultimately bringing about "a profound reorientation of the

comedies,"[68] perhaps even going so far as to become its own kind of "comedy that destroys

comedy,"[69] and performing the kind of retraction and reformulation that Isabella promotes.

Even Wheeler's conceptualization of a more linear progression between the comedies,

problem plays, late tragedies, and romances suggests more nuanced movement. Writing of the

problematic sexual relationships that the problem plays depict, Wheeler argues that

> Shakespeare is unable to dramatize in these plays an action that moves beyond failed trust to sexual bonds both persuasively completed in themselves and fully integrated into a reaffirmed social order. This achievement must wait for the late romances. Shakespeare must discover, must find himself able to discover, a comic ordering principle equivalent in power and scope to the destructive logic of tragedy. Such art must wait for Shakespeare's comic imagination to develop a route beyond the tragedies to a pattern of restored trust and a new ordering of human impulse in *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*."[70]

In other words, while the problem plays may chronologically follow the comedies and precede

the late tragedies and romances, Shakespeare can move from the problem plays to the romances

only by moving backward and pulling from the earlier comedies, which in turn allows him to

move through or over or "beyond" the late tragedies in order to finally reach the romances. Thus,

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[68] Wheeler, *Shakespeare's Development*, 13.
[69] Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*, 380.
[70] Wheeler, *Shakespeare's Development*, 19.

the canon's linear forward movement here is not so linear or forward-moving after all, requiring

motion in multiple directions and engagement with ideas and structures in other times and

locations in order to make progress.

Ultimately, then, the Shakespeare canon is not simply a static set of chronologically

progressing texts but is also a living, moving, and movable expanse of characters, texts, spaces,

and forms. By entering that expanse and immersing ourselves in the worlds that exist within it,

we can watch Shakespeare shape his texts, his characters, and his legacy into what he wants them

to be, moving forward toward an ideal body of work, but not without stopping to reevaluate

along the way.

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