The Ancient Greek Wild in *The Winter's Tale*

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Résumé : Quand on lit The Winter's Tale de Shakespeare à la lumière de ses allusions aux traditions culturelles grecques comme elles étaient comprises à la Renaissance, on se rend compte que les liens entre les personnages sont plus étroits que prévus. Si l'on se rappelle l'association entre l'ours et Artemis, protectrice de la faune sauvage et déesse de la fertilité, le lien entre l'ours et Hermione s'éclaircit. La transgression du loup, nommé Autolycus, offre une parodie de la louveté tyrannique de Léontès, ce qui aide le public à le comprendre et, peut-être, à lui pardonner. Par conséquent, ces deux personnages, qui ne sont pas essentiels à l'intrigue, sont en fait bien intégrés dans la pièce.

Shakespeare's reversal of the two settings of Greene's *Pandosto*—his main source for *The Winter's Tale*—takes the pastoral scenes of act 4 out of Sicilia, a place traditionally associated with the literary pastoral, and locates them in the apparently anomalous Bohemia, which seems to have had no such associations. While rumours of the hopes of Princess Elizabeth's husband-to-be for the crown of Bohemia could have influenced Shakespeare to shift the courtship of Perdita and Florizel there, Stephen Orgel has suggested that "Bohemia" with its seacoast might simply be a part of the "fairy tale world of the story" and a signal for the earliest audiences of the unreality of the play's setting.¹ I would like to go further and make the claim that if we not only think of Shakespeare's Bohemia as a "fairy tale world" or "Never-Never Land," but at the same time make ourselves aware of how deeply it is infused with Greek cultural materials—especially myths related to wild nature—*The Winter's Tale* becomes much more imaginatively coherent than it has often been assumed to be. The intricate substructure of Greek cultural materials is very close to the surface

of the play, and its presence helps to explain why, despite the two distinct settings and the elision of sixteen years, *The Winter's Tale* provides an integrated aesthetic experience. Moreover, because nature in the literary pastoral is at least sometimes escapist, the avoidance of a setting traditionally associated with the pastoral allows more freedom in the representation of wild nature; freedom used in this case to show nature as deeply regenerative, rather than escapist or enervating. It is easier to understand how this is so when we read the play with a fuller knowledge of the Greek elements in its cultural context.

To imagine a little-known place in terms of what one already knows is not unreasonable; to assume that Shakespeare did this in writing *The Winter's Tale* renders discussion of the haphazard geography of the play irrelevant. For Shakespeare to fill in many of the blank spaces in his picture of Bohemia with details from ancient Greece (a culture that was very important to Renaissance Europeans) seems natural enough, especially when we remember that much of Sicilia, the other setting of the play, was culturally Greek in ancient times. If we think of Shakespeare's practice in regard to the settings of the play as being very like what Giambattista Vico later called "poetic geography," such problems as the perplexing seacoast attributed to landlocked Bohemia disappear. As Vico puts it, "poetic geography" is

. . . the property of human nature that in describing unknown or distant things, in respect of which they either have not had the true idea themselves or wish to explain it to others who do not have it, men make use of the semblances of things known or near at hand . . .²

In other words, in terms of "poetic geography" the play should not be criticized for its failure to represent an objective picture of the historical Bohemia, because what the play shows is the assimilation of Bohemia into the imaginative world of Shakespeare and his contemporaries in a meaningful way. From this point of view, the presence of Greek cultural materials in Bohemia in a play written by a classically educated Englishman is perfectly natural.

One can in fact claim that the dominant cultural matrix of the play is Greek throughout. To make such a statement is not, of course, to deny the importance of Renaissance English cultural traditions from or perceptions about Italy, Bohemia, and even Russia, for a full understanding of the play.³ Nor is it to minimize the presence of what were most likely first-hand observations of English rural life in the "Bohemian" setting. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that while Bohemia and Russia both had roles in the international politics and trade of the day, and while general knowledge

about both places was to some degree disseminated in England, the deeper cultural traditions of the play, underlying the important English and Italian elements, are Greek. Given the prestige and unique position of Greek culture among educated Europeans in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, this is hardly surprising. That the play does not limit itself to a literal representation of ancient Greece is in accord both with Shakespeare's practice elsewhere and with what seems to have been Renaissance humanist practice generally.⁴

Enough details of the text are Greek to support readings that emphasize the Greek aspect of the play. More often than not, the characters have Greek names, in Bohemia as well as in Sicilia. The most important divinity is Apollo of "Delphos" (as the name of that place was commonly spelled by the Elizabethans). And while the centrality of the Demeter-Persephone myth may not be universally accepted, it is a persisting strain in reflection on the play. In fact, with the single exception of the Roman Flora, all the divinities mentioned in both Sicilia and Bohemia are Greek, despite Shakespeare's following the common Renaissance practice of using their Latin names. It is also notable that, as Louis L. Martz points out, Shakespeare greatly increased the Greek elements in the play as he adapted Greene's narrative for the stage, giving greater prominence to culturally Greek Sicilia, changing characters' non-Greek names to Greek names, adding the Greek characters Cleomenes and Dion to make the journey to the oracle at Delphos, and making Leontes' reaction to the oracle include blasphemy against Apollo, in contrast to the parallel passage in Greene in which Pandosto does not acknowledge the god explicitly and immediately turns to reconciliation with those he has wronged.⁵ Therefore I think it is reasonable to interpret some aspects of the play that might seem generically European, the bear in particular, in relation to echoes or cultural memories of Greece in Renaissance Europe. And Autolycus, as well, is much more Greek, under his English, cony-catching veneer, than Bohemian.

The bear, obviously, and Autolycus in important ways that will be discussed later, both have strong links with wild nature, including many associations with the ancient Greek province of Arkadia—a marginalized, partly wild place. Arkadia might seem the most appropriate setting for the pastoral scenes, but since ancient Sicilia had become culturally Greek through being colonized from Greece, including Arkadia,⁶ Arkadia was already part of Sicilian culture and, especially, of its past. Thus, using it as the other setting of the play would give us a world in which renewal came from regression to the past rather than an alternate place in the present. An additional, and perhaps more important, complication is that by Shakespeare's time Arkadia had been transformed into "Arcadia," the favored

setting for the literary pastoral, and so would have been less effective as the source of the healing brought into the play from wild nature as distinct from the semi-domesticated nature of pastoral. Nature in Bohemia is certainly, as Stephen Orgel says, “nature at its wildest.”⁷ Because the name “Bohemia” does not invoke the traditional pastoral, its use gives freedom to imagine a place in which nature can be represented as more truly wild, a “Never-Never Land” filled with images, personages, and hints of stories from the ancient Greek wild, but largely free from the limitations that would be imposed by invoking the literary pastoral, often idyllic and escapist, as locating the scenes in wild nature in Arcadia, or in Sicilia, as in *Pandosto*, would do. Pastoral elements are present in “Bohemia” but do not exclude or outweigh representations of a harsher and wilder, and also more truly regenerative, nature; while infusing “Bohemia” with Greek cultural elements makes it more consistent with Sicilia, the other, historically Greek, setting.

Artemis’ Bear

The presence of bears in such a cold, northern place as Bohemia is hardly unexpected, but bears are also a sign of the ancient Greek wild, lending their name, “arktos,” to the province of Arkadia and having a strong presence in the foundational stories of that place and in other Greek wilderness myths, especially those involving Artemis. When the bear in act 3 of *The Winter’s Tale* is understood as part of the play’s Greek cultural matrix, rather than as generically European or specifically Bohemian, it becomes part of larger patterns of meaning, especially in relation to Hermione. I would like to suggest that, besides its role in the plot, the bear has two other functions in the play. First, it is a signal to the audience that we are now in a setting where wild nature is powerful, away from the closed-in Sicilian palace of the earlier part of the play, where human emotions hold sway. Second, it alludes to a cluster of myths and cultural practices from ancient Greece that can deepen our understanding of the play and our appreciation of its aesthetic integrity. The bear, given its place in the Greek cultural background of the play, is particularly apposite as the agent for redress of the wrong done to Hermione. The second point, because it is less obvious than the first, will be discussed in detail later.⁸

In terms of the plot of the play alone, the destruction of Antigonus by some means is absolutely necessary. Had he lived to return to Sicilia, his knowledge of the exact place where he had abandoned Perdita might well have made him the leader of a rescue mission sent out by the newly penitent Leontes. But, its role in the plot aside, the crucial reason for Antigonus’

death is that it completes in muted form the tragic pattern of the first three acts. Leontes has behaved very much like the protagonist of a Shakespearean tragedy, becoming more and more isolated in his misperceptions of the world he lives in and more and more out of harmony with it, coming to understand his mistakes too late to stop the evil that he has set in motion. Death soon after his moment of realization—as Hermione’s trial collapses into confusion—would provide an appropriate outcome. This particular play is not, however, “The Tragedy of Leontes,” but an old tale with a “happy” conclusion. The happiness involves a serious danger for the audience: it creates the possibility that the evil that Leontes has done will seem negligible because it appears to be forgiven and his life is renewed. Thus it is appropriate that Antigonus, his agent, carrying out one of Leontes’ final mistaken actions (exposure of the unwanted infant in the traditional way of Greek legend), die in his place. That Antigonus is the only character in the play who expresses agreement with Leontes’ belief that Perdita is Polixenes’ child—saying, “. . .this being indeed the issue / Of King Polixenes”⁹—links him even more strongly to Leontes, and makes his death all the more appropriate. This literal death, of which Paulina reminds the audience near the end of the play, prevents the serious evil that Leontes has done in the first three acts from being completely lost sight of in the forgiveness and rejoicing. Antigonus’ death provides closure for the tragic pattern and an outward sign of the purging of Leontes’ evil from the world of the play, while allowing Leontes himself to repent so that he can be forgiven at the end. For this reason, the death must be presented in some detail; Antigonus cannot simply disappear or die offstage as the unfortunate Mamillius does.

Yet being killed and mostly eaten by a bear is hardly necessary to accomplish this purpose. As long as Antigonus dies and his death is foregrounded so that his role in completing the tragic pattern is not obscured, the agent of his death is immaterial. But one can say that an important function of the bear, in addition to its role in the plot, is to complete what the sea has begun and to signal the change to a setting in which nature is more powerful than Leontes’ dark imaginings. Surely a wild animal is appropriate for this.

The ferocity of this particular bear would have come as no surprise to an audience as familiar with bear-baitings as with plays;¹⁰ but, as Carol Gesner points out, an attack by a lion or a bear is one of the conventions of the Greek romance tradition underlying *The Winter's Tale*.¹¹ Other Renaissance English texts related to the Greek romance tradition also include an attack by a bear or, in the case of Sidney’s *Arcadia*, a bear and a lion together. It may be of interest that in both *Arcadia* and the related

play *Mucedorus*, the attacking bears are referred to with feminine pronouns and are killed by stalwart male characters. While these texts might well have been in Shakespeare's mind as he wrote this section of *The Winter's Tale* (as has been suggested by Geoffrey Bullough),¹² his own use of the convention creates a different outcome: wild nature wins and the agent of the deluded king loses. In Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, less obviously Greek than *Arcadia* or *The Winter's Tale*, Sir Calepine kills a bear in order to rescue the infant that it carries in its jaws.¹³ Again, the situation is fundamentally different from the bear episode in *The Winter's Tale* in that this bear, like the bears in *Arcadia* and *Mucedorus*, loses to the representative of the human world.

Moreover, while the appearance of the bear in *The Winter's Tale* is in itself a surprise, as in the romance convention, the outcome, the death of Antigonus, is not. Before the bear enters, and kills and eats him, Antigonus tells the audience of Hermione appearing to him in a dream, where she predicts that he will be punished for cooperating with Leontes' wicked plan for Perdita:

For this ungentle business
Put on thee by my lord, thou ne'er shalt see
Thy wife Paulina more.¹⁴

Such a dream could stem from an uneasy conscience; yet within the text of the play it also creates a link between the bear and Hermione, similar to the link between Antigonus and Leontes.

The bear, then, is not the gratuitously appearing wild beast of the romances, but the instrument of something that is not precisely revenge for Hermione, but is certainly a compensatory response on her behalf from this newly introduced part of the world of the play. Indeed, the bear is seen by Jeanne Addison Roberts as "actually the agent of female Nature, liberating the play world from some of the tyranny of male Culture."¹⁵ Certainly Nature seen as feminine does seem to be the appropriate source of the response in the world of the play to the wrongs done by Leontes against his wife and newly born daughter.

One strain of scholarship about *The Winter's Tale* finds compelling analogies between the classical myth of Demeter and Persephone, and Hermione and Perdita; indeed, for some this myth is the Greek cultural element most strongly present in the play.¹⁶ Clearly the textual and contextual evidence for the relevance of these goddesses to interpreting the play is overwhelming; one might mention Perdita's reference to Proserpina, for example.¹⁷ But it can be useful to remember that Demeter and Persephone and other goddesses, including Diana-Artemis, were not al-

ways clearly distinguished. The Renaissance mythographer Natalis Comes, for example, mentions this merging of goddesses, “. . . la Lune, Diane & Hecate ne sont qu'un: ou selon les autres, Iunon, Diane & Proserpine” [“. . . the Moon, Diana and Hecate are simply one: or according to other sources, Juno, Diana and Proserpina"].¹⁸ This point was not merely the product of Renaissance syncretism in thinking about classical mythology. In ancient Arkadia, for example, worship of Demeter, Persephone, and Artemis was less clearly distinct than one might expect. In his account of the geography of ancient Greece, Pausanias reports that the physical remains of the cults of the three were often mixed; images of one goddess were sometimes in or near a temple of the other, and, in at least one case, there was a temple to Demeter and Artemis jointly.¹⁹ This ancient and Renaissance blurring of boundaries between divinities often assumed to be distinct is similar to Jeanne Addison Roberts's sense that the pagan goddesses present in and behind those of Shakespeare's plays that foreground nature are aspects of one Great Goddess.²⁰ Further, if we think of the natural world as it is represented in this play, the cultivated landscape associated with Demeter the Corn Goddess and her daughter is notably absent. Nature's presence in the play's Sicilian setting is very limited, while in Bohemia it is either wild or pastoral, not agrarian. And for the ancient Greeks, the pre-eminent goddess of the wild places was Artemis, later named Diana by the Romans.

In Shakespeare's plays set in the classical world, Diana often becomes the protectress of women estranged or separated from the men who should normally care for them. The most pertinent example is the earlier romance, *Pericles*, because of its closeness in time, genre, and content to *The Winter's Tale*. In *Pericles*, the lost maiden Marina is protected by Diana; and Marina's mother, Thaisa, separated from her husband by shipwreck, becomes Diana's priestess in the great temple of Ephesus. Near the end of the play, Diana herself appears on stage. Thaisa's situation is similar to that of Emilia in *The Comedy of Errors* who becomes Abbess of a "priory" in Ephesus after being separated from her family. (The "priory" is presumably the famous temple of Diana.) Becoming a votary of Diana is also the alternative that Theseus finds for Hermia when she is unwilling to accept her father's choice of husband in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Thus it would hardly have been unreasonable for the first audience of *The Winter's Tale* to think of Diana in connection with Hermione's plight.²¹ Apollo is the most prominent divinity in the play; Diana, his twin, has strong associations—with both bears and women in childbirth—that are relevant to understanding *The Winter's Tale*.

Leontes' sexual jealousy takes the particularly ugly form of hostility toward the pregnant Hermione. His tyrannical behavior includes lack of regard for her state; as Hermione puts it, her sufferings include "the childbed privilege denied, which 'longs / to women of all fashion."²² In the Greek world, perhaps paradoxically, it is the virgin huntress and goddess of the wild places, Artemis, who presides over childbirth and protects new mothers, as reported by Natalis Comes:

D'avantage elle eut la charge des accouchees, à fin qu'elle connust quelle quantité de maux elle auoit euité en demandant de garder tousiours sa virginité, comme on peut veoir en ces vers de Callimache:

Je n'entreray iamais dedans aucune ville,
Sinon pour assister aux Dames de famille
Si requise i'en suis au milieu du tourment
Des trenchantes douleurs de leur enfantement.

[Further she had care of women in child-bed, so that she should know what great evils she had avoided in asking to keep her virginity always, as one can see in these lines of Callimachus:

I will never enter any town,
Except to help women of family
If I am needed in the midst of the pain
Of the sharp sorrows of their childbirth.]²³

In a world in which Apollo's oracle is the final arbiter of justice, Diana-Artemis would inevitably be concerned about the violation of Hermione's childbed privilege.

Thus we would expect the presence of Diana in this play both because of Hermione's general situation—she is a woman estranged from her husband and such women are commonly protected by the goddess Diana in similar Shakespeare plays—and because of her pregnancy. Yet the most compelling evidence for the presence of Diana in the world of the play is the bear itself. Diana does not need to appear on stage in *The Winter's Tale* as she does in *Pericles*, because the bear appears in her place.

Whether Diana's Greek name, Artemis, is linked etymologically to "arktos" is unclear, but she is commonly tied to bears in both classical and Renaissance sources. For example, in Edward Topsell's translation and adaptation of Conrad Gesner's sixteenth-century natural history, knowledge about bears that is deemed essential includes the myth of Callisto, an attendant of Artemis who was transformed into a bear after being raped by Jupiter.²⁴ The assumption in this work—that understanding bears in the natural world also requires knowing something of their place in the history of human culture, including the ancient story of Callisto—would seem to validate Jonathan Bate's claim that Shakespeare's bear in *The Winter's Tale* should suggest Ovid's version of Callisto's story to us:

But even if the identification of the bear with Callisto is dismissed as fanciful, I still believe that for Shakespeare and those members of his audience who knew their Ovid, a bear would have been more than just a bear—it would have brought with it a narrative that is characterized by destructive sexuality, disguise, abuse of an innocent woman, wrongful accusation, jealousy, and revenge. . . . The story of Callisto also shows that bears may be a means through which the gods work out their arguments with each other and intervene in human affairs. To read mythically is to put every phenomenon *sub specie aeternitatis*.²⁵

Given the strong presence of Ovid in formal education and in the arts and literature in Shakespeare's time, Bate's suggestion is surely correct. In Book 2 of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Jupiter disguises himself as Diana in order to approach Callisto without her suspecting his intention, and his success in ravishing her leads to her being rejected by Diana.²⁶ So the bear suggests an echo of Callisto, who was handmaiden to Diana-Artemis—whose intimated presence in this play is clearly appropriate (as I have suggested) because of her role as protectress of women in childbed as well as of women estranged from their husbands.

Thus the bear can be seen as acting on behalf of Hermione, and for the educated members of Shakespeare's first audiences it could also suggest the presence of Diana in the world of the play, which is appropriate on other grounds as well. In fact, in both ancient and Renaissance cultures the boundaries between goddess, worshippers, and bear were far from firm.²⁷

Roberts's sense, mentioned earlier, that this bear is "the agent of female Nature" is in fact supported by a perception recorded in Topsell's natural history:

Great is the fiercenes of a beare, as appeareth by holie scripture Osee.13. I will meet them as a beare robbed of her whelps (saith the Lorde) and will teare in pieces their forward heart : And Chusai telleth Absalon. 2. Sam. 17. Thou knowest that thy Father and the men that bee with him be most valiant and fierce like a shee beare robbed of her Whelpes: for a shee beare is more couragious then male.²⁸

Perceived in this context, it is hardly surprising that the bear might be savage toward Antigonus, considering the circumstances under which it meets him. Nor is its ferocity incompatible with a link with the feminine and the maternal, whatever its biological sex might be. The bear's failure to harm Perdita would not necessarily have seemed unusual to the play's original audience. It can be seen, not simply as a bear choosing the more filling meal, but also as a partly ironic fulfillment of Antigonus' pious hope for Perdita when, earlier in the play, he removes her from the presence of her implacable father:

Come on, poor babe,
 Some powerful spirit instruct the kites and ravens
 To be thy nurses. Wolves and bears, they say,
 Casting their savageness aside, have done
 Like offices of pity.²⁹

This bear does not cast its savageness aside, nor does it become Perdita's nurse, but it does no harm to the innocent baby and it expedites her transition from a world in which she is in danger from her father's wrath to a world where she is sheltered and nurtured.

Thus a very important moment in the play seems less haphazard and more finely integrated into larger patterns of meaning when we become aware of some links to the pervasive Greek cultural background. If we understand the bear as a Greek mythological bear, as a sign of the presence of the goddess in the world of the play, it also becomes a sign that the feminine, rejected by Leontes and pushed out of his world, is strong in this new setting and that its strength is connected to wild nature.

Leontes' Wolf

While wild nature in the play punishes Leontes symbolically through the destruction of his agent, nature also provides symbolic confirmation of his healing through the intimated presence of the wilderness god Hermes.

Among the ancient Greek divinities, Hermes had some of the strongest associations with wild nature, except possibly for his half-sister Artemis and one of his own children, Pan. His traditional birthplace was Mount Kyllene in Arkadia, and that province continued to be the major center of his cult into historical times.³⁰ Thus, one would expect his presence in a wild setting within a Greek cultural context. Further, in addition to links to Artemis, as goddess of the wild,³¹ Hermes has ties with the Demeter-Persephone stories,³² ties that make allusions to him important in reading a play often seen as echoing those stories. That his half-brother Apollo, who figures prominently in some of the early stories of Hermes, is the dominant god of the Sicilian setting of the play may be relevant as well.

In *The Winter's Tale*, Hermes is represented by Autolycus, who bears the name of a son of Hermes who became the grandfather of Odysseus. Like Shakespeare's character, this earlier Autolycus was a notable liar and thief.³³ The ancient Autolycus was said to be an Arkadian, like his father, living on Mount Parnassus.³⁴ Shakespeare's character makes minimal claims about his own ancestry, but he does say that both he and his father were "littered under Mercury,"³⁵ making the mythological connection

explicit. If we admit a link with Mercury-Hermes, little in the character of Shakespeare's Autolycus surprises.

Mercury-Hermes was the god of pastoral people in the literal sense, the keepers of herds and flocks,³⁶ making the presence of Autolycus at a sheep-shearing particularly appropriate. And since Mercury-Hermes was the god of thieves as well, Autolycus' behavior at the sheep-shearing is fully in accord with what could be expected from his mythological antecedent:

On luy a donné la reputation d'estre le Dieu des larrons, imposteurs, & de toutes fraudes; sindic & patron des Marchands, banquiers, trafficqueurs, courtiers; non seulement pource que si l'eloquence & beau parler est conjointe avec vn mauuais & malicieux esprit, il peut faire beaucoup de maux aux autres hommes: mais aussi d'autant que ceux sur la naissance desquels la planete de Mercure domine, sont voleurs, enclins au larcin, & à toutes sortes de ruses & cauteles.

[People have given him the reputation of being the god of thieves, cheats, and of all deceits; syndie and master of merchants, bankers, traders, brokers; not only because if eloquence and speaking finely are joined with a wicked and malicious mind, it can do much evil to other men: but particularly because those whose birth is ruled by the planet Mercury are robbers, prone to pilfering, and to all kinds of trickery and cunning.]³⁷

Surely one of Autolycus' main functions in the play is to amuse us with his cunning and with his supreme joy in enacting the rogueries listed in this catalogue. Like the bear, he is hardly needed for the unfolding of the plot. Information that he provides is crucial for the recognition scene reported to the audience near the end; but another character, Camillo, for example, could have provided that information just as well. Yet Autolycus has a much more important role in the play than providing comic relief or forwarding the plot. In terms of the emotional dynamics of the play he is very important indeed, even crucial. While the renewal and restoration of Leontes' life is literally produced by his long years of penitence under Paulina's tutelage, that in itself is not necessarily enough to persuade the audience to join in the forgiveness of Leontes at the end. Too many of the characters in the play have been harmed too seriously as a result of his actions. But Autolycus' thievery, as well as the cheery sexual promiscuity suggested when he sings of tumbling with his "aunts" in the hay,³⁸ provide a light-hearted and amusing counter-example of transgressive masculinity that contrasts strongly with the dark, brooding, obsessive, destructive presence of Leontes in acts 1–3. (That we see Autolycus' transgressions largely from his own detached perspective is doubtless why we are able to find them amusing; in acts 1–3, by contrast, our emotional engagement with the characters' sufferings repels any laughter.) Autolycus has wit,

charm, and an extreme reluctance to take himself seriously. Leontes has none of these qualities. Certainly Autolycus himself could be seen as the “good red blood in winter’s pale,”³⁹ with Leontes’ obsessive emotional deadness as the contrasting winter. But while the exact nature of the connection between Leontes and Autolycus is elusive, it seems to be stronger than a simple relationship of central character and foil. It may well be that the characterization in this play is closer to that of such romance narratives as *The Faerie Queene*, than to the characterization found in Shakespeare’s earlier plays.

In other words, it might be useful, at the least, to see Autolycus and Leontes, and perhaps Florizell as well, as alternate explorations of one kind of male consciousness. Certainly all three transgress boundaries of one kind or another and all have sexual feelings that are to some degree problematic in the world of the play. Although Leontes’ raging jealousy is much more damaging in the world of the play than Autolycus’ tumblings in the hay or Florizell’s elopement against his father’s wishes, all three violate conventional norms for sexual behavior. If we were to look at Autolycus in this way, it would enable us to articulate his importance to the play as a whole. He has been seen as Leontes’ “parodic double” and as the play’s “anomalous trickster.”⁴⁰ Certainly Autolycus seems to be in the play to show something significant about its central issues. Seeing him as exploring issues important for understanding Leontes in another key may be the best way to make sense of his charming but elusive presence in the work.

The text itself also links him to Antigonus, Leontes’ agent or henchman, in a way that forces awareness of the contrast between their two modes of being male, and that sums up the differences between Sicilia and Bohemia. When the Clown reports Antigonus’ death after the bear’s pursuit, he speaks of “how the bear tore out his shoulder-bone.”⁴¹ Shortly afterwards, in Autolycus’ first scene, his parody of victimization includes proclaiming to the Clown, “I fear, sir, my shoulder-blade is out,”⁴² so the two are strongly linked. Doubling the parts would make this connection of the two characters via shoulder-bones an excellent theatrical joke, but surely it also shows us something about the two different worlds of this play. If we accept that Antigonus is Leontes’ agent in his final appearance in the play, there is an implicit but compelling connection with Leontes as well. Antigonus’ words as he abandons Perdita and flees from the bear are words of high seriousness,

... Weep I cannot,
But my heart bleeds, and most accurst am I
To be by oath enjoined to this . . .⁴³

These are the words of one caught up in dark endeavors not of his own making, endeavors that result in the violent death for Antigonus that Leontes might have considered appropriate for Perdita when he initiated Antigonus' mission. The social bond that Antigonus honors—fulfillment of his oath, obedience to his king—is a perversion of the good that such bonds should, ideally, further. Autolycus' first words in the play, in contrast, are a joke that he shares with us. The Clown, witness of Antigonus' violent end, becomes Autolycus' "prize." In this case normal social bonds are violated as Autolycus steals the money for the sheep-shearing feast. But somehow Autolycus' transgressive behavior seems less wrong than Antigonus' loyalty. In any case, Autolycus' faked injury echoes Antigonus' real one but at the same time leads us to compare Autolycus with Leontes. Their imagined wrongs, playful in the one case, deadly serious in the other, lead both of them to do wrong to others.

One key to furthering our understanding of the relationship between these two characters—who never appear together on the stage—may lie in Autolycus' name. "The wolf itself" or "wolf to himself" are reasonable translations; yet we can see that it is Leontes, even more than Autolycus, who is the metaphorical wolf in the play. Autolycus' predatory behavior is too playful and, ultimately, harmless to take seriously. But that of Leontes is not. Leontes' behavior toward others is aggressive and destructive; and as the play unfolds, that wolf-like behavior recoils on himself. In acts 2 and 3 Paulina refers to Leontes repeatedly as a "tyrant" and her use of the term is validated by the message of Apollo's oracle when it says that Leontes is "a jealous tyrant."⁴⁴

The word "tyrant" was sometimes linked with wolves in Renaissance culture. Shakespeare, for example, makes such a connection early in *Julius Caesar*. As Cassius and Caska discuss Caesar's shortcomings, Cassius says:

And why should Caesar be a tyrant then?
 Poor man, I know he would not be a wolf
 But that he sees the Romans are but sheep.⁴⁵

These lines clearly invoke a Renaissance metaphor of the bad ruler as wolf to his sheep-subjects; and while the tyrant-wolf link is not made as explicitly in *The Winter's Tale*, the labeling of Leontes as "tyrant," and the presence of a wolf-named character as his foil (or parodic double or comedic shadow or anomalous trickster), would seem to indicate that the tyrant-wolf metaphor is one of the patterns from Renaissance culture very near the surface of the play, especially when we consider how common, almost commonplace, that metaphor was. In addition to Shakespeare's use

of the metaphor in *Julius Caesar*, one can cite Topsell, who makes the wolf-tyrant connection in a matter-of-fact way:

. . . like as Tyrants in an evil grieved estate, do pick quarrels against every man that is rich for the spoyle of their goods, accounting them their enemies, how well soever they have deserved at their handes. In like manner, Wolves . . .⁴⁶

Renaissance commentators on Ovid sometimes see the story of Lycaon—the early king of Arkadia, transformed into a wolf for his transgressions—in political terms, that is, as the story of an archetypal tyrant. It is probably fair to say that just as a bear would have suggested the story of Callisto to the educated English of Shakespeare’s time, a king characterized as a tyrant, with a foil whose name means “Wolf,” would have suggested the story of Callisto’s father, Lycaon. Further, because Lycaon was a king, when his story was read in a culture that took monarchy seriously, emphasis on the political implications of that story was inevitable. Topsell’s discussion of wolves includes the Lycaon story as a matter of course.⁴⁷ The story itself was commonly available to Renaissance readers in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Book 1.⁴⁸ Lycaon, visited by Zeus-Jupiter in disguise, tests that divinity, and violates his obligations as a ruler and as a human being, by sacrificing a hostage and preparing and serving a cannibal meal. In outrage, Jupiter turns Lycaon into a wolf, in which form he turns upon the sheep, just as he had victimized humans earlier. In his commentary on Ovid’s version of Lycaon’s story, George Sandys emphasizes the political dimension:

This Lycaon was King of Arcadia, a cruell and inhumane Prince: who feasted the Cretan Jupiter (then with him on an embassy) with the flesh of a stranger. Which discovered hee overthrew the table; and rushing into the streets, so incensed the Cittizens, that they betooke them to their weapons and by his conduct drove him out of the City: who living like an out-law in the woods, comitting daily rapines & robberies was there said, together with his sonnes, to have been changed into Wolves . . .⁴⁹

The “Cittizens” and their political action are very much Sandys’s elaboration. They are not present in Ovid’s text. But this politicized reading of Lycaon’s story, very commonly known in the Renaissance because of the wide dissemination of the *Metamorphoses*, is clearly relevant to *The Winter’s Tale*, which has its own “cruell and inhumane Prince,” whose foil-shadow-parody is named “Self-wolf.”

The literal transformation of the werewolf is not present in *The Winter’s Tale*, as it is in the *Metamorphoses*, but it occurs in *The Duchess of Malfi*, a play roughly contemporary with *The Winter’s Tale*. Both plays

focus on individual psychopathologies that are of particular importance because they manifest in individuals who are sovereign rulers. In Webster's play, however, the wolf-tyrant metaphor is sensationalized. The mentally ill Duke Ferdinand is diagnosed as suffering from "Licanthropia" by the play's physician, whose description of the disease includes the information that those afflicted,

... imagine
 Themselves to be transformed into Woolves,
 Steale for to Church-yards in the dead of night,
 And dig dead bodies up . . .⁵⁰

It may be that the story that Mamillius begins in *The Winter's Tale* is of this sort, as he tries to frighten his mother by telling her of a man who "dwelt by a churchyard."⁵¹ He is interrupted by the entrance of his enraged and jealous father, who, while he may not be digging up dead bodies, certainly causes death in the play. Shakespeare is more subtle than Webster: the wolf-tyrant metaphor and the Lycaon story are only hinted at in Autolycus' name and, perhaps, in Paulina's label of "tyrant" for Leontes. Jonathan Bate comments that by Shakespeare's time interpretations of Lycaon had broadened so that for some he had come to represent "all oppressive and cruel men."⁵² Certainly Leontes, as king and as man, is oppressive and cruel. It may be of interest that the classical werewolf stories are connected with the cult of Apollo Lycaeus,⁵³ and thus are another aspect of the central divinity of this play.

In any case, Leontes the tyrant and the wolf-named Autolycus are both outlaws in the sense of having placed themselves by their actions outside of and antagonistic to human society. In particular, both Leontes and Autolycus violate the guest-host relationship just as Lycaon does—Leontes by his paranoid plan to murder Polixenes, and Autolycus by preying on those who welcome him to the sheep-shearing. And Leontes' rejection of the message from Apollo's oracle shows impiety similar to Lycaon's impiety toward Jupiter. Autolycus' literal standing outside the law helps us to understand more fully Leontes' having put himself metaphorically in the same position. The character at the apex of society has more in common with the character at the bottom than with anyone else in the play. Audiences may sense a deep connection between the two, but consideration of the tyrant-wolf metaphor as found in Renaissance understandings of the Lycaon story shows that the historical context supports such perceptions. Leontes' behavior toward Hermione, his guest Polixenes, and, indeed, toward everyone who questions his misjudgments certainly earns for him Paulina's label of "tyrant," validated by Apollo's oracle. Although Autoly-

cus' peccadilloes are hardly on the same level, they are similarly antagonistic to the maintenance of essential social bonds. Perhaps the view that Autolycus' wolf-like depredations do not disturb the larger harmony in Bohemia enables some of the audience to participate in the forgiveness of Leontes at the end. Like Mercury-Hermes, he is a trickster, but his presence has little direct impact on Leontes, whose therapeutic penitence under Paulina's guidance provides healing.

There are, however, patterns here larger than individual emotions of the characters and larger than the political subtext that I have presented. If we think of human culture as being about definitions, limits, and boundaries, and of wild nature as involving freedom from those limits (as scholars sometimes do⁵⁴), a sense of Autolycus' deepest function in the play becomes clear. We come out of act 3 oppressed by the limits of King Leontes' mind: the definitions and boundaries that he imposes on others; the stiflingly closed-in world over which he presides, a world that seems to be largely the projection of his own diseased mind. Then we meet Autolycus who cheerfully exempts himself from respecting any boundaries at all, and whose joy in living makes him seem the very antidote we need to Leontes' poison. When we remember that Mercury-Hermes is a god of healing as well as of the boundaries that he, like Autolycus, transgresses so freely, we discover another subtext that helps explain Autolycus' importance in the play. Surely it is Leontes' anger and lack of emotional balance that need to be healed, and Mercury-Hermes' is well able to meet that need:

. . . la raison qui est en nous, qu'on a pensé estre Mercure, appaise tous les troubles & mouuemens qui sourdent de cette partie de nostre ame, qui est encline à la cholere, & ramene au giron de la raison tous le pensers de nostre esprit qui ne sont pas bien reiglez.

[. . . the intellect within us, which people identify with Mercury, calms all the turmoil and agitation which arises from the part of our soul inclined to anger and brings all thoughts not well ordered back to sanity.]⁵⁵

Clearly Leontes' emotions are not touched directly by the presence of Autolycus or the god associated with him as those of the audience can be, but it is Autolycus who literally brings to Sicilia the knowledge that renews Leontes' life; and we could attribute Leontes' healing to "la raison qui est en nous," aided in his case by Paulina. Autolycus' parodic or comic wolfishness not only lessens the impact of Leontes' much uglier behavior on the audience, but his presence reminds us of the healing power of an ancient Greek wilderness god, already manifested in Leontes' life. While an urban pick-pocket could have served some of these purposes, we have Autolycus instead. If we accept that echoes of ancient Arkadia are present

in Autolycus' world, he becomes one of its most natural denizens, as much at home there as Mopsa and Dorcas, or the bear. It is a world in which such "evil" as Autolycus' petty transgressions has its place, turning out to be annoying or even amusing, not destructive of life. The detour into a Bohemia infused with Arkadian figures and myths helps some at least in the audience to accept less reluctantly the renewal of Leontes' life at the end of the play, however undeserving he may be. It may also help us to understand why nature in *The Winter's Tale* is in some sense regenerative, more powerful than either Leontes' paranoia or Autolycus' trickery.⁵⁶

Thus, reading *The Winter's Tale* in light of its allusions to and subtexts from Greek cultural traditions about wild nature provides deeper ways of understanding the function of the bear, surely one of the play's most complex symbols, and of Autolycus, who may well be its most engaging character. In both cases the Greek cultural context helps us to see how well integrated this play actually is—despite the prominence of these two figures who are not essential to the plot. Moreover, these presences from the ancient Greek wild prevent Bohemia from being enervating and escapist, as natural settings sometimes are in the traditional literary pastoral, but instead make it a source of renewal.

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Notes

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1. Stephen Orgel, ed., *The Winter's Tale* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996), pp. 15–16, 38–39. References to the play will be to this edition.
2. Giambattista Vico, *The New Science*, 3rd ed. (1744), trans. Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1968), p. 285.
3. See R. W. Desai, "'What means Sicilia? He something seems unsettled': Sicily, Russia, and Bohemia in *The Winter's Tale*," *Comparative Drama* 30 (1996), pp. 311–24. Desai discusses the play in terms of a northern-southern European cultural and anthropological dichotomy. For Desai, "the superiority claimed by the northern Europeans over their southern counterparts is a significant element in the multiculturalism that *The Winter's Tale* embodies" (p. 312). See also Michele Marrapodi, "'Of that fatal country': Sicily and the rhetoric of topography in *The Winter's Tale*," *Shakespeare's Italy: Functions of Italian Locations in Renaissance Drama*, eds. Michele Marrapodi, A. J. Hoenselaars, Marcello Cappuzzo, and L. Falzon Santucci

- (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1993), pp. 213–28. Marrapodi sees the perception of Sicily as more mixed but ultimately positive, “the birthplace of poetry and art” (p. 224). See also Daryl W. Palmer, “Jacobean Muscovites: Winter, Tyranny, and Knowledge in *The Winter’s Tale*,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 46 (1995), pp. 323–39. Palmer explores the knowledge of Russia in Shakespeare’s England that is relevant to the play in some detail, responding to Hermione’s statement that “the Emperor of Russia was my father” (*The Winter’s Tale*, 3.2.117).
4. In discussing why the “Pyramus and Thisbe” play in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* is funny, Jonathan Bate points out that for Renaissance humanism “rewriting and ‘modernization’”—not literalism—were what kept the classics alive, hence the plodding literalism of the mechanics’ representation of a classical story was an important part of the fun. Jonathan Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993), p. 131.
 5. Louis L. Martz, “Shakespeare’s Humanist Enterprise: *The Winter’s Tale*,” *English Renaissance Studies Presented to Dame Helen Gardner in honour of her Seventieth Birthday*, ed. John Carey (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1980), pp. 114–31, especially pp. 114–17. Among other studies emphasizing various aspects of the Greek cultural materials in the play, one might mention: David M. Bergeron, “The Apollo Mission in *The Winter’s Tale*,” *The Winter’s Tale: Critical Essays*, ed. Maurice Hunt (New York: Garland, 1995), pp. 361–79; Stevie Davies, *The Feminine Reclaimed: The Idea of Woman in Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton* (Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1986), pp. 152–74; Carol Gesner, *Shakespeare & the Greek Romance: A Study of Origins* (Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1970), especially pp. 116–25; F. David Hoeniger, “The Meaning of *The Winter’s Tale*,” *University of Toronto Quarterly* 20 (1950–51), pp. 11, 17–26; Janet S. Wolf, “‘Like an Old Tale Still’: Paulina, ‘Triple Hecate,’ and the Persephone Myth in *The Winter’s Tale*,” *Images of Persephone: Feminist Readings in Western Literature*, ed. Elizabeth T. Hayes (Gainesville: UP of Florida, 1994), pp. 32–44.
 6. George Sandys, *A Relation of a Journey . . .* (1615; Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1973), in describing the city of Syracuse in Sicily, retells the story of Arathusa: “Once a nymph of Arcadia, (as they fable) and beloved of the river Alpheus: turned into a spring by Diana for safeguard of her chastity, and conducted by her under seas and earth, reascended in this Iland” (p. 240). One could hardly ask for a clearer example of “poetic geography.”
 7. Orgel, p. 39.
 8. Although discussions of the bear in *The Winter’s Tale* abound, the only extensive treatment connecting it with Greek culture that I am aware of is Jonathan Bate, above, who focuses on the myth of Callisto (*Shakespeare and Ovid*, pp. 223–27). See also Michael Bristol, “In Search of the Bear: Spatiotemporal Form and the Heterogeneity of Economies in *The Winter’s Tale*,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 42 (1991), pp. 145–67. Bristol mentions many earlier studies as he develops his own reading, which centers on the bear as a seasonal symbol pervasive throughout European cultures, although he finds an echo of Callisto’s story in the bear hunt itself (p. 160). Louise George Clubb, in “The Tragicomic Bear,” *Comparative Literature Studies* 9 (1972), pp. 17–30, explores the bear as a sign of transition from tragedy to comedy, emphasizing its symbolic ambiguity or versatility.
 9. *The Winter’s Tale* (WT), 3.3.42–43.
 10. For a recent discussion of the close links between bear-baiting and the theater in Shakespeare’s time see Jason Scott-Warren, “When Theaters Were Bear-Gardens;

- or, What's at Stake in the Comedy of Humors," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 54 (2003), pp. 63–82.
11. Gesner, p. 117.
12. Geoffrey Bullough, ed., *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, vol. 7 (London: Routledge, 1975), pp. 125–26. Bullough prints excerpts from *Arcadia* on pp. 199–202, and from *Mucedorus* on pp. 204–7.
13. *The Works of Edmund Spenser*, eds. Edwin Greenlaw et al., vol. 6, *The Faerie Queene, Books Six and Seven* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1938), 6.4.stanzas 27–33.
14. *WT*, 3.3.33–35.
15. Jeanne Addison Roberts, *The Shakespearean Wild: Geography, Genus, and Gender* (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1991), p. 83.
16. See Davies, Hoeniger, and Wolf (note 5).
17. Perdita invokes Proserpina at *WT*, 4.4.116. Abraham Ortelius, *Theatrum orbis terrarum* (1570; Amsterdam: N. Israel, 1964), in his comment on the map of Sicily mentions that island's consecration to Ceres, while on the map itself a location is marked "Raptus Proserpinae" (fol. 38). George Sandys writes of Sicily as "sacred of old unto Ceres and Proserpina" and "famous for the fabulous Rape of Proserpina" (*A Relation of a Journey . . .*, p. 235. See note 6). And, of course, Sicily is mentioned in Ovid's retelling of the story in book 5 of the *Metamorphoses*.
18. Natalis Comes, *Mythologie*, trans. Jean de Montlyard, rev. and ed. Jean Baudouin, 1627 (New York: Garland, 1976), p. 228. (The English translations of Natalis Comes in this article are mine.)
19. Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, eds. W.H.S. Jones, H. A. Ormerod, and R. E. Wycherley (5 vols. Cambridge: Harvard UP; London: Heinemann, 1918–35), 8.31.1, 8.35.7, 8.37.1.
20. Roberts, pp. 168–69.
21. Davies connects Diana with *The Winter's Tale* in a different way, reasoning that the name "Paulina" suggests St. Paul, which in turn suggests Ephesus and, thus, Diana (pp. 167–68).
22. *WT*, 3.2.101–2.
23. Comes, p. 251.
24. Edward Topsell, *The Historie of Foure-Footed Beastes* (1607; Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1973), p. 42.
25. Bate, p. 227.
26. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, ed. Frank Justus Miller (2 vols. Cambridge: Harvard UP; London: Heinemann, 1977), 2.401–530.
27. Ancient Greek worship of Artemis sometimes involved bears, and specific traditions are recorded from a few locations. The Renaissance mythographer Lilio Gregorio Giraldi discussed the bear rituals of Artemis' cult in ancient Attica, in *De deis gentium* . . . (Lugduni: Iacobus Iuncta, 1565):
Helanicus vero in secundo Atthidos, Munichiam ait appellatam esse a Munichio rege, Pentaclei filio, qui & Dianae Munichiae templum erexit, in quo cum Athenienses ursam Dianae sacram inte[r]fecissent . . . mos inolevit, ut inde virgines Dianae Munichiae et Brauroniae consecrantur ante nuptias, quae puellae $\rho\kappa\tau\omicron\iota$, id est, ursae ab eis vocarentur . . . (p. 317)

[. . . Indeed Hellanicus in the second part of Atthis says that Munichia is named for King Munichius, son of Pentacleius, who built a temple for Diana Munichia, where when the Athenians had killed a bear sacred to Diana . . . a custom developed, that from that time young girls would be dedicated to Diana of Munichia and Brauron before marriage, and these girls would be called arktoi, that is bears . . . {my translation}]

This phenomenon has been discussed by modern scholars as well, including Lewis Richard Farnell, *The Cults of the Greek States* (5 vols. Oxford: Clarendon P, 1896–1909). Farnell concluded that “the goddess and her worshippers and the bear were considered as of one nature, and called by the same name” (vol. 2, p. 437).

28. Topsell, p. 43.
29. *WT*, 2.3.184–88.
30. Comes, p. 421; Farnell, vol. 5, pp. 1–4.
31. Pausanias, 8.30.6, 8.32.3–4.
32. Comes, p. 428.
33. Orgel, pp. 50–53. Jonathan Bate points out that Shakespeare’s character is, like Apollo and Shakespeare himself, a singer as well (p. 228).
34. Pausanias, 8.4.6.
35. *WT*, 4.3.24–26.
36. Comes, p. 424.
37. Comes, p. 431.
38. *WT*, 4.3.11–12.
39. *WT*, 4.3.4.
40. Carol Thomas Neeley, in *Broken Nuptials in Shakespeare’s Plays* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1985), suggests that Autolycus is Leontes’ “parodic double” (pp. 203–204). For discussion of Autolycus as a trickster figure, see Richard Hillman, *Shakespearean Subversions: The Trickster and the Play-text* (London: Routledge, 1992) pp. 7, 222–25.
41. *WT*, 3.3.91–92.
42. *WT*, 4.3.72–73.
43. *WT*, 3.3.50–52.
44. Paulina refers to Leontes as “tyrant” at *WT*, 2.3.115, 3.2.173, and 3.3.205. The oracle’s message is reported at 3.2.130–34.
45. *Julius Caesar*, ed. David Daniel, The Arden Shakespeare, 3rd series (1998; London: Thomson, 2000), 1.3.103–105.
46. Topsell, p. 738.
47. Topsell, p. 735.
48. Ovid, 1.163–243.
49. George Sandys, *Ovid’s Metamorphoses Englished, Mythologized, and Represented in Figures* (1632; ed. Karl K. Hulley and Stanley T. Vandersall, Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1970), p. 65.
50. *The Works of John Webster*, eds. David Gunby, David Carnegie, Antony Hammond, and Doreen DelVecchio, vol. 1, *The White Devil, The Duchess of Malfi* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995), 5.2.6–9.

51. *WT*, 2.1.30.
52. Bate, p. 26.
53. David Williams, *Deformed Discourse: The Function of the Monster in Mediaeval Thought and Literature* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's UP, 1996), p. 121.
54. Roberts, pp. 1–22.
55. Comes, p. 432.
56. As Hillman puts it, “the effect of making Autolycus so openly an emblem of the trickster-principle is precisely to point up his out-tricking by the dramatic universe itself, which frankly appropriates his disruptive energy for its own redemptive purposes” (p. 223).