

New Tales of Winter – abstracts
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Rita Banerjee

Tragicomedy and the Restoration of Credit in *The Winter's Tale*

Suggesting close links between the genre of tragicomedy and economic exchanges, this paper argues that *The Winter's Tale*, as a tragicomedy, reproduces the economic processes of loss and gain. It interrogates the notions of trust and risk in *The Winter's Tale* (1611) and links the concepts with 'credit,' bringing out their economic implications. Credit and trust were often used interchangeably. One of the meanings of credit was "trust or confidence in a buyer's ability and intention to pay at a future time, exhibited by entrusting him with goods without present payment" (*OED*). Credit was important in overseas international trade as well as domestic financial transactions in seventeenth-century England. Because of the limited money supply, the economic structure was heavily dependent on the circulation of credit.

The reiteration of the word credit in Shakespeare's source *Pandosto* and the way it is echoed at crucial junctures in *The Winter's Tale* show how the play can be examined in terms of trust, credit, and risk-taking. Because of his unwarranted distrust of Hermione, Leontes loses credibility and credit, being deprived of Mamillius and facing the possibility of complete obliteration of his lineage by the loss of Perdita. Paulina's and Florizel's acts of risk-taking restore the balance of credit in Sicilia. This paper examines Autolycus's exclusion from the process of credit-restoration and shows how the play breeds trust and credibility in the audience, despite the predominance of the magical and the supernatural, and achieves creditworthiness and marketability.

Tom Bishop

An Afterlife for Alcestis; or, How Much Greek Does a Playwright Need?

This paper is an excerpt from work in progress on Shakespeare's relation to the authority of prior texts, and in particular of sacred texts. I am especially interested in the strategies of reading which can be deployed for the management, and the creative deformation, of that authority. In the course of this work, I have been attempting to account for the scope of the word "grace" in *The Winter's Tale*, and have been thence drawn back to the question of Shakespeare's access to Greek, and in particular to the Greek of Euripides' *Alcestis*.

The paper looks in some detail at the history of the publication of Greek and Latin texts of Euripides in the sixteenth century to reconstruct HOW the reading of a Greek text might have been done in Shakespeare's lifetime by one who we know to have had, in the sniffy testimony of a learned friend, "small Latin and less Greek". It then compares some local passages and features of that reading with some events in Shakespeare's text in the hope they may illuminate the question of WHETHER that reading was done for the Alcestis story in Shakespeare's late play. Finally, it attends to the important theme of *kharis* (Latin *gratia*) in *Alcestis* to measure how we might see this ancient concept of "grace" deployed in and responded to by Shakespeare's play.

Andrea P. Borunda

Indigeneity and the Ecoracial in *The Winter's Tale*

This paper offers a response grounded in indigeneity that imagines the practice of new inclusive futures that raise questions about relationality and im/material ecologies, and environmental and social justice in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*. Within the discourse of competing environmental ideologies and imaginaries an investigation of precolonial indigenous epistemologies of nature must be considered to recognize the ways in which first nations people have been engaging, developing, and resisting the changing conditions of life under the legacies of colonialism. If the play is read from the position of imperial dominion, then it reinforces a white male supremacy, if read from the margins, however, foregrounding indigeneity, *The Winter's Tale* becomes a play about spiritual, social, and ecological transgressions. Using indigenous frameworks of knowledge to make formal interventions into the mainstream discourse about the environment and its rightful possessors creates an indigenous sovereignty that runs contrary to the rigid framework of codes, representations, and discursive formations so critical to the West. Highlighting the *ecoracial* which speaks to indigenous and multiethnic movements of ecocritical resistance and resilience in this chapter alerts readers to understandings of Western theories that have maintained an ignorance of the majority of those living in non-Western cultures that can play a vital role in revising centuries of feudal, colonial, and neocolonial dynamics of environmental racism. This intellectual sovereignty is fundamental to first nations people to sustain elements of their continuity and imagine new futures for themselves and in turn, counter the pervasive violence of environmental oppression.

Yan Brailowsky

Gendered Violence in *The Winter's Tale*: Pedagogical Issues or Opportunities?

This paper is part of an ongoing project on the pedagogical problems related to teaching plays featuring gendered violence (both in secondary schools and university-level classes). *The Winter's Tale* features as an exemplary text to explore the topics of honor killings, domestic violence and infanticide, as well as gendered discourse on the female tongue, conjugal duties, and age (or, rather, ageism). From a pedagogical standpoint, studying these topics raises ethical, practical, and cultural questions, be it within cultural communities which resist calls to deal with these issues, to communities which have begun exploring these issues more frankly. My aim is to give students and teachers theoretical and practical tools to make sense of the play's resort to gender-based violence and thus to open up spaces for constructive discussions on a fraught topic.

Mark Kaethler

"Life Itself: Recycled Eco-materiality in *The Winter's Tale*"

This paper seeks to unite several critical trends concerning *The Winter's Tale* that have either been of recent or ongoing interest: resurrection, ecocriticism, and doubling.

The play has frequently been discussed for its infamous statue scene of resurrection. In his study of *Shakespeare and the Afterlife*, John Garrison posits that “drama, by its nature, is an engine of resurrection” (94), and Hermione’s transformation from statue to living person certainly encapsulates this process which Garrison later attends to in the same chapter. This essay, however, preoccupies itself with a different kind of return—of matter rather than life—and what this means for Hermione’s ostensible resurrection.

Vin Nardizzi’s conception of eco-materiality as the tie between the theatre and the natural environment offers some grounds to think about theatrical bodies as matter. Although Nardizzi focuses primarily upon woodlands, I expand his scope to examine human matter as connected with eco-matter. Whereas Hermione is dramatically resurrected as the same person, human eco-matter also returns in the play, though anew.

Doubling is the theatrical practice that accomplishes this eco-material vision. Although Perdita and Mamillius have dominated the conversation’s attention in recent years, I want to return to this likely pairing in light of a few things: doubling Antigonus and Autolycus; baby Perdita as stage property; and the possibility that Mamillius is Perdita not only through doubling but as the actual lost one. This plausible casting presents a rhetoric of the dead returning in ways that anticipate the resurrection of Hermione while distinguishing her return.

Jim Kearney

Shipwrecked Affect: Catastrophe and Response in *The Winter’s Tale*

Shipwreck – real and fictive – captures the imagination in part because it dramatizes the life- and world-shattering power of chance and contingency. Adopted as a figure for calamity in ancient and Renaissance moral philosophy, shipwreck was in the early modern world a very real hazard as well as a vehicle for story and speculative thought. It is also, to borrow Northrop Frye’s old joke, a basic means of transportation in Renaissance romance. In this paper I first address shipwreck in a few of Shakespeare’s romances in order to explore the ways in which these plays dramatize affective responses to catastrophe. I then turn to *The Winter’s Tale* to attend to one of the stranger scenes in the history of what Hans Blumenberg has called “shipwreck with spectator.” To make sense of this scene, I take up Sianne Ngai’s understanding of the affect of zaniness and consider the figure of the Renaissance *zanni*. Ultimately, the paper addresses the attempt to stage the strange short-circuiting of embodied and affective response that witnessing catastrophe engenders.

Yu Jin Ko

Spectatorship in *The Winter’s Tale* from The Globe to the Modern Stage

Simon Forman’s account of his visit to The Globe to see *The Winter’s Tale* famously leaves out any mention of what scholars generally consider the play’s emotional and theatrical climax, namely, the statue scene. We should of course not make too much of this omission, given how idiosyncratic and often erroneous Forman’s accounts are. However, given Forman’s emphasis on what he *observed* at performances, his account does raise the question of why he leaves out a moment that depends on a specifically visual surprise. One of the

many reasons that make this question vexing to answer is that the available evidence suggests that—perhaps counter-intuitively—the statue scene would have utilized the "discovery space" (at both the Globe and Blackfriars) and thus would have created sightline problems for many of the spectators. It is possible, that is, that Forman simply did not *see* the statue until after it emerged as the living Hermione from the discovery space. At the very least, some spectators probably did not. If so, how would one understand a visual dramaturgy that seems deliberately to exclude a portion of the audience?

In my essay I would like to explore how physically compromised spectatorship serves as a metaphor for visual experience in the play. In particular, I would like to study two modern productions that deliberately obscure the spectators' views in different ways: The Ryutopia Noh Theatre production (2005), which adapts Noh conventions regarding ghostly presences on stage to complicate sight and spectatorship for both the characters and the audience; and the Bridge Project production (2009, at BAM), in which the "statue" of Hermione faces upstage until the moment of awakening. Even as both productions separate the sightlines, as it were, of the "blind" Leontes and the knowing audience, they align them at crucial moments in the play to recreate in the audience the experience of awakening from blindness into another realm.

Laura Levine

Abhorred Ingredients Newly Performed: Shakespeare and Christopher Wheeldon

When Shakespeare has Paulina say Hermione is dead at the end of the trial scene in Act 3 of *The Winter's Tale*, he presents readers and spectators with an instance of a problem at the play's center, one that Leontes has been struggling with from the very beginning of the play: how it is possible to know anything with certainty? In Act III of the play we are told Hermione is dead. In act V when Paulina tells Hermione's statue to be "stone no more," she appears to bring Hermione back to life.. How are we to reconcile these two moments and the conflict they generate? 400 years later, Christopher Wheeldon's ballet of *The Winter's Tale* would seem to simplify this question. In a production where Mamillius dies on stage, Hermione falls to the floor in front of us a moment later, and even Paulina reacts with visible shock to what has happened. Wheeldon would seem to resolve the conflict, minimize ambiguity, and eliminate the possibility that Paulina has tucked Hermione away for 16 years. The ballet seems to present Hermione's resurrection at the end of the play as a genuine miracle. Even as Wheeldon simplifies, however, he would seem to complicate in other ways the problem of a statue which comes to life. Not only does Wheeldon change the statue, making it a joint statue of Hermione and Mamillius, only half of which comes to life, he makes the statue itself one of many in the ballet. How does this multiplication of statues bear on the problem of knowledge at the core of Shakespeare's play?

Christina Luckyj

Perdita, Politics and the People

Heralded by Florizel as "no shepherdess" but "queen" (4.4.2-5) from the moment she appears, Perdita is often aligned with courtliness rather than rusticity in *The Winter's Tale*, as critics and editors persistently associate her either with her father's royal court or with her

future husband's royal gaze. Unlike the play's first part, the second part is rarely read through contemporary politics, though Perdita is sometimes identified with Queen Elizabeth, the sheepshearing with the Jacobean court masque. Yet I shall argue that both the original Folio text and contemporary performance foreground the rustic "breeding" (4.4.560) of the "low-born lass" (4.4.156). Perdita's power emerges from not from her courtly identity but from her connection with the people – a people motivated not by mercenary greed as in Greene's *Pandosto* but by homely "pity" (3.3.72) and ready generosity (4.3.72) in Shakespeare's play. Though the audience is aware of Perdita as royal heir, Florizel must choose her believing that she is "i'th'rear' our birth" (4.4.561). In the edgy genre of pastoral tragicomedy the choice is as political as it is personal: Perdita's mean degree is essential to the inherently politicized model of consensual marriage between a prince devoted to and tutored by his humble subject. This paper contests dominant readings of Perdita's courtliness by reading the roots of her character in contemporary popular culture and political critique.