

Wonder in *The Winter's Tale*: A Cautionary Account of Epistemic Criticism

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It seems to me that I have spent much of my life arguing that American philosophers who generalize about literary experience pay insufficient attention to lyric poetry.¹ It seems so much easier and more relevant to deal with narrative fictions, since they open directly on the actual world without the degree of formal mediation poems involve. These fictions also have the space and the conscience to deal directly with moral issues that philosophers are trained to clarify and, the best of them, to deepen. But that very ease of access may prove inseparable from a narrowness of focus. For these philosophers have to ignore how other modes of writing less blessed with direct worldliness make use of their resources. In particular attention to the lyric might bring a more Nietzschean tone to what we take as the ethical values writing can encourage, since that mode tends toward the idealization of exuberant performing selves caught up in pursuits very different from narrative fiction's penchant for knotted ethical dilemmas. So it seems reasonable at least to inquire about the possibility that philosophers who deal only with narrative fiction ignore two important imaginative forces at play in our literary traditions. At one pole they do not pay sufficient attention to what Henry Staten has called "the labors writers perform in relation to their medium," with all the attendant consequences that derive from any mode of ignoring the role of the worker.² And at the other pole they miss what we might call the possible ethical force that can come from reflecting on precisely how intense concern for the constitutive elements of texts like sound, rhythm and syntax expand to establish exemplary modes of taking the self seriously in the world.

Unfortunately only those who make poetry central in their lives are likely to recognize what I am talking about. And they can be spared the sermon. So here I am

going to try a different approach that takes up closely related issues. I shall not engage those philosophers who seem to me the most influential and the most dangerous in narrowing their focus to narrative fiction. I have no hope left in this theater. But perhaps I can get at why philosophy is comfortable only in that domain by addressing the work of an American thinker who has gone perhaps as far as American philosophy can in exploring the affective dimension of literary representation. If I can show that even Stanley Cavell seems trapped by a distinctive version of the epistemic values making philosophy at home only in narrative fiction, then maybe we can better reflect on how trapped that discipline is, at least with respect to its engagements with literary works.

Cavell does not write about narrative fiction except in film. But I will argue that his work on Shakespeare, particularly on *The Winter's Tale*, is typical of philosophical work on fiction in its eagerness to explore moral and psychological dilemmas and in its ignoring what might be called the provocative imaginative space afforded by attention to how the text builds distinctive structural relations that at once distance it from the empirical world and model alternative ways of participating in that world. Therefore while I can have no complaint at how Cavell teases out imaginative affective investments on the part of the characters and focuses attention on how subtle shadings and echoes within the language reveal the nature of those investments, I do have many complaints about the psychoanalytic cast Cavell gives to those investments. I complain in part because I think that cast alters towards contemporary biases what might be refreshingly and intensively different experiences if we tried to recuperate what probably mattered most to the author who made the basic choices shaping what is available for the theater.³ And I complain in part because Cavell's investments lead him to stress the affective dimensions only of fundamentally cognitive values based how the engagement with skepticism might in turn provide therapeutic self-knowledge for both the characters and the audience.

There is a sense in Cavell's criticism that if the character could learn to think within Cavell's blend of philosophy and psychoanalysis, he or she might be saved. These commitments on Cavell's part make the affects primarily phenomena to be interpreted rather than forces inviting our participation. And these commitments take us a long way

from Hegel's notion that in tragedy knowledge of the truth only intensifies the sense of doom, and farther yet from Nietzsche's notion that it is precisely this knowledge that becomes a joy to the man who must die. Yet the more bleak we see the tragedies, and the more we see them in ontological terms rather than in therapeutic and hence epistemic terms, the fuller we are likely to flesh out how Shakespearean romance counters that tragic vision. Therefore I will try to show how Shakespeare invites a mode of philosophical attention less bound to how agents deal with variants of knowledge and more sensitive to the affective states that theater might afford self-consciousness, especially through possible identifications or refusals of identification with characters and situations. [If we see how limited are the powers of agents, we are in a much better position to appreciate other powers and other causes of responsiveness to power at work in the play. And we may then at least feel the challenge of finding ways to apply the abstractness of Shakespearean philosophical romance by making boundaries between individuals more pliant and their ties to nature and contingency much more mysterious.]

In particular I shall concentrate on *The Winter's Tale* because this play is probably Shakespeare's fullest test of how the spirit of romance can engage and transform the logic set in motion by his tragedies. With *The Winter's Tale* we can examine both how well Cavell's perspective accounts for the tragic dimension of the play and how well his analysis of the situation interprets what makes possible the turn to romance. And we can test in its stead the possibility that this romance is primarily an invitation to explore the affective states created by various kinds of identifications—from the shocked turn from Leontes' as his madness intensifies to identification with the frustrations of his courtiers to the amazing distribution of complex identifications with the characters at the end as they align with different levels of responsiveness to what wonder can establish. The purpose of the play is less to provide therapy for problematic attitudes than to provide inspiration to explore in pure form intricate affective states usually suppressed by our cautious realisms. But first I have to issue a caveat. I find Cavell extremely difficult to read, primarily because his prose is so subtle and arguments so intricate. So I will try to give what seem to me his central claims, but abstracted from the subtlety that gives them life. We have to strip the corpse before we can do an autopsy, and our discovery of what killed the patient will rarely account for what made his life interesting.

I

I see three problems in these Cavellian analyses, all of them consequences of his investments in therapeutic stances that try to find an adequate way to deal with Cartesian skepticism. The first is so obvious it needs only be mentioned, then developed a little when we turn to concrete analysis. Cavell is simply not interested in how the social dimension of the play is represented, despite the fact that its psychological analysis of tyranny seems to me especially appropriate to the deployment of public power now in the U.S. Cavell never mentions Leontes' overriding all resistance from his court nor the differences between the world of the young lovers and the order of fathers that gives them so much trouble. Yet it is crucial to the significance of the romance that Leontes' becomes a "tyrant" and Polixenes almost echoes him in the fourth act. Leontes' jealousy is less the internal poison that Othello experiences than the very public madness of a ruler who suspects all forms of innocence and trusts only what confirms his own bleak view of human motives. And because his jealousy takes this form, the powers promised by romance values also take a social significance, especially because they are so carefully tempered by Shakespeare's art.

The second and third problems are more complex—involving attitudes towards dramatic character and towards the role Christian models play in Shakespearean philosophical romance. Perhaps the best way to generalize about the second is to say that for Cavell, as for almost all critics for whom psychoanalytic motifs play a central role, character is a matter of long-standing but somewhat hidden dispositions that the play presents as coming into crisis and so becoming visible. The critic's task is to reconstruct abiding fantasies from linguistic clues, then spell out how these dispositions become problematic and how the play might show a "path of recovery" to the appropriate self-knowledge either as possible (in romance) or as blocked (in tragedy). As is well-known, all of Cavell's Shakespearean readings turn on the challenge skepticism poses for individual characters: how will they handle the truth that there cannot be firm foundations for knowledge if we insist on grounding knowledge claims in nature, and how will they adapt to the alternative possibility that effective dealing with the world depends on our trusting in the agreements that provide adequate criteria for understanding how to get on in the world.

For the tragedies, this critical projection of problematic epistemic dispositions makes a lot of sense. Lear clearly rages against any sense of limitation of his powers to know as veridical relation of consciousness to the world, and Othello desperately tries to find prove for a love that can only be located in trust. But with *The Winter's Tale*, Cavell has to be more than usually inventive and hypothetical. He begins with a lengthy treatment of Leontes' relation to his son Mamillius that seems out of proportion to the role the son has in the play. But this relation turns out to be crucial in establishing how Leontes' has an epistemic disposition that makes him prone to outbursts of jealousy. We see through Leontes' relation to his son that he is oriented toward a skeptic's refusal to acknowledge the reality of his son as actually his and therefore capable of obliging him to certain concerns and actions: "Disowning his issue is more fundamental than, or causes, his jealousy of his friend and brother, rather than the other way around" (195).⁴ If he in fact owned and owned up to the reality of his son (even by entertaining Oedipal fantasies), he would be taking responsibility for being in the world as it is, as other than the "nothing" that he claims it to be in his madness. And he would be entering into a complex of social bonds that in his madness at least he completely rejects, not least because the boy bonds intimately with the mother, whispering tales that Leontes cannot hear. Embracing skepticism is a defense against being, the violence of which gets expressed in his jealousy. But the basic epistemic and ontological dispositions preexist and prepare for the onset of his jealousy.

To shore up the case that Leontes' character is shaped by his way of responding to his skepticism, and to indicate what a cure will have to consist in, Cavell turns to two fundamental motifs in the play that work out how Leontes encounter with skepticism precedes his theater of madness.⁵ These motifs are ideas concerning the full register of concerns associated with telling, counting, and relating and "ideas concerning breeding and issue" (199). The conceptual regions brought into play then are vast. They "may be seen as the poles of opposite faces of a world of partings, of parting's dual valence, as suggested in the paired ideas of participation and parturition(200), that is, ideas of "being fellow to and dissevering" (200).

These motifs then suggest that "What Leontes is suffering has a cure, namely to acknowledge his son as his, to own it." But to do that he would have to have a grasp of

what it is possible to tell in a way that can negotiate both the demands and the difficulties of what it is possible to know: “The failure of knowledge is a failure of acknowledgment, which means, whatever else it means, that the result of the failure is not an ignorance but an ignoring, not an opposable doubt but an unappeasable denial, a willful uncertainty that constitutes an annihilation” (206 Telling must be seen not as “tallying how much or how many, but establishing membership or belonging” (205). But when Leontes asks “Art thou my boy,” he can only try in vain to find physical proof that can provide an answer. So like Othello in his mad quest for proof (203), Leontes becomes incapable of accounting for “the order and size and pace of his experiences, to tell anything.” His jealousy stems ultimately from his “sense of the unpayable, the unforgivability of one’s own owing, as it were for being the one one is, for so to speak the gift of life, produces a wish to revenge oneself on existence, on the fact, or facts, of life as such” (211).⁶

This emphasis on the character’s disposition also is largely responsible for what I am calling the third problem in Cavell’s analysis, his handling of the miracle of Hermione’s coming back to life. Here I find two disturbing aspects of Cavell’s analysis. First, there is the overarching insistence that the center of the play is what Leontes has to learn on his “path of recovery” from revenge on life for not issuing in the peace of nothingness (214). I find this problematic because of the simple fact that by act 3 scene 2 Leontes has seen the evil of his ways and taken up quite different attitudes. Yet it is only sixteen years later that he is rewarded by realizing the romance possibilities in his situation. His life certainly changes. But is it impossible to attribute these changes to anything new that he discovers in those years. Leontes changes in the third act; his world and implicitly the audience’s world, change in the last act less because of anything he does than because of what he has become through his suffering. To explain that change then we cannot concentrate on the character’s attitudes toward knowledge so much as on the world’s becoming different for the character primarily due to factors completely beyond his control like luck and grace. The ending requires attention to very different aspects of being than are likely to be the concerns of the recovering skeptic.

Second, Cavell’s emphasis on character makes it all too easy from him to dismiss the relevance of Christian allegorical frameworks as interpretations of this ending. There is much to learn from Cavell’s account as it tries to “establish or deliver the gravity or the

weight” of the play’s probable moral—“that all require forgiveness and forgiveness is always a miracle, taking time but beyond time” (193-4). And he has very good things to say about the role the audience is asked to play in the play’s presentation of its miracle (cf p.204). But I suspect that even “forgiveness” is too psychological a term for what generates the miracle and for the affects it produces in the audience. Forgiveness is something we learn to do or perhaps learn to accept. Neither of these possibilities quite accounts for way the statue confers a kind of blessedness and rapture on all the concerned parties. More important, Cavell exclaims that he is “not satisfied” to think of the last scene as “a translated moment of religious resurrection, with Paulina a figure for Saint Paul, a figure justified by the appearance in the scene of the words, ‘grace’, ‘graces’, ‘faith’, and ‘redeems’” (218). Instead of a Christian allegory he understands the scene as setting “the theater in competition with religion, as if declaring itself religion’s successor” (218): “I find myself feeling in Hermione’s awakening that the play itself is being brought forth as from itself, that she is the play” and that she comes to establish a new form of the wedding ceremony (219). Ultimately this scene interprets Leontes as creating the possibility that two can come from one, so that this final scene “is their creation by one another” (220): “the final scene of issuing in *The Winter’s Tale* shows what it may be to find in oneself the life of the world” (221), to find the way that world can be embraced in its “specificness” rather than resented for all that it refuses of the ego’s demands. Leontes has found a voice to complete his son’s tale of generation, “as if he is accepting in himself the voices of father and son, commanding and whispering, hence multiplicity, accepting himself as having, and being, issue (220).

Clearly Cavell is right that reading the play as only Christian allegory substantially weakens its force for contemporary audiences and perhaps even for those in Shakespeare’s time. But there may be ways to honor what seems the play’s indebtedness to Christianity while casting the motifs in a more general psychological language. And there may be ways of honoring the affects involved in a parallel resistance to individual psychology that is an aspect of becoming open to what grace affords. Perhaps the play dramatizes a psychology of how one becomes open to grace precisely by losing one’s sense of the entitlement to treat one’s life as entirely specific. Perhaps redemption is not in the specificity of being accountable for being but in the complete acceptance of one’s

own contingency and capacity to fulfill one's will largely in one's capacity as an audience. Perhaps Shakespeare is thinking of how those who suffered for sixteen years can come fully to accept a world almost entirely different from the procreative intensities that charge life for the young.⁷

II

I have now to provide alternatives to Cavell's reading. On the matter of character I have to show how Shakespeare does not rely on the need for hypothesizing complex dispositions but puts on stage sufficient information for enabling us to identify affectively with why and how the character's governing affects emerge. Characters are not blank slates to be written on by the action. But we need only grant them dispositions that are suggested by how and what they speak in conjunction with our expectations about the play's cultural context.⁸ Take the example of Leontes' jealousy. To attribute it to skepticism and its accompanying desire to destroy all claims on the self Cavell has to assume significant parallels between Leontes and Othello. I will argue instead that Coleridge was right in asserting that the "genuine jealousy of distribution" in *The Winter's Tale* is "the direct contrast" of *Othello* "in every way."⁹ The major change from *Othello* in *The Winter's Tale* is that there is no Iago in the later play. There is no dramatic agent drawing Leontes into his madness; and there is no claim to being a physician except by Paulina. While her righteousness is almost as repellent as Iago's deviousness, her basic role is to serve as the climactic voice of public reason that Leontes is violating. It is central to the play that Paulina keeps calling him a tyrant. Where Othello eats away at himself and his ideal relation with Desdemona, Leontes creates problems for the civic order. In fact the major scene of madness in *The Winter's Tale* is a public trial; the climactic madness scene in *Othello* is in their bed chamber.

This contrast between the plays brings out the very different roles affective states play in each. Where Othello wants proof to secure his intense passion, Leontes wants simply to find a way of dealing with feelings he has not experienced before, so I think we sympathize him for a while, then become shocked at where our sympathy is leading. The tragedy of his situation stems from the emergence of vague feelings of impotence around his relation to Polixenes, stemming especially from contrasts between who he has become and the sense of potential they both shared as youths. Because he is acutely self-

conscious Leontes has to find a name for the feelings and attribute them to some cause. That is why at the first opportunity he seizes upon jealousy as an obvious social script. In this passage Leontes has the dilemma of serving as the only interpreter of these feelings. In this passage he is responding to Antigonus 's refusal to believe ill of Hermione:

Cease, no more.

You smell this business with a sense as cold
As is a dead man's nose; but I do see't and feel't,
As you feel doing thus [grasps his arm]—and see withal
The instruments that feel. (2.1.150-54)

Cavell might say that Leontes is even more the would-be empiricist than Othello because he seeks to conquer skepticism by one of the oldest ploys—the claim to veridical feeling. But in theater the claim to the certainty of feeling entails a very different sense of cause and of consequence than Othello experienced.¹⁰

Feelings are mute; and the path allowing the agent to represent what he in fact feels can be quite intricate, providing a track rife with possible errors and necessary leaps. For negotiating that path requires the agent at every step to translate what is neither object nor yet subject into the terms that might provide a plot. And then when the plot begins to build, the agent has to be careful to keep in touch with the feeling so that the imputed plot does not determine what he feels rather than adjustments in feeling determining turns in the plot. Misjudgments in this domain involve not only a distorted sense of the world but a distorted sense of the powers and limitations of human agency.

Let us track in dramatic terms how Leontes becomes so secure in the fact that what he feels fits into a jealousy plot and that the object of jealousy should be Hermione. What might he feel when Polixenes says he will depart for Bohemia? Disappointment is present, since this interlude of replaying their past will be over. Irritation and twinges of impotency occur because he seems helpless to change Polixenes' mind. And more than twinges of impotency emerge because this replaying of the past must end, so now he has only linear time towards death rather than re-circulated time. That Hermione played her part so well as witness to their memories makes her vulnerable to being associated with the disappointments that necessity seems to entail.¹¹

We see signs of this vulnerability in the way Leontes' first words to her seem curt and laden with incipient resentment: "Tongue-tied our queen? Speak you." (1.2.27). I think he is groping for objects on which to hang both his disappointment and his feeling of impotent abandonment. His life must change, and he wants some cause that is not just his own psyche. He is not yet jealous; he is only beginning to feel that Hermione is not living up to what we must presume is her usual role as providing emotional nurturing—just when he seems to need her most.

The affective scene is set in such a way that Hermione cannot win, even though she plays the game superbly. Because she is seen as somehow disappointing him before she even begins, it is not surprising that her success with Polixenes will be read by Leontes as somehow continuing in her failure to meet his needs. Leontes is not blind to her social abilities nor at this point incapable of appreciating them. But we have to think of him silently attending as her witty exchange with Polixenes on motifs of innocence and grace gets for him unbearably extended. Then we will understand why when he returns to speech he is somewhat uncomfortable and more visibly needy—although not yet fully jealous:

Leon. Is he won yet?
Her. He'll stay my lord.
Leon. At my request he would not.
 Hermione, my dearest, thou never spoke'st
 To better purpose
Her. Never
Leon. Never, but once.
Her. What have I twice said well? When twas it
 Before?
 I prithee tell me; cram 's with praise, and make
 As fat as tame things. ... (1.2.86-92)

Why does Leontes not know that Polixenes has changed his mind? Perhaps he is just being polite. But it is more likely that his own mind has been wandering uncomfortably but also aimlessly. Then he tries gracious praise, but comparatives often hide traps. And in this case Hermione's Rosalind-like graciousness fatally ignores the

danger. Whether she in fact does not know that Leontes is referring to their courtship or whether he pretends she does not know to prolong the social scene, her behavior has to make Leontes think his persistence with her is less significant for her than her success with Polixenes. And then when she knows what he refers to and claims to accept both the suitor and the suiting on an equal par, she chooses to take Polixenes hand.

It is only now that Leontes can name his feeling, can turn the inchoate into the tragically coherent. Notice how carefully he observes himself:

[Aside] 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. This entertainment
May a free face put on, derive a liberty
From heartiness, from bounty's fertile bosom,
And well become the agent; 't may—I grant
But to be paddling palms and pinching fingers
As now they are and making practis'd smiles ... (1.2.108-16)

With this aside social coherence is irretrievably broken. But the source of the break is quite different from Othello's madness, and more dangerous. For there is no question of proof, no appeal to anything that even smacks of social confirmation. Leontes just looks within. He feels the tremor of his heart, and he recognizes first what the cause is not: "it is not for joy; not joy." Only then does he turn to the world around him, at first trying to argue away his feeling but then embracing jealousy as an interpretation of his pain. Jealousy is a perfect hypothesis for his feelings that his subjective power is waning and he risks becoming an object distinguished only by his horns (hence the image of other's laughing at one's stupidity in 2.3.24ff.)

Now he turns to his son Mamillius. I think he asks "art thou my boy?" not because he harbors any hostility but rather because the one "who I think is mine and love as mine" (1.2.331) offers the possibility of a likeness that will sustain him in the face of this sudden distance from his wife. His split consciousness is dramatized by his trying to focus on the boy even as he cannot not see how Polixenes and Hermione still act out their bonding—c.f. 1.2. 119-130.)

Leontes does not fight his emerging jealousy the way Othello does; nor does he become increasingly withdrawn from the other characters, as if he were struggling with thoughts too embarrassing to admit in public. Rather Leontes almost finds comfort in the jealousy as he develops further charges against Hermione. The difference between plays stems largely from generic reasons. Othello fights the jealousy because in so doing he enhances the infernal marriage to Iago. With Leontes, on the other hand, the romance genre elicits his close connection with the welfare of the state. In *The Winter's Tale* everyone knows that he is jealous and almost everyone tries to convince him of his error. It is as if the crime against Hermione were paralleled by a crime against the state that can occur when the king is not skeptical enough but believes on all too insubstantial grounds his own interpretations of what he feels. Those who disagree are not just wrong or have different perspectives—they must will their ignorance of such obvious facts or not love the ruler enough to submit their judgment to his and so they must be regarded as traitors (as is the case with respect to Camillo and more generally in 2.3.83). So the ruler has no option but to govern by his own lights alone. The ruler becomes a tyrant

Why, what need we

Commune with you of this, but rather follow
Our forceful instigation? Our prerogative
Calls not your counsels, but our natural goodness
Imparts this; which if you—or stupefied
Or seeming so in skill—cannot or will not,
Relish a truth like us, inform yourselves
We need no more of your advice. The matter,
The loss, the gain, the ord'ring on't, is all
Properly ours. (2.1.161-169)

That all his advisors disagree only shows that there is probably a plot against the king's rule.

III

It is tempting to draw parallels to the contemporary political scene in the U.S. where there is a similar denial of innocence and insistence on opposition as betrayal: since the only motives granted are political interests, the only possible states are

compliance with authority or treachery motivated by resentment that others are in power. (Leontes mad “all’s true that is mistrusted” [2.1.48] seems sanity to the current administration.) But now I mention this primarily to indicate in contemporary terms the kind of situation that calls for romance solutions, or, better, the kind of solution where despair can only be tempered by romance fantasies. Because Leontes is solely responsible for the evil, and because there is not the sense of fatality that contributes to Othello’s doom, it is possible to imagine that the conversion of only one agent can heal the inner divisions the crime has created. There becomes a perfectly definable path for redemption. First his error, then his tyranny establish clear lines of responsibility and clear measures of what can and cannot undo those transgressions. The path to redemption is not easy, but it can justify not yielding completely to what Wallace Stevens called the greatest evil, finding oneself in situations where one cannot tell desire from despair (see “Esthetique du Mal”).

To appreciate the difficulties of that path we have to see that it comprises two distinctive stages. First Leontes must recognize what he has done and change his behaviors and then, in the play at least, he must recognize that such change cannot be motivated by any hope that he can regain what he has lost. He must relegate to fate and chance and perhaps nature’s creativity any possibility that righteousness can be reconnected to blessedness. He must learn the huge difference between recognizing error and atoning for all that he has violated.

Paulina’s primary function in the play is to clarify what each of those stages involves. Just after Leontes has descended to the horror of imagining himself being the object of laughter, Paulina charges onto the stage. She is the last of the figures from the court to attempt to change his mind, but she is the first to insist on the pathos of what he has become. It is she who dares to call Leontes a tyrant. It is she who in her self-appointed role as physician tries to minister to Leontes’ psyche by eliciting shame and by finding proof of innocence that even the tyrant cannot resist. And it is she who changes the language of the play from stressing the family of economic terms Cavell notices to the affective ones involving oppositions between states like shame and those involving innocence and grace.

Her most powerful act as mediator of affective discourses is repudiating Leontes' initial act of acknowledging his crimes. Even when the oracle finds Hermione innocent, the tyrant can continue to deny any innocence he cannot feel as innocent. But when his son dies of shame at what his mother is going through, Leontes has to admit "my injustice" (3.2. 147) and confess that he had "too much believed my own suspicion" (3.2. 151). For the tyrant (and perhaps for the logic of Cavell's reading)¹² it seems that this admission of cognitive error must suffice. After all, Leontes is quite sincere in expressing repentance towards the oracle and in promising a very different life in the future free from impulses to revenge:

Apollo, pardon
My great profaneness 'gainst thine oracle!
I'll reconcile me to Polixenes,
New woo my queen, recall the good Camillo,
Whom I proclaim a man of truth, of mercy;
For being transported by my jealousies
To bloody thoughts, and to revenge, I chose
Camillo for the minister to poison
My friend Polixenes ...

How he [Polixenes] glisters
Through my rust! and how his piety
Does my deeds make the blacker! (3.2. 153-172)¹³

Yet although Leontes is beginning to understand the reality of his situation, he has no idea of its seriousness—largely because he still retains what we might call a tyrant's temporality. Time for Leontes is measured in instants where the word suffices for the deed. New knowledge should produce the will to change, and the tyrant's will should have the power to achieve this change immediately. Since in this case it is only he who is responsible for evil, the change in self-awareness should be directly effective. But Paulina introduces the need for a drastically different sense of temporality in which one must fully inure himself to the likelihood that even with a new perspective, after what he has done nothing will change that really matters. To enter that sense of temporality Leontes must teach himself that the actual suffering he caused is more important than the

fact that he caused it—largely because then he also has to face the fact of how little he now controls the conditions that really matter to him, whatever his attitude might be toward epistemic skepticism.

Paulina's establishes this different sense of temporality by imposing on Leontes a strict narrative accounting of his deeds, culminating in his responsibility for the death of the Queen (3.2.185-202). A drop of reason will not cleanse of him of this sequence of deeds. Now Leontes must engage a sense of causality and consequence that requires a kind of responsiveness considerably different from what mere knowledge can provide:

therefore betake thee
To nothing but despair. A thousand knees,
Ten thousand years together, naked, fasting,
Upon a barren mountain, and still winter
In storm perpetual, could not move the gods
To look that way thou wert. (3.2.209-14)

To his credit, Leontes takes this speech to heart, metrically completing her last line:

Go on, go on;
Thou canst not speak too much, I have deserv'd
All tongues to talk their bitt' rest. (3.2.214-6)

He is so convincingly despondent that Paulina relents and apologizes. But Leontes is far beyond being touched by apology. He only knows now that he must will suffering so that "tears shed there" at the tomb of son and mother "shall be my recreation" each day (3.2.239-40).

IV

Now I face the challenge of grappling with how the romance can plausibly transform Leontes' condition without trivializing his remorse or quite erasing the sense of willed renunciation of ordinary pleasures. If, like Cavell, we treat Leontes transformation as something he earns by his change of heart towards skepticism, I think we greatly oversimplify the affective demands placed on the audience to sort out the kind of identifications possible in the last act. Certainly the ending could not have taken place without Leontes admitting his blindness and coming to accept remorse and vulnerability.

But those are only preconditions of wonder, not what wonder creates on the stage as the conditions for change.

I want to show how wonder is basically the vehicle for the grace to understand how a miracle can change a life like Leontes where despair has been woven into what seems every fabric of his being. Wonder in *the Winter's Tale* takes many forms. But the most dramatically salient form is remarkably attuned to how limited Leontes' life has become and how much therefore he cannot be expected to change except inwardly. As Stevens might say, the wonder makes it ¹⁴seem as if nothing had changed at all, except that there is a total change in how he comes to will his life and appreciate what he has been given. So I want to correlate this sense of wonder not with Descartes celebration of curiosity and epistemic discovery but with what Wittgenstein has to say about the mystical in his Tractatus:

To view the world *sub specie aeterni* is to view it as a whole—a limited whole.

Feeling the world as limited whole—it is this that is mystical. ...

There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They make themselves manifest. They are what is mystical. (6.45, 6.522)¹⁵

The mystical is the transcendental sense that what cannot be said about totality can be felt as the acknowledgment and affirmation of absolute limitation.¹⁶ One might say that grace waits for the individual in this invitation to admit all that one cannot have or control. For Shakespeare, but not for Wittgenstein, that sense of limitation and hence that sense of dependence on grace for grace, then takes a further psychological twist because it affords something that makes demands on knowing itself. Wonder is the place where theater itself metaphorically replaces human agency and makes us aware of what can produce utter conviction without reason and utter attunement to what the character could never have let himself imagine.

The best way to make my case is to dwell on distinct levels of action within the structure of the play that contextualize its various senses of the “wonder” made emblematic in Hermione’s coming to life. Cavell’s nimble allegorical imagination helps make the first level dramatically significant. He speculates that the bear’s eating Antigonus evokes the idea of “nature ...reabsorbing a guilty civilization” (215). The bear

offers the plays image of lawful eating,” an “expression of nature’s violence” that “seems the beginning of redemption, or rescue, from the shipwreck of human violence with its unpayable debts” (217-18). But if the bear introduces motifs of governing laws, we still have to ask what kind of law he follows. For it may be the case that then we will also recognize other activities might accord with other laws, perhaps even with a hierarchy of laws. The bear’s lawful eating only when is hungry reflects a distinctive realm of natural law where there is only need and desire, without any of the differences humanity might bring to possibilities of lawfulness. The bear’s action then can suggest why the fullness of human life may require a very different responsiveness to other possibilities in nature.

We can attribute a second level of lawfulness to Autolycus, a figure representing the possibility of extending nature by inventiveness and artifice. Autolycus offers an endlessly renewable feeling of his own innocence in which anything can be exchanged for anything else without fear of substantial harm.¹⁷ He accepts a world in which the demand is simply to invent oneself for the occasion, be it in poems or products to sell or disguises to adapt. (His mother must have loved him very much.) That adaptiveness makes Autolycus a figure

sharply opposed to what Leontes comes to represent, perhaps marking the difference between those that are fulfilled in their naturalness and those in need of something like redemption. Leontes’ decisions about how to handle his grief and his guilt make it impossible for him to change. His life is devoted to utter repetition in his willed daily visit to shed tears of remorse as his form of “recreation” (3.2.238-42). And it is not only the admonitory presence of Paulina that makes a new marriage impossible for him. His very way of understanding what his own nature has produced cuts him off entirely from what keeps most other people going. Only a miracle, something at the boundaries of nature, will make change available for him, since only a miracle can restore the innocence or ease of being that he seems to have utterly destroyed.

A higher level of nature exists for the lovers Perdita and Florizel because there exchange becomes the condition of each of them experiencing a fullness that they could not enjoy on the level of Autolycan entrepreneurship. Hence in Florizel’s opening scene he swears “I cannot be/ Mine own, nor any thing to any, if/ I be not thine” (4.4.42-46). Here the play’s treatment of levels of nature becomes more complex than I can deal with.

Suffice it to notice how nature grows to include both the creative powers of art (in the flower scene) and the creative force of eros that binds people to attempting to bring the present (Autolycus's tense) into the future. Part of Perdita's power consists in her gathering all these forces into one person, preeminently when she transforms Florizel's joke that the garlands she imagines weaving might be for a corpse into the domain of the erotic:

No, like a bank, for love to lie and play on ;
Not like a corse; or if—not to be buried,
But quick and in my arms. (4.4.131-34)

She figuratively at least identifies with love's power to turn dying into living.

But we have to notice also how the play sets limits to this expansive creative nature, and in so doing provides a different perspective on what Leontes needs. On this level of nature Polixenes is the principle figure. For his rage at his son's marriage plans make him sound like Leontes, albeit with what to Shakespeare probably seemed better reasons. Apparently this procreative aspect of nature is difficult to reconcile with the forms of care and of authority that fathers find it in their nature to accommodate. Initially he makes considerable efforts to link his model of care to the natural energies of the lovers by proposing what a father might contribute to the wedding ceremony:

Is not your father grown incapable
Of reasonable affairs? Is he not stupid
With age and alt'ring rheums? Can he speak? Hear ...
Reason my son
Should choose himself a wife, but as good reason
The father (all of whose joy is nothing else
But fair posterity) should hold some counsel
In such a business. (4.4. 395-409).

The father has to be concerned for expansive time beyond the lover's notion of a future, and therefore has to find ways of testing and sanctioning erotic energy, even if it means being transformed from someone greatly touched by Perdita to someone forbidding his son's wedding to her. But for the son the father's demands are those of a tyrant, since the

father's rage is all the indication needed that he does not sufficiently appreciate both the power of love and the son's willingness to stake everything in pursuit of this power.

If Polixenes must be at best only an exiled witness to this procreative nature, imagine how far Leontes must remain from anything approaching the present tense or promise for the future. Any sense of wonder that can include him cannot stem fundamentally from nature, at least from this level of nature. And any sense of wonder that makes a difference in his life must involve considerable attention to suffering, loss, and exile.

V

The task of the fifth act is to bring wonder to the world of the play while discriminating among its various levels of being. Initially we return to Leontes so the audience can see what romance forces must overcome, as if his were a more serious version of Jacques's separation from the revels. He has given his spirit to remorse and he his self-knowledge has come to this continuing awareness that is unforgivably responsible for the murder of several innocent people. Self-knowledge entails the conclusion that hope would be utterly presumptuous, since nothing can balance the loss to himself and to the state that he has inflicted. But his is not at all entirely negative, since when he first sees Perdita and Florizel he can make a comparison of his and Polixenes' lives that refuses any envy, even though there is certainly sufficient cause for it:

For which the heavens, taking angry note,
Have left me issueless; and your father bless'd
(As he from heaven merits it) with you,
Worthy his goodness. What might I have been,
Might I a son and daughter now have looked on,
Such goodly things as you? (5.1.173-77)

Because he has purified himself of any sense of entitlement and any hope that his condition can change, he can live in a compelling resigned transparency.

For grace to enter Leontes' life there would have to be a miracle, a space opened beyond what any reasoning can grasp. And that, crucially, the Leontes of 5.1 cannot do by himself. It takes grace to open his eyes to what grace can be, and that grace is

precisely what despair refuses even to pursue. Paulina's Pauline severity is the only companionship he can imagine having. She does not have to work very hard to block thoughts of his remarrying.

Exercising consummate tact, the second scene of Act V puts Leontes off-stage so that the audience can adjust to the transformations that are occurring. In fact all the major actors are off-stage as Shakespeare chooses to offer narrative from the perspective of minor actors, even though the events narrated are momentous and beg to be performed.

It is not difficult to appreciate Shakespeare's choice because the narrative contrasts so effectively with the transformation of Hermione that Shakespeare does present dramatically in the final scene. But appreciation deepens if we pursue what may be at stake in this contrast. First, it is important to notice that while Leontes is off stage he is not absent from the story or from the audience's attention. I think the play turns to narrative in part not to overwhelm the audience with what overwhelms the characters. Narrative becomes a strange blend of gaining access to events, protecting the audience from the intensity of those events, marking the kind of distance that establishes the filters for experience born of age and suffering, preparing for the even greater event, and testing how distance can merge with a sense of wonder. The scene almost asks how else could such a series of events and such a mixture of emotions be made plausible and touching, except by the protective distance of narrative?

Second, there is a complex self-awareness in the play of different shades of wonder and hence different ways that awe and pain seem to come together. This is how the narrative handles the reunion between Camillo and Leontes:

They seem'd almost, with staring on one another, to tear the cases of their eyes. There was speech in their dumbness, language in their very gesture; they look'd as they had heard of a world ransom'd or one destroy'd. A notable passion of wonder appear'd in them; but the wisest beholder that knew no more but seeing could not say if th' importance were joy or sorrow; but in extremity of one it must needs be.

Narrative distance makes it possible to render an event that displays how those who have lost procreative nature find intensity so unbearably mixed: wonder is inseparable from the pains of loss and age and limitation. The dramatist would have to choose an interpretation; the narrators can take a more reflective view establishing just how difficult it would be to choose one line of interpretation.

This story is followed in rapid sequence by “the wonder” of discovering that Perdita is his daughter—a discovery inseparable from the pain of recognizing all the years he lost with her—then the comic moment of this sense of pain and sorrow in Leontes’ interest in Perdita as a possible wife, then Paulina’s having to bear the tale of the bear eating her husband, followed finally “how attentiveness” to the tale of her mother’s death “wounded his daughter till (from one sign of dolor to another) she did (with an “Alas!”), I would fain say, bleed tears; for I sure my heart wept blood” (5.2.86-89).

And finally there is the way the drama of the last scene invites us to reflect on contrasts between what narrative can offer and what has to have the presence of living theater. We realize that narrative is capable of dealing with even the wondrous events of 5.2. But narrative is impossible for the events of 5.3. Narrative would not be believed and narrative could not even hope to record the complex emotions involved. So the narrative sets off another level of wonder—dramatically and metadramatically which is allowed a language of miracle precisely because of its distance from the narrative. And part of the miracle is our awareness of the difference between narrating the pathos of conflicting joys and pains and presenting something that inextricably fuses a distinctive sadness and a distinctive joy. That relation to the affects in turn reminds us that now an imaginative site has been constructed for us that is well beyond the world of the young lovers’ procreative eros.

This quite different imaginative world stems largely from how much the play readapts its own figures and in effect puts itself on stage, a phenomenon on which both Cavell and Bishop remark. Wonder begins in the fact that we know that were this narrated the audience could not believe it. In effect we enter now a level of nature which itself cannot be the subject of narrative. Rather it is inseparable from theater—literally inseparable from stage effects and metaphorically inseparable from the

kind of literalness provided by imagination at its most intense and intensive. The very presence of this statue coming alive suggests the possibility of a domain where theater makes demands on belief and approaches truths or conditions in present time that narrative consciousness must distrust.¹⁸

But that difference from narrative does not entail that theater is replacing religion. We do better to imagine Shakespeare enacting how fully theater is conjoined with certain aspects of the religious spirit because of the kind of nature to which both can be responsive. Theater here seems capable of presenting what might occur in the inner lives of those who have opened themselves to for what for lack of a better word I have to call “grace.” And, more important, theater seems able to make that sense of grace conform to the spiritual possibilities of those for whom the theater of procreative eros is a dim and bitter memory and narrative a bondage to such memories. To create wonder for Perdita and Florizel would no more difficult than to stage Miranda’s wonder. But to create a level of wonder that makes Leontes feel that his life can be open to something other than resigned despair is much more difficult and task, especially if the wonder does not erase all that he has come to know about himself. Then we can see his seeing that there is more to his world than the self he has armored can imagine, while also attempting to imagine how this combined sense of restraint and release is far more intricate than what his reaction to Camillo made us see it was still possible for him to feel. There is wonder that can be narrated, like the discovery of a daughter, and wonder that cannot be narrated, like the discovery that one’s affective life is not over and that one has by one’s suffering been perfectly trained to adapt to the constraints that remain in place for what can transpire among adults that have suffered as much as Herminone and Leontes have.

Critics point out that Hermione speaks only to her daughter. But they fail to see that this is the case largely because Hermione wants narrative from her, and speech can be sufficient for that. The richest wonder in the play is that Hermione and Leontes need not speak, indeed cannot speak to each other. They can only hold each other. This is in part because Leontes’ has so contaminated speaking by using all its resources for an eloquent theater of recrimination. But it is also because the previous scene teaches us even in lesser miracles how the complex of pain and pleasure simply beggars language. The theater gives us wonder in the form of physical presences that can adapt to such a

realm of affect without having to trivialize it by words that either interpret it or claim ownership for its consequences.¹⁹

Ironically the relation between Hermione and Leontes seems the only situation to be narrated in this final scene: “She hangs about his neck” (5.3.112). This, however, is a very different kind of narrative—not of what happened but of what is happening in a world where both agents are speechless. Sixteen years of stony silence have prepared both Leontes and Hermione not to reduce grace to any claim about knowledge. Sixteen years of stony silence have prepared Leontes and Hermione to trust in what the present can give, as well as in what it cannot give that the young lovers experience. And three hours of theater are all that is necessary to produce the fine gradations of feeling that separate this wonder from any rhetoric of the sublime, with its overwhelming but not very discriminating affective fields.

VI

I cannot conclude without drawing back from the wondrous to the practical by posing myself the question how my reading of this play has any generalizing force. I would like it to help make plausible four claims. 1) Knowledge and grace pertain to quite different domains. Grace involves complex interpersonal affects that can situate possibilities of knowledge that knowledge itself otherwise cannot realize. Correlatively being an active audience for this play affords the opportunity to test against the limits of knowledge what the powers of feeling can afford in making subtle adjustments to the situation. 2) From the example of *The Winter's Tale* we have to be leery of attributing large-scale and intricate attitudes to what we project as dispositions of the characters preexisting what we see dramatized about them. Shakespeare wants to establish the relevant emotional states dramatically, so he provides sufficient evidence in performance for the genesis and transformation of the character traits with which he wants us to adapt or to distance ourselves from. Attributing dispositions is necessary for there to be characters at all, but attributing too much to dispositions is to reduce Shakespeare's play to an exercise in the critic's working out his or her own moral narrative. 3) One can emphasize self-consciousness about the mechanics of theatre as Shakespeare does without being content with such self-consciousness as an end in itself. Shakespeare's theater can be seen as the construction of mimetic windows onto the world for which the

workings of theater are essential—first in terms of how people themselves function as dramatically self-aware characters, then in terms of how theater can enable us to occupy liminal conditions usually dismissed by those who insist on stable criteria for what we can say we know. 4) Wonder in *The Winter's Tale* may take a distinctive modern form. Wonder is not quite a Cartesian and an Aristotelian provocation to curiosity and promise of further knowledge but may depend on the power to elicit states of will almost for their own sake. It is the promise of blessedness not the promise of power that wonder offers. And this blessedness may be most fully imagined by correlating it with a sense of accepted limits or ordinariness rather than with the unboundedness offered by the sublime.

1 The only American philosopher I know who deals intensively with poetry is Richard Eldridge. For my some of my complaints see "Lyrical Ethics and Literary Experience." *Style* 32 (1998): 272-97. Reprinted in Todd Davis and Kenneth Womack eds., *Mapping the Ethical Turn*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2001: 30-58.

2 Staten, "Clement Greenberg, Radical Painting, and the Logic of Modernism" *Angelaki* 7.1, (Spring 2002).

3 Probably at the core of my complaint are expressions like "Reading *The Winter's Tale* to study it, to find out my interest in it" (200) because these remarks revel in a preference for the subjective pole rather than the useful fantasy of struggling to clarify potentially objective forces in a text.

4 Cavell's evidence for his claims consists largely in the fact that th Leontes first words to his son are "Art thou my boy" (1.2.119) and that Leontes drops his "'diseased opinion'" of the entire situation "exactly on learning that his son is dead" (195), as if the theater of jealousy had created the desired effect. But that initial suspicion is primarily Leontes' effort to resist losing himself in his incipient jealousy by shoring up identifications. Soon after he admits that

Mamillius is his (see 1.2.330-31 and 2.1.40). And the fact of Mamillius's death is enough to convince Leontes' he has insulted Apollo without any need to hypothesize a satisfaction to which the play certainly calls no attention.

5 Harry Berger Jr., "What Did the King Know and When Did He Know It? Shakespearean Discourse and Psychoanalysis," in Russ McDonald, ed. *Shakespeare: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory 1945-2000* (Oxford: Blackwells, 2004), 365-398 has a very interesting similar critique of Freudian psychoanalysis that parallels my views but puts the case to very different Lacanian ends. But I also ought shore up my version of the argument that this level of generalization to disposition is fundamental to psychoanalytic criticism. So I turn to another brilliant critic, T.G. Bishop, *Shakespeare and the Theatre of Wonder* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996): "Both Leontes' jealousy and Shakespeare's play provide an "intermediate area"—and they provide it in response to the same fact or fantasy: male terror at the nature and implications of sexual desire. Leontes' behavior invites us to see him as a hysteric terrified of his own capacity and wish to inflict the aggressive pain of his sexuality on the female" (144). One could also cite Murray M. Schwartz argument that what Leontes says about the spider expresses his primary fear of maternal engulfment" or Coppelia Kahn's version of a frequent claim that the homosexuality implicit between Polixenes and Leontes explains why he is unwilling to trust his manhood to woman, so his jealousy becomes a mode of self-protection. For Schwartz see "Leontes Jealousy in *The Winter's Tale*," *American Imago* 30 (1973), 250-73, and for Kahn see "The Providential Tempest and the Shakespearean Family," in Murray Krieger and Coppelia Kahn (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 217-63.

6 I cannot resist citing Cavell's clearest formulation of how Leontes' troubles stem from his attitude toward knowledge. One can tell differences, and thereby make claims to knowledge in three distinctive ways: one can identify features that count as distinguishing marks of identity; one can show is that one is a position to know; and one can make a convincing case that one has seen directly the phenomenon in question. But one always tells "more and ... less" (201) than one knows. Indeed that is why Wittgenstein is so important a philosopher and why "Descartes discovery of skepticism shows ... what makes Leontes' madness possible or what makes his madness representative of the human need for acknowledgment" (203). Wittgenstein's thinking about criteria is "not meant to settle the field of existence" in its disputes with dreams and other modes of apparent illusion. Rather he tries simply "to mark its bourn, to say its conceptual space" (203) by not refuting the skeptic but rather by showing the truth of skepticism and at the

same time demonstrating how one can use the temptation of skepticism to recognize that the world of possible agreement among subjects must suffice.

7 Ironically Cavell's language has Leontes almost becoming the incarnation of his son, thereby reducing Hermione to nurturing mother and Perdita to a daughter's irrelevance to the main drama of patrimony.

8 We have to attribute pride to Oedipus in order to make sense of the overt feelings he renders in *Oedipus Rex*, but both the play and the myth indicate that he possesses such traits. (That is, we would be hard-pressed to make any sense of the play at all if we were unwilling to grant that the text creates this attribution of character.) We do not just infer a preexisting attitude, and there is no reason to attribute explanations of any of his traits so as to warrant hypotheses about desires for his mother. (Hamlet's behavior on the other hand does not require an inference about preexisting desire because it is hard to ignore that desire as a dramatic fact.) Analogously, Leontes shares with most men a capacity for irrational jealousy, but that it stems from skepticism is a much harder sell when we see how careful Shakespeare is to embed its eruption in the dramatic situation.

9 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Notes and Lectures Upon Shakespeare*, cited in Maurice Hunt ed. *The Winter's Tale: Critical Essays* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1995), p. 72.

10 It is crucial that all of the evidence for Leontes grappling with skepticism and wanting to be rid of the claims of his son stem from passages that are themselves grappling with the sudden onslaught of feelings he cannot understand. If one must talk about skepticism in this play it is more probable to cast it as the result of hypotheses within the fit of jealousy rather than seeing it as preexisting the jealousy and serving as its cause. Carol Neeley, in "The Winter's Tale: the Triumph of Speech," reprinted in Hunt, ed., pp. 243-57 has a similar sense to mine of the importance of what is inchoate in Leontes movement toward jealousy.

11 See 1.2.60 ff for evidence of how well Hermione plays the role of witness eager for the telling of their tales one more time.

12 I am not arguing that Cavell thinks Leontes has sufficiently repented here. I am arguing that Cavell's epistemic framework cannot say much about what Leontes still has to learn because there is no place in this thinking for what fifteen years of sorrow and shame punctuated by daily visits to the grave of a dead son and wife can do for the possibility of "recovery." Actually I should say "what Leontes still has to become open to" because the epistemic

emphasis of “learn” proves misleading about how agency and grace are cast in the concluding scenes of the play. It is no accident that the very next scene takes up Perdita’s story, the story of what is lost returning to create possibilities of grace and wonder. No attitude shaped around the discourses of skepticism can engage the nature of this transformation or what it holds for the one who can learn to repent.

13 One could argue that Leontes still remains envious of Polixenes. But I think Shakespeare wants it to be Leontes’ intention at least to recognize and to appreciate the graciousness of Polixenes leaving. Envy is in the background but other attitudes are becoming possible.

14 In this analysis of wonder I have been helped immensely by T.G Bishop’s *Shakespeare and the Theater of Wonder*, especially for his demonstration of how the play develops several internal reversals that intensify the ending. He acknowledges the importance of Cavell’s reading (with which he is much sympathetic than I am), but he also insists on how the theater stages wonder in a very different light than a Cartesian discourse: Theater both releases wonder as an affective accompaniment of what is staged and encourages a dialectical view where what is staged reflects back on the audience’s interests in and complicity for what can be released in the domain of fantasy. But then to interpret these qualities of fantasy Bishop relies on Ovid’s version of the Persephone story. This seems an important mistake to me for two reasons. That orientation links with Cavell’s ignoring the kind and quality of fantasies that give Christianity much of its power. (Bishop does does rely on a notion of incarnation throughout this book and in his last pages on *Winter’s Tale*, but it is not a very doctrinal notion of incarnation and I think an insufficiently wondrous because his psychoanalytic commitments constrain incarnation to reconciliation with the flesh as end rather than as means to a spiritual life.) And Bishop’s appreciation of fantasy is used to justify a primarily therapeutic vocabulary emphasizing at the conclusion of the play the acceptance of vulnerability and the repudiation of violence toward women. These are important contemporary values but too caught up in the ego’s needs to capture the affective demand in Shakespeare’s play to identify with a state that in its various permutations transforms everything that can be staged.

¹⁵ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, translated by D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961), p. 149. I am not suggesting that Shakespeare shared early Wittgenstein’s understanding of the limits of language. I am suggesting that one version of Christian thinking might make wonder consistent with a sense that human powers constitute a very limited whole bounded by grace, and that

one can be given visions of this condition as a whole that would count as mystical experience. See Northrop Frye's remarks on how small humans become in the last act of the play, in his "Recognition in the Winter's Tale," in Hunt, ed, 110. And on the working of silence in the last scene see William H. Matchett, "Some Dramatic Techniques in The Winter's Tale," *Shakespeare Survey* 22 (1969): 93-107.

16 It is important that Wittgenstein connects his sense of the mystical to a classical vision of fate opposed to the modern sense of "the laws of nature" that makes it look as if everything were explained" (6.372).

17 Cavell's view of Autolycus is very much like mine except he does not seek structural levels in representing nature and he does insist that Autolycus's way is a powerful alternative to skepticism. In Autolycus "lawlessness and economy and sexuality and fertility and art are shown to live together with jollity not fatality" (214). Autolycus cannot turn the play into comedy but he can provide perspective on Leontes' sense of birth as monstrous. The spirit of Autolycus ushers in the play's many efforts to counter the motif of bastards by at least the possibility that in nature "all graftings are legitimate" (215).

18 Inga -Stina Ewbank "The Triumph of Time in The Winter's Tale," in Hunt ed, 139-155 and Charles Frey, *Shakespeare's Vast Romance: A Study of The Winter's Tale* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1980) were very helpful in my thinking about time in this play, a topic on which much more needs to be written because the ending so carefully echoes and transforms the senses of time early in the play. The issues of narrativity at the end pick up the limitations inherent in how Polixenes and Leontes become nostalgic about their memories. And Leontes' sense of satisfaction in how his limitations prove inseparable from an eternally affirmable present in the company of Hermione contrasts powerfully with the sense of the present on demand in his tyrannical mode.

19 Most commentators speak of the importance of audience participation here, since the situation strains the very credulity that it invites. But while not denying the role of the audience, one could stress the pressure on them also to understand how when theater risks this degree of miraculous presence there is a sense in which they are totally irrelevant—the play believes. Perhaps one can say the play needs the audience to acknowledge the possibility of their own irrelevance or complete subsumption within the terms of the life that are made present and unknowable except by

surrendering to the imagination. Only then can there be full redemption from the demands for narrative that audiences tend to assert.