The Winter’s Tale

Week 10

5.3

5.2 had ended with Clo.’s invitation to Aut.: “Hark! The kings and princes, our kindred, are going to see the queen’s picture. Come, follow us: we’ll be thy good masters”.

However, the Shepherds, notwithstanding their being “kindred” to the kings and princes and – ‘gentlemen born’ – are not part of the final scene.

In 5.2 there were enough astonishing revelations and reunions to satisfy half a dozen series of modern TV programmes like Long Lost Family – in a play like Twelfth Night the reunions of 5.2 could take place onstage and forming the dramatic climax of the play.

In TWT these all took place offstage in 5.2 – and reported rather flatly in utilitarian prose by a number of Gentlemen – in order not to detract from the dramatic impact of the spectacular coup de theatre that provides its climax and ‘resolution’.

Just as Camillo had devised both the script and the staging of the play-within-a-play performed by Flor. & Per. at the court of Leon., in this scene Paulina takes on these roles. [It comes as no real surprise at the end of the scene when these two born organisers – Cam. & Paul. – are to be united in marriage.]

The location of the scene is (presumably) in a secluded part of Paul.’s house – perhaps a separate annex or chapel [it is called a “chapel” at 86]. Clearly it needs to be sufficiently close and private to enable her to have visited it “twice or thrice a day” – and over sixteen years(!) as reported in 5.2.105 – without arousing undue suspicion. [New Camb. observes that it ‘is a female domain, the first since 2.1; the difference now is that the male presence is invited rather than intrusive’ (NC, p. 240)].

The exchanges begin with mutual compliments and acknowledgements of obligation from both Leon. & Paul.:

Leon. acknowledges the “great comfort” that Paul. has been to him – though there is little doubt that she has never let him forget the great wrong he did to Her. (& Mam.) or that Leon. has welcomed such ‘scourging’ of his conscience as being well deserved;
Paul., in her turn, acknowledges 1. that she always “meant well” even when she “did not well” – and 2. that Leon. has fully repaid her “services” by deigning (“vouchsaf’d”) to visit her “poor house” together with Pol. (“your crown’d brother”) and “your contracted/ Heirs of your kingdoms” (Flor. & Per.) – she feels that she can never repay the compliment that has been done to her (8) [Their civil marriage ‘contract’ is referred to later].

Leon. – like all kings or ‘Princes’ in Shakespeare who visit the homes of their subjects – acknowledges the “trouble” that the subject incurs by that visit.¹

However, Leon. is anxious to proceed to the purpose of the visit – “To see the statue of our queen” (10). He acknowledges the many rarities that he saw while passing through her “gallery” but not the statue itself;

Paul. is confident that just as Her. herself lived “peerless” (without comparison) so her statue, her “dead likeness” will exceed anything that he passed in the gallery – or, indeed, anything else that “hand of man hath done” (i.e. work of art).

Because of this unique quality, says Paul., she keeps it “Lonely, apart” and Leon. should prepare himself to life imitated (“mock’d”) as exactly as sleep mocks death. [The statue has been onstage from the opening of the scene but concealed – perhaps by being simply draped with a cloth but more usually within some sort of screened, curtained area, possibly on a slightly raised dais or within a curtained alcove such as the Globe’s ‘inner stage’ – perhaps even ‘recumbent on a tomb’ (NC, p. 241)...?]

The ‘curtain’ is drawn back to reveal the statue and Paul. is gratified by the onlookers’ silence which shows their amazement (“wonder”). She invites Leon. to speak, asking with deliberate understatement: “Comes it not something near?”

Leon. confesses it is exactly her stance/posture when alive – and, addressing the statue, says that he would believe the statue was Her. if it were to rebuke him, as he believes she ought to (i.e. for treating her so

¹ N.B. The honour that Queen Elizabeth bestowed on subjects when she visited them as part of her annual summer ‘Progresses’ was offset by the enormous expense and ‘trouble’ that the subject incurred in accommodating and entertaining the queen and her very substantial retinue which often numbered over a hundred. More information can be found at the web site: https://www.just-shakespeare.co.uk/shakespeares-dysfunctional-families.html. See the ‘Troublesome Monarchs’ section of the ‘Shakespeare’s Dysfunctional Families Lecture’ file.
cruelly), but the statue standing silent is truly like her because it doesn’t do so since she was as gentle as a baby and as divine mercy (26-27);

Nevertheless, he observes to Paul. that Her. was not as “wrinkled, nothing/ So aged” as the statue seems;

Paul. argues that this is further evidence of the sculptor’s skill/genius – to have ‘made her’ as she would be “now”, after sixteen years.

[Clearly this episode, while contributing to the eternal Renaissance Art vs Nature debate – only serves to complicate it further.]

Leon. is again moved to grieve about what “might” have been, considering the “good comfort” that he might now have received from her, even though the sculptor has captured the “majesty” of the living Her. “when first I woo’d her” (36);

Indeed, the stone rebukes him for being more unfeeling than the stone itself – i.e. unfeeling in his cruelty towards the living Her.; in wonder he calls it a “royal piece” ['piece' often means ‘masterpiece’ in such a context];

The sculpture’s “majesty” has a “magic” that has not only “My evils conjur’d to [my] remembrance” but also struck Per. motionless with wonder as if it has stolen her life essence (“took the spirits”, 41).

[OED: admiring, v, 1. a. To feel or express wonder, astonishment, or surprise; to marvel. †(a) intransitive. Without construction. Obsolete.]

Per. speaks for the first time in the scene, asking permission of the statue to kiss its hand and, kneeling, to “implore its blessing”. At the same time she acknowledges an incongruity (a blasphemy...?) in such a request: “And do not say ‘tis superstition”. [Arden3. ‘Kneeling and kissing a parent’s hand indicated filial love and obedience. However, to do this to a statue would be, to Protestant eyes, popish idolatry ... in particular the veneration of the Virgin Mary’ (p.340). All of my texts have “Lady...” – the capital would normally be used of the Virgin.]

At the same time, alluding to the fact that her mother’s life ended “when I but began” asks for “that hand of your to kiss”.

As she reaches out to touch the statue’s hand, however, Paul. intervenes to prevent her, claiming that “colour’s/ Not dry” (48).

Cam. addresses Leon., urging that his grief was “too sore laid on” – he has wept so many tears that not even sixteen years of winter winds and
summer heat could **dry** them [The image (emboldened here) is probably prompted by the idea of the paint on the statue not being dry.]; just as scarcely any joy can live so long, no sorrow can last sixteen years.

Pol., in a gesture of **self-sacrifice**, takes upon himself the causal role in the tragedy: “Let him that was the **cause**...” (i.e. Pol. himself), proposing that he should himself take on “so much grief from you as he/ Will piece up (parcel up) in himself”. [‘By accepting responsibility for Leon.’s suffering, Pol. demonstrates the magnanimity mandated by ideal friendship in Shakespeare’s time’ (Arden3, p. 243).]:

Paul., seeing Leon. so deeply moved, says she would not have revealed the statue to him, had she imagined that he would be so troubled by it [At the same time, she asserts her personal agency with the “I ... my ... I’d...” construction and with “for the stone is mine”]. She moves as if to close the curtain again but is urged not to do so – the fact that Leon.’s half-line completes the line begun by Paul. suggests an eagerness/quickness on his part which interrupts her intended action.

Even as Paul. makes as if to shield Leon’s eyes from the sight of the statue she tempts his “fancy” (60) to speculate that “it moves”. [My word ‘tempts’ is appropriate, I think, since there are overtones of idolatry, even blasphemy, in the notion of a statue ‘moving’].

Leon. takes up the suggestion by dwelling on the mastery of the sculptor, inviting Pol. to confirm his own sense of the statue’s
corporeality: “Would you not deem it breath’d?/ and that those veins/ Did verily bear blood? [We recall that in MoV Bassanio, having correctly chosen the lead casket, expresses his own sense of wonder by alluding to the skill of the limner of Portia’s miniature portrait.];

Pol. shares this potential blasphemy by endorsing Leon.’s sentiments: “Masterly done:/ The very life seems warm upon her lip” – echoed by Leon’s oxymoronic “The fixture of her eye has motion in’t” so that they are deluded (“mock’d”) with art [Again the Art vs Nature debate is suggested];

Again Paul., seeing that Leon. is “so far transported that/ He’ll think anon it lives” (69-70) makes to draw the curtain but again her half-line is completed by Leon’s urgency as he pleads with Paul., handing direct agency to her: “Make me think so twenty years together!” (i.e. uninterrupted) and again flirting blasphemy as he expresses a preference for “The pleasure” of madness rather than “The settled senses of the world”.

Incrementally, Paul. inches towards her main purpose, always urging Leon. to strive for further immersion in the fantasy of a ‘living statue’: “I could afflict you farther”, fully aware of the contradiction in the notion of a willing ‘affliction’;

But again it is a paradox to which Leon. instantly responds in kind, confessing that “this affliction has a taste as sweet/ As any cordial comfort” and speaking of “an air that comes from her”, of the sculptor’s chisel that can “cut breath” and, ultimately making to “kiss her” [Notice that since line 66 (“…warm upon her lip…”) Leon. has referred to the statue as ‘her’ whereas Paul. has consistently maintained ‘it’].

Again Paul. protests the newness of the statue’s paint (81-83) and seems anxious to “draw the curtain” while Leon. & Per. seem themselves inclined to turn to stone in their longing to “Stand by, a looker on”.

Seeing that her visitors are virtually transfixed by the statue Paul. on the one hand delivers an ultimatum – either to “Quit presently (immediately) the chapel” or to intensify still further the dichotomy between reality and unreality/fantasy as she offers – tempts, even – with

2 Leontes’ position now seems to parallel the myth of Pygmalion and Galatea.
the prospect of “more amazement”: “If you can behold it, / I’ll make the statue move indeed; descend,/ And take you by the hand”;

At the same time, she acknowledges the perilous knife-edge she treads between and artifice and sorcery or witchcraft: “But then you’ll think/ (Which I protest against) I am assisted/ By wicked powers”.

Twice Leon. iterates, as if hypnotised: “I am content ... I am content” (92-93) and progressing from “to look -> to hear -> To make her speak” (92-94).

Paul. then utters what are surely the most transformative – magical, even – words of the play:

“It is requir’d/ You do awake your faith” – having just alluded to matters “wicked” and now “unlawful” – she employs their antonym: “faith” – it means ‘trust’, of course, the trust or faith that was lacking when Leon. ‘wickedly’ believed that Her. was false – but it also combines with notions of religious belief, of religious faith;

It is a trust that is “requir’d” – i.e. commanded/demanded – a trust so complete that its total spiritual immersion that (perhaps?) may be likened to a mystical ‘baptism’ – to deny to do so, it is also ‘required’: “let them depart” (97):

[If we had been completing the course under normal circumstances I had intended – in Stratford, at least, and time permitting – to show this final scene on the dvd before discussing it in detail.]

Paul. now assumes an active role, calling for “Music...” [Music is invariably the accompaniment to Prospero’s enchantments in _The Tempest_.]. In effect she has become a ‘conjurer’ as she commands “be stone no more; approach;/ Strike all that look upon with marvel”. [The word ‘strike’ also implies some supra-human power or influence – e.g. _MND_, 4.1: Titania, music call; and strike more dead/ Than common sleep of all these five the sense.]

Paul. says that she will fill up Her.’s grave since it will no more be needed.

[cont.]
However, [NC, p. 246] She instructs Her. to leave to death the “numbness” of her statue role, since she is redeemed/saved by “Dear life” (103) and draws the onlookers’ attention to the fact that “she stirs”.

The onlookers are naturally stunned, startled, perhaps, into an instinctive step backwards (though not Leon...?), fearful that such conjuring is the result of devilish powers – but Paul. reassures them that the ‘statue’s’ behaviour is “lawful” and Paul.’s own actions “holy”. [Shakespeare is also careful to reassure his daughter, Miranda (and the audience) that the nature of Prospero’s magic is ‘white’ rather than ‘black’: “There's no harm done ... No harm” (Tempest, 1.2)].

Hitherto Paul. has mainly addressed all of those assembled in her ‘chapel’ – but now she addresses Leon. personally, urging him not to “shun her” until she dies “again” [Paul. even now reminds Leon. that his crime of irrational jealousy has ‘killed’ her already, sixteen years earlier].

Clearly, Leon. is hesitant and needs to be gently prompted to action by Paul.: he had wooed Her. eagerly “When she was young” – does Her. now have to do the wooing...? (108-109);

Leon.’s response “O, she’s warm” can be the most moving moment of the play as Her.’s living humanity is finally appreciated and prompts the response: “If this be magic, let it be an art/ Lawful as eating”;

Leon. & Her. embrace, a deeply tender, emotional moment which requires no words from them while onlookers pose the questions that, as yet, remain to be answered (113-15).
115-18 Paul. deliberately confuses the relationship between myth & reality: ‘If what you are witnessing were related to you it would provoke laughter as being merely “Like an old tale” – i.e. it may be ‘like’ an old tale but it isn’t one, since “it appears she lives” – i.e. ‘it appears’ – you can see with your own eyes that it is ‘real’ and ‘true’;

At the same time, Paul.’s response demands that we examine the very nature of theatrical ‘truth’ – theatre can convey ‘truth’ through the medium of falseness or deception in a transaction between players and audience by which both they and we ‘do awake our faith’ to take what is represented on the stage as ‘real’ in theatrical terms – the fabled ‘willing suspension of disbelief’.

Now is the time for daughter to be reunited with her mother – Paul. ‘directing’ a tableau as Per. is invited to “kneel/ And pray your mother’s blessing” – again ‘pray’ and ‘blessing’ bestow a quasi-religious quality upon the reunion; the tableau may even invoke a kind echo of religious images of the holy family...

Paul. stakes her own claim to some measure of ‘ownership’ of this reunion with “Our Perdita is found” (121) a form of words that recalls the Oracle’s decree that “the king shall live without an heir, if that which is lost be not found” (3.2.134-36);

Her.’s first words appropriate invoke “You gods...” (121) – again a pagan context is superimposed upon the Christian framework suggested previously with a plea that “from your sacred vials [you] pour your graces/ Upon my daughter’s head!”

Then flows a torrent of the most natural of questions: “Where ...? where ...? how ...?” The word “preserved” is used twice: of Per.’s preservation – and of Her.’s own: “I have preserved/ Myself to see the issue” (‘issue’ = both the outcome of the Oracle’s prophesy AND ‘offspring’),
having learned from Paul. that the Oracle “Gave hope ...” (i.e. the hope contained in the Oracle’s “if ... lost ... found”):

Paul. still has an authoritative presence, declaring “There’s time enough for that”. She understands that their present/immediate joy should not be tempered at this time with their individual stories.

Having wrought this reunion and instructed that their jubilation they share with (“Partake to”) every one Paul. identifies her own separateness, issuing a lament in which she represents herself as “an old turtle” – the turtle dove was emblematic of fidelity – who will retire to a desolate place where she will grieve for her “mate” (i.e. Antigonus – killed by the bear) until her death [Note the echo of the “found ... lost” motif (134-35)];

It is Leon. who breaks this solemn mood with “O, peace, Paulina!” – in other words: “O, do be quiet, Paulina!” – it is a moment that usually prompts the laughter of relief in the audience.

Nevertheless, his intervention imposes balance and equilibrium to another strand of the plot: just as “lost” was offset by “found”; now, just as Paul. has “found” his wife it is only fitting that he should now find a husband for Pauline (“by my consent”, 136) and so avert the melancholy end that she has just foreseen for herself.

To our surprise (and hers...!) it is revealed that the match has already been arranged between them (i.e. Leon. & Paul.) with solemn promises (“vows”, 138). There is clearly an irony in the fact that having totally ‘stage manged’ the reunion of Leon., Her., & Per. Paul. she should have no say in choosing a husband for herself:

[The unlikeliness of this particular detail of plotting in the interests of the comedic tradition that ‘all must have husbands/wives’ can be given a special appositeness by the theatrical convention that the parts of Camillo and Antigonus are often ‘doubled’ – i.e. the same actor]
playing both parts. This means that at the end of the play Paul. is, indeed, going to marry her ‘husband’ since the husband consumed by the bear is ‘reborn’ in the husband that is Camillo, **played by the same actor**. Thus another strand of restitution is effected.

Leon. acknowledges that Paul. has “found” his wife – and he has spoken many prayers over the place he believed to be her grave, though he has still to learn the details of Her.’s preservation;

as for Camillo, whose “mind” (in respect of his feelings about Paul.) Leon. he is already aware – Leon. knows that he will not need to look far to find Paul. “An honourable husband” (143).

With acknowledgements to Paul.’s “worth and honesty” Cam. is instructed to “take her by the hand”, their union being “justified” (i.e. affirmed) “By us, a pair of kings”. [It is a phrase that effectively reunites the former ‘brotherly’ affection between Leon. & Pol. – and also acknowledges the service that Cam. has given to Pol. during his sixteen years in Bohemia.]

“What! Look upon my brother” is addressed (in most editions)

[To Hermione]

introduced to her “son-in-law”, Flor. as “son unto the king” who is by this time “troth-plight” to Her. [This off-stage ceremony formalises the hand-fasting that Pol. interrupted in 4.4].

Paul. is fittingly asked to “Lead us from hence” [They are, after all in her house so Leon. has acknowledged the etiquette of hospitality by deferring to their hostess.] and the play ends with the customary prospect of all of characters learning the many twists and turns of plot that have brought them all to this point. [Of course, only we, the audience, are in full command of the tale’s many complications.]

[Cont. below]
Having reached this point you might find the following both interesting and instructive. It offers an interesting perspective on the demands made on the boy actors in Shakespeare’s time.

It was sent to me by Stella in the Warwick group so I’ll hand over to her. *Thank you, Stella:*

*From Stella:* This is the poem I mentioned which I heard performed by Henry Goodman at a recital once. The actress next to him became the listening boy, wide-eyed with dread at the prospect!

**Instructions to an actor**

by Edwin Morgan

Now, boy, remember this is the great scene.  
You’ll stand on a pedestal behind a curtain,  
the curtain will be drawn, and then you don’t move  
for eighty lines; don’t move, don’t speak, don’t breathe.  
I’ll stun them all out there, I’ll scare them,  
make them weep, but it depends on you.  
I warn you eighty lines is a long time,  
but you don’t breathe, you’re dead,  
you’re a dead queen, a statue,  
you’re dead as stone, new-carved,  
new-painted and the paint not dry.  
- we’ll get some red to keep your lip shining-  
and you’re a mature woman, you’ve got dignity,  
some beauty still in middle age, and  
you’re kind and true, but you’re dead,  
your husband thinks you’re dead,  
the audience thinks you’re dead,  
and you don’t breathe, boy, I say  
you don’t even blink for eighty lines,  
if you blink you’re out!  
Fix your eye on something and keep watching it.  
Practise when you get home. It can be done.  
And you move at last – music’s the cue.  
When you hear a mysterious solemn jangle  
of instruments, make yourself ready.  
Five lines more, you can lift a hand.  
It may tingle a bit, but lift it -  
slow, slow -  
O this is where I hit them  
right between the eyes, I’ve got them now -  
I’m making the dead walk -
you move a foot, slow, steady, down,
you guard your balance in case you’re stiff,
you move, you step down, down from the pedestal,
control your skirt with one hand, the other hand
you now hold out -
O this will melt their hearts if nothing does -
to your husband who wronged you long ago
and hesitates in amazement
to believe you are alive.
Finally he embraces you, and there’s nothing
I can give you to say, boy,
but you must show that you have forgiven him.
 Forgiveness, that’s the thing. It’s like a second life.
I know you can do it. - Right then, shall we try?