PERDITA'S INVOLUNTARY GENTILITY IN SHAKESPEARE'S *THE WINTER'S TALE*

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PREFACE

The theme of gentility is one of the most important themes of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*, which critics, to my knowledge, have failed to explore. My thesis is an examination of Perdita's gentility according to the criteria by which all of Shakespeare's gentles are distinquished from his non-gentles.

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PERDITA'S INVOLUNTARY GENTILITY IN SHAKESPEARE'S *THE WINTER'S TALE*

The Winter's Tale, like many other Shakespearean plays, reveals Shakespeare's tendency of distinguishing between gentles and non-gentles.[1] Gentles are those who, technically speaking, possess coats of arms and the right to bear arms. This fact is evident in *The Taming of the Shrew* (II.i.222) when Katherina says to Petruchio, "And if no gentleman, why then no arms."[2] More generally, to be gentle is to possess good blood and the numerous favorable characteristics that good blood bestows upon its possessors. Good blood is associated, in Shakespeare's plays, with an abundance of blood and choler, which aids in vanquishing the enemy. It is red, hot, thin, fast-flowing, and sweet-tasting and exempts its possessor from fatigue, whereas thick blood--low in quantity, of lowered heat, phlegmatic, and melancholic--tends to remove feelings of pity and kindliness. Non-gentles, possessing thick blood, have emotions of slighter intensity and diminished range. On the lower side of the dividing line that is drawn very tautly by Shakespeare, there are the non-gentles, who possess neither coats of arms nor the status of being squires, to cite the lowest of the

armigeral classes. To be non-gentle in a Shakespearean play is to be the carrier of blood that is notably melancholic in the Galenic sense, heavy with phlegm, and to own a genealogy largely unknown and supposedly stained with much bastardy.

Gentles in Shakespeare's plays are commonly very conscious of the quality of their blood and speak of it often, and others speak of it, whereas non-gentles do not mention their blood, and others disparage it. When Camillo warns Polixenes of Leontes' fatal suspicion towards him, Polixenes says, "O, then my best blood turn / To an infected jelly, and my name / Be yoked with his that did betray the Best!" (I.ii.417-19). Polixenes' phrase "my best blood " imports all the gentlemanly qualities his blood provides him. In similar fashion Perdita, in praising Florizel, refers to his faith, love, honesty, and his other good qualities by mentioning his blood: "O, Doricles, / Your praises are too large. But that your youth, / And the true blood which peeps so fairly through't, / Do plainly give you out an unstain'd shepherd . . ." (IV.iv.146-49). Good blood is obviously the sign, as well as the container and transmitter, of human excellence.

Surprisingly, critics seem to have ignored the treatment of the theme of gentility in _The Winter's Tale_. J. H. P. Pafford, for instance, considers reconciliation, forgiveness, mercy, restoration, reunion, time, growth, and decay as the major themes of this play.[3] Andrew J.

Solomon notices in The Winter's Tale Shakespeare's concern with "the uses and abuses of power, the creative use of suffering, and with grace, love, faith, and hope."[4] One may speculate that critics have refused to explicate this obvious theme of class-based excellence and depravity because of their unwillingness to associate the name of Shakespeare with the old order of class and privilege. Robert Browning, for example, in "The Lost Leader" states that "Shakespeare was of us,"[5] implying that Shakespeare was a liberal and perhaps an egalitarian. For this reason I shall primarily examine Perdita's gentility according to the criteria that distinguish Shakespeare's gentles and then make references to other gentle characters in Shakespearean plays accordingly to show that for Shakespeare gentility takes its origin from blood. The following are the qualities that Shakespeare's gentles enjoy: an appearance of distinction, the ability to learn rapidly, courage, the power to bear affliction patiently, the capacity to own a wider range of emotion than the peasantry enjoy, and the ability to rationally control their passions with the single exception of mutual love at first sight. Thus Perdita, though reared in a pastoral environment by a shepherd, along with the Clown and shepherdesses like Mopsa and Dorcas, is singled out by her rare beauty, accomplishments, and her elevated demeanour. She embodies all the characteristics of the gentles proper to women and can be said to be gentle

because she is instinctively perceived by Florizel to be gentle and casually said by Polixenes to be outwardly superior to all her associates. Primarily she is gentle by descent from gentle parents, particularly her father.

Perdita's high blood invests her with beauty that appears in very early infancy. At the very instant that the Shepherd finds her, he utters the words "A boy or a child, I wonder? / A pretty one; a very pretty one" (III. iii.69-70). Moreover, everyone wonders at finding such beauty in a rustic house. When Polixenes is curious to discover Florizel's cause of frequenting "the house of a most homely shepherd," Camillo answers him: "I have heard, Sir, of such a man, who has a daughter of most rare note. The report of her is extended more than can be thought to begin from such a cottage" (IV.ii.41-43). Visiting the Shepherd's house, Polixenes notices Perdita's improbable beauty and noble attitudes in such a cottage: "This is the prettiest low-born lass that ever / Ran on the greensward. Nothing she does or seems / But smacks of something greater than herself, / Too noble for this place" (IV.iv.156-59). Pafford expands upon this greatness: "She is chiefly important in her personification of virtuous charm, grace, and beauty. Her very appearance captivates young and old, and throughout the play her grace and loveliness are felt to be a remarkable power."[6] William J. Rolfe thinks that "the impression of her perfect beauty and airy elegance of demeanour is conveyed

in two exquisite passages [uttered by Florizel]."[7]

Florizel is indeed fascinated by Perdita's manners:

> What you do
> Still betters what is done. When you speak, sweet,
> I'd have you do it ever. When you sing,
> I'd have you buy and sell so; so give alms,
> Pray so; and for the ord'ring your affairs,
> To sing them too. When you do dance, I wish you
> A wave o' the sea, that you might ever do
> Nothing but that; move still, still so,
> And own no other function.
> (IV.iv.135-43)

Again, Florizel acknowledges Perdita's beauty--that of her hands--in hyperbolical terms:

> I take thy hand--this hand,
> As soft as dove's down and as white as it,
> Or Ethiopian's tooth, or the fann'd snow that's bolted
> By th' northern blasts twice over.
> (IV.iv.351-54)

Perdita's beauty and elegance are reported to Paulina by a servant when Florizel and Perdita are seeking refuge in Sicilia: "Women will love her that she is a woman / More worth than any man; men, that she is / The rarest of all women" (V.i.110-12). Patricia Southard Gourlay believes that, on her arrival at Leontes' Court, Perdita is described in "quasi-religious terms":[8]

> This is a creature
> Would she begin a sect, might quench the zeal
> Of all professors else, make proselytes
> Of who she but bid follow.
> (V.i.106-109)

This passage indicates that Perdita's extreme beauty makes her beholders truly devout. In respect to beauty as a characteristic of gentles, one may exemplify Marina's remark in Pericles to Leonine: "You are well-favoured,

and your looks foreshow / You have a gentle heart" (IV.i. 86-87). Beauty is in Shakespeare's plays a genetic endowment. "Beauty breedeth beauty" says Venus in Venus and Adonis (1.167). Theseus utters accepted doctrine in A Midsummer Night's Dream in advising Hermia: "To you your father should be as a god: / One that compos'd your beauties" (I.i.48).

Unlike gentles, non-gentles in Shakespearean plays are often ugly. In The Tempest "Foreheads villanous low" (IV.i.246) implies that the gentlemanly hairline as with Shakespeare himself will begin well above the eyes. Henry VI, Part II (IV.x.46-52) tells us that the peasant leader of the rebellion, Jack Cade, has a poorly composed body, which the gentleman Iden invidiously contrasts with his own. The gentle Rosalind, in As You Like It, tells the plebeian Phebe, "'Tis such fools as you / That makes the world full of ill-favour'd children" (III.v.52-53). In Henry V when the King turns to the base-borns of his expeditionary force, he says, "And you good yeomen / Whose limbs were made in England, show us here / The mettle of your pasture" (III.i.25-27). The imagery here, addressed directly to "men of grosser blood," suggests that Shakespeare visualizes Henry's common soldiers as being large and solid of figure, but without good lines. They are strong but "gross."

Perdita is like other Shakespearean gentles in learning ability. She surprises us by her knowledge of

flowers. She discusses the nature of rosemary, rue, gillyvors, hot lavenders, mints, savory, marigold, and, marjoram and knows to which season of year they belong and, thus, combines their time of blooming with the state of Polixenes' age, saying, "These are flow'rs / Of middle summer, and I think they are given / To men of middle age" (IV.iv.107-08). She wishes to give spring flowers to Florizel and to the young shepherdesses to match their "time of day." As Irene G. Dash points out, in Perdita's analogy "nature, the flowers, the seasons, and man's relationship to them are intertwined."[9] Dash's assertion suggests that Perdita's flowers are symbolic and carry the connotations of man's age and feeling:

> 'Rosemary and rue' sustain man through the cold and barren winter; marigolds, summer flowers, parallel his middle age, a period that speeds by consumed in sleepy forgetfulness, as do the hours between dusk and dawn. Like the flowers going to bed with the sun, man, as the youthful edge of middle age, rises at daybreak weeping for the elusive, lost years.[10]

Thus considered, Perdita's metaphorical treatment of flowers--combining youth with spring flowers and middle age with midsummer flowers--is improbably the production of the mind of an uneducated shepherdess of sixteen. Perhaps more fascinating is Perdita's knowledge of classical mythology. She alludes to the myth of Proserpina and combines the sweetness of violets with the "lids of Juno's eyes" and with "the breath of Cytherea" (IV.iv.121-22). She refers to pale primroses as unmarried

maids who fail to see the visage of Phoebus (presumably a lover or husband). Perdita seems to have received her knowledge of classical mythology from Florizel, who shows some understanding of this subject.

In addition to her acquaintance with classical mythology, Perdita's intuitive knowledge deserves attention: she has the ability to differentiate between true and false or low and high blood as instanced in her recognition of Florizel's "true blood" (IV.iv.146-49). Besides, she intuitively understands that Florizel's father will be opposed to his son's marriage to a base-born shepherdess, and she mentally prepares herself for disappointment in this matter. When the King rebukes his son for presuming to marry without his consent, she shows the instinctive good sense of refraining from quoting the King's theory as antithetical to his present behavior. Polixenes' theory reads thus:

> We marry
> A gentler scion to the wildest stock
> And make conceive a bark of baser kind
> By bud of nobler race. This is an art
> Which does mend nature--change it rather; but
> The art itself is nature.
> (IV.iv.92ff)

Polixenes' anger at Florizel's mingling with the low-born Perdita is paradoxical to his own theory, which holds that from marriage of a base-born with a gentle-born, there is produced a noble offspring. One might also note that Perdita shows good sense in never condescending to her foster-father, the Shepherd, or to her supposed

brother, the Clown: their behavior at times could elicit satirical or censorious comment from her, but she declines to indulge such speech. She neither alienates her family nor the King or his counsellor Camillo. Additionally, Perdita is not dazzled by rank. The old Shepherd cringes before royalty, but she does not; she has the intuitive knowledge of how to behave in all situations. Perdita is also totally free from the delusion entertained by her foster-father and foster-brother that the wearing of an elaborate costume will "gentle" anyone's condition. Thus, we understand it to be most unlikely that Perdita would endorse her foster-brother's delusion that her marriage to Florizel "gentles" his condition.

Besides Perdita, there are other gentles in Shakespearean plays who are fast learners, of whom Prince Hal is the most notable. The Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Ely are unable to account for the speed and the thoroughness by which Henry the Fifth has made himself a learned man. No one has ever seen Henry the Fifth or the earlier Prince Hal with a book in his hands, and the reader is unaware of his ever having had a tutor in any subject. As the Archbishop says, "Never was such a scholar made" (I.i.32). Another fast learner is the gentle Posthumus in _Cymbeline_, of whom one of the court gentlemen says,

> The King he takes the babe
> Into his protection, calls him Posthumus Leonatus,
> Breeds him and makes him of his bed chamber,

> Puts to him all the learnings that his time
> Could make him the receiver of, which he took,
> As we do air, fast as 'twas
> Minist'red. . . .
>
> (I.i.40-45)

Arviragus and Guiderius in Cymbeline are endowed with intuitive knowledge. They assume the disguised Imogen to be their brother in the very first moment they encounter her (III.vi.71). In The Tempest Miranda is also an epitome of fast learning: she appraises Ferdinand's worth without knowing anything about him. One finds Orlando in As You Like It described as "gentle, never schooled, and yet learned" (I.i.172-73). He knows how to behave himself well in strange situations despite the fact that he has not been educated. As Castiglione says in The Book of The Courtier, "Some there are borne endowed with such graces, that they seem not to have been borne, but rather facioned with the verye hand of some God, and abounde in all goodnesse both of bodye and mynde."[11]

Gentles in Shakespeare's plays are usually depicted as courageous. Perdita, of course, is no exception to this rule. When Polixenes threatens Florizel and the Shepherd and insults Perdita for engaging in a presumptuous amour with his royal son, Perdita shows her courage in a lofty, metaphorical language far from being the speech of a young girl: (After Polixenes exits, of course.)

> Even here undone!
> I was not much afeared; for once or twice
> I was about to speak, and tell him plainly

> The self same sun that shines upon his court
> Hides not his visage from our cottage, but
> Looks on alike.
>
> (IV.iv.431-36)

The phrase "I was not much afeared" is outstanding, for it expresses Perdita's courage and self-confidence in what she is; she is not intimidated by seeing the King in anger and is so firm that she neither gives way to weeping nor condemns herself for her ungrounded love. And though she is in a difficult situation, her answer is cautious, brave, and wise, which obliquely implies that Polixenes, in all his royal glory, is not more powerful than nature or God, whose kindness spreads over poor and rich. Perdita simply expresses her contempt for Polixenes' worldly pride, and this occasion, better than any other time, shows the similarity between her character and that of her mother, Hermione. When condemned to prison, Hermione shows no sign of anger but very firmly endures Leontes' fatal suspicion, not even giving way to weeping or sighing when in a courageous tone she, thus, addresses the lords:

> Do not weep, good fools;
> There is no cause. When you shall know your mistress
> Has deserv'd prison, then abound in tears
> As I come out. This action I now go on
> Is for my better grace. Adieu my lord.
>
> (II.i.118-22)

Perdita's risking the journey to Sicilia with Florizel is another aspect of her courage; she is aware of the difficulties they may meet on their way, yet such obstacles cannot stop her. She also well remembers

Polixenes' threat, but not even that prevents her from venturing the trip. The evidence that courage is synonymous with gentility in Shakespeare's plays may be seen when the Bishop of Ely thus incites Henry the Fifth: "The blood and courage that renowned them /[your ancestors]/ / Runs in your veins" (I.ii.118-19). One might observe that the royalty ideally possess more courage than simple gentry. For example, Old Morgan in *Cymbeline* is unquestionably a gentleman and a patriot but the mountain princes, Guiderius and Arviragus, are much more eager to take on the Roman army. And Guiderius is much less timid than Old Morgan about the decapitation of Cloten. Nevertheless, merely to affirm that one was "a gentleman of blood" was to imply, among other things, that one was a man of courage (cf. *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, III.i.121).

Not surprisingly, non-gentles in Shakespearean plays are marked by fearfulness. The point to observe is that, physiologically, they lack heat and blood of good quality and are possessed of excessive Galenic melancholy and phlegm. York says in *Henry VI, Part II*, "Let pale-faced fear keep with the mean-born man / And find no harbour in a royal heart" (III.i.335-36). "The hedge-born swain" is congenitally possessed of "fear and cold heart" (*Henry VI, Part I*, IV.i.43). In *The Winter's Tale*, upon Polixenes' revelation of his true identity to Florizel, Perdita, and the Shepherd, Perdita's firmness in patience and fearlessness becomes apparent (IV.iv.431-36). The Shepherd, an

epitome of fear and cold-heartedness, on this occasion indulges in the most cowardly language--indicative of his plebeian, melancholic blood:

> I cannot speak nor think,
> Nor dare to know that which I know. [To Florizel] O
> Sir,
> You have undone a man of fourscore three,
> That thought to fill his grave in quiet; yea,
> To die upon the bed my father died,
> To lie close by his honest bones; but now
> Some hangman must put on my shroud and lay me
> Where no priest shovels in dust. [To Perdita] O
> cursed wretch,
> That knew'st this was the prince and wouldst adventure
> To mingle faith with him!--Undone! undone!
> If I might die within this hour, I have liv'd
> To die when I desire.
>
> (IV.iv.442-52)

The Shepherd not only gives rein to excessive anger, but also degrades Perdita before all the company in addressing her as the "cursed wretch." His language shows lack of restraint and indicates thoughtlessness. Moreover, Perdita's foster-brother, the Clown, by refusing to save Antigonus in the bear attack, may serve as another example of Shakespeare's non-gentles who lack courage. The Clown's own description of the bear attack may give us a better image of his passivity:

> To see how the bear tore out his shoulder bone; how he cried to me for help and said his name was Antigonus, a noble man! But to make an end of the ship--to see how the sea flapdragon'd it; but first, how the poor souls roared, and the sea mock'd them; and how the poor gentleman roared, and the bear mock'd him, both roaring louder than the sea or weather.
>
> (IV.i.91-97)

The Clown clearly says here that Antigonus cried out to

him for help but that he was too timid to act. He lacks blood and choler, and on that physiological account he is a poltroon.

Shakespeare's gentles are also endowed with the quality of bearing affliction patiently. When Polixenes reveals himself to Florizel and displays his excessive anger to him and Perdita, we may imagine Perdita listening silently mindful of the outcome. Her fortitude is shown in what she says to Florizel:

> Will't please you, sir, be gone?
> I told you what would come of this. Beseech you
> Of your own state take care. This dream of mine--
> Being now awake, I'll quench it no inch farther,
> But milk my ewes and weep.
>
> (IV.iv.436-40)

This passage signifies Perdita's extreme patience, for it suggests she is prepared to bear all the disadvantages of this love alone without considering Florizel's part in the matter. S. L. Bethell holds that "She is not dazzled by rank; and she is prepared to bid her lover go, to waken from her dream in which she had never, like Leontes, lost hold upon reality."[12] Furthermore, Perdita's endurance of the hard conditions of life is manifested in her answer to Camillo, who tells her, "Prosperity's the very bond of love, / Whose fresh complexion and whose heart together / Affliction alters" (IV.iv.563-65). Perdita answers, "One of these is true. / I think affliction may subdue the cheek, / But not take in the mind" (IV.iv.565-67). Grief, therefore, will not afflict

the wise man's mind. Besides Perdita, there are other gentle characters in Shakespearean plays who are known for patience and resistance against life's discomforts: Duke Senior in As You Like It mirrors many others in Shakespeare's plays in his extreme patience against affliction. Coriolanus' speech to his mother at the time of his farewell is significant for the value it places upon powerful endurance against "fortune's blows":

> Come, leave your tears. A brief farewell. The beast
> With many heads butts me away. Nay, mother
> Where is your ancient courage? You were us'd
> To say extremities was the trier of spirits;
> That common chances common men could bear;
> That when the sea was calm, all boats alike
> Show'd mastership in floating; fortune's blows
> When most struck home, being gentle wounded craves
> A noble cunning. You were us'd to load me
> With precepts that would make invincible
> The heart that conn'd them.
>
> (Coriolanus, IV.i.7-9)

Coriolanus here suggests that it is no wonder that man endures life well in its happy moments; he who has endurance in the most disastrous situations possesses indeed a gentle heart. Talbot in Henry VI, Part I also connects courage and resistance against distress with "gentle blood":

> Knights of the Garter were of noble birth,
> Valiant and virtuous, full of haughty courage,
> Such as were grown to credit by the wars;
> Not fearing death nor shrinking for distress,
> But always resolute in most extremes.
> He then that is not furnish'd in this sort
> Doth but usurp the sacred name of knight,
> Profaning this most honourable order,
> And should (if I were worthy to be judge)
> Be quite degraded, like a hedge-born swain
> That does presume to boast of gentle blood.
>
> (IV.i.34-44)

Talbot associates knighthood with "haughty courage" and resolution in "most extremes" and believes that the knights lacking these qualities have cunningly achieved their rank.

Shakespeare's gentles also enjoy a wider range of emotion than peasantry. For Perdita and Florizel, love carries its full meaning. Bethell assures us that "the love of Florizel and Perdita is characterized by a balance of strong sensuality and perfect chastity--it is love of body and soul, neither fleshly lust nor thinly spiritual but involving the whole personality."[13] Bethell also comments on Florizel's words--"So turtles pair, that never mean to part" (IV.iv.155-56)--by saying that "frankness and faith characterize the love of Florizel and Perdita; mutual love, clear-eyed and unshakable."[14] Peter Lindenbaum describes Perdita's and Hermione's similarity in their attitude toward sexual love. He admits that Perdita's love is a life-giving force:

> The most important similarity between Perdita and Hermione, though, is their attitude toward sexual love. Hermione's willingness to acknowledge being a devil in the definition of the fall that Polixenes provides in I.ii implies that she accepts sexual love as a good and natural practice for man. Perdita brings back to the earth not only spring for Leontes, but that attitude toward sexual love as well. She is the repository of Hermione's thoughts in the next generation, and, while thoroughly chaste and modest, she is particularly frank and open about her sexual desires. And they are desires which exist not in a timeless world but in a time-governed one. It is the insistence on time passing and on the full acceptance of sexual love which must differentiate Perdita's pastoral vision from Polixenes' vision of this

> "Eden" earlier in the play. Whereas Polixenes sought to stop time and be free of sexual passion, Perdita fully accepts the first and rejoices in the second.[15]

Shakespearean non-gentles are not distinguished by emotional range. The opposite of Florizel's and Perdita's love is the gross and trivial relationship of the Clown and Mopsa, which does not have anything remarkable about it. One gathers that no love has ever existed between them, for there is no expression of love in their relationship. It seems that Mopsa only depends on the Clown for buying her certain "ribbons and gloves" (IV.iv.230). Besides, one might notice that the Clown, on meeting the two Kings and Florizel, states, "We wept, and there was the first gentleman-like tears that we shed" (V.ii.135-36). But neither the Clown nor his father is given to weeping, an emotion that in Shakespearean plays is almost completely reserved for gentles. Besides, one would on no account expect either the Clown or the Old Shepherd or Mopsa or Autolycus to die of a broken heart, a death that Shakespeare reserves exclusively for gentles--Gloucester, King Lear, Enobarbus, Mamillius, and the father of Posthumus (Sicilius Leonatus). In _All's Well That Ends Well_, one notices that Parolles says in soliloquy, "If My heart were great, / 'Twould burst at this" (IV.iii.303-04); it seems that sensible hearts feel far more deeply. A deficiency in blood is seemingly the reason why non-gentles do not die of broken hearts.

Another quality that separates gentles from non-gentles in Shakespeare's plays is their rational control of the passions. The greater the degree of reasonable conduct, the better one's blood. This conception is summarized in Hermione's and Perdita's wise reactions to the disastrous situations they are placed in. What Henry N. Hudson expresses about Hermione's conduct in the court very properly suits Perdita's attitude in the sheep-shearing feast on her confrontation with Polixenes' anger:

> Not withstanding the insults and hardships wantonly put upon her, she still preserves the smoothness of peace; is never betrayed into the least sign of anger or impatience or resentment, but maintains, throughout, perfect order and fitness and proportion in act and speech. The charge, so dreadful in itself, and so cruel in its circumstance, neither rouses her passions, as it would Paulina's, nor stuns her sensibilities, as in the case of Desdemona; but, like the sinking of lead in the ocean's bosom, it goes to the depths without ruffling the surface of her soul.[16]

Here Hudson commends Hermione for her beauty of "act and speech" in the most disastrous moments. In addition to being patient, Shakespeare's gentles are endowed with a sense of forgiveness that brings the oppressor to a sense of guilt and repentance. Hermione, for instance, does not utter a single curse to fall upon Leontes; nor will she seek vengeance on him. She leaves everything to be taken care of by the passage of time. Thus also is Perdita, who having no sense of revenge, relies on her patience to make everything right. Prospero in The Tempest may also be noticed for his rational control of passions and forgive-

ness. When Ariel tells him of the high distress of Antonio, Alonso, and Sebastian, Prospero realizes that vengeance is not a worthy deed and, therefore, sets Alonso and his companions free, saying,

> Though with their high wrong I am struck to th' quick,
> Yet with my nobler reason 'gainst my fury
> Do I take part. The rarer action is
> In virtue than in vengeance. They being penitent,
> The sole drift of my purpose doth extend
> Not a frown further. Go, release them, Ariel.
> My charms I'll break, their senses I'll restore,
> And they shall be themselves.
>
> (V.i.25-32)

That Alonso is penitent satisfies Prospero and keeps him from further hostile actions against his opponents. Prospero's advice to Ferdinand, which he takes, is significant in this respect:

> Look, thou be true, do not give dalliance
> Too much the rein. The strongest oaths are straw
> To th' fire i' th' blood. Be more abstemious
> Or else good night your vow!
>
> (IV.i.51-54)

Prospero advises Ferdinand to be mild in making judgments or else he would be in trouble. Unlike the reasonable characters in Shakespeare, Antonio and Sebastian in _The Tempest_ remain unaffected throughout the play by the obvious need to reform their characters. Not repenting, they would be dismissed as degenerates (they are not, of course, plebeians).

Perhaps the Shakespearean character whose passions are most unregulated is the lustful Caliban of _The Tempest_, who wants to violate Miranda (I.ii.345-48). Other examples are Jack Cade, fomenter of an aroused jacquerie

in Henry VI, Part II, Malvolio in Twelfth Night, a churl who allows himself to think of marrying the gentle Olivia, and the behavior of the Roman mob during Antony's funeral oration for Julius Caesar. And in The Winter's Tale, the peasantry, generally speaking, are neither reasonable nor passionate--as exemplified in the Clown's and Mopsa's relationship. Interestingly enough, one exception to the gentles' rational control of passions is their falling in love at first sight. This phenomenon is reserved in the Shakespearean plays for gentles whose blood is of equal quality such as that of Florizel and Perdita, Ferdinand and Miranda, and Romeo and Juliet. Non-gentles in Shakespearean plays never fall in love mutually at first sight. It seems that something less electric attracts them. This fact is shown in the Clown's and Mopsa's love.

Other excellencies that make Perdita a distinguished gentle character are her elevated language and actions as contrasted with those of Mopsa. An outstanding characteristic of Perdita's language is its being in verse, whereas Mopsa's is in prose throughout the fourth act. Shakespeare has the tendency to attribute verse forms of speech to gentles and prose forms to non-gentles. The tendency of non-gentles to talk prose suggests the musically inharmonious condition of their minds. Prose is thus a proper medium of the unelevated thoughts of the peasantry in Shakespearean plays, but we occasionally notice exceptions to this rule. For instance, the gardener in

King Richard II speaks in blank verse (III.iv.29ff), and so does the nurse in *Romeo and Juliet* (I.iii). Moreover, Perdita's language is lofty, sweet, and delicate. Her speeches are so refined that one may imagine them improbably belonging to a shepherdess. She even feels strong hatred of using or hearing any foul words. When a servant asks the Shepherd's permission to lead a singer into the house, Perdita's primary suggestion is, "Forewarn him that he use no scurrilous words in 's tunes" (IV.iv.212). But, as it seems, Mopsa is not the least upset when the Clown addresses Dorcas and her in obscene language. This instance occurs when Mopsa drives the Clown nearly mad by untimely suggestions of buying her things. And the Clown's answer does not surprise us in the least because little refinement is expected from his blood quality and, therefore, from his language: "Is there no manners left among maids? Will they wear their plackets where they should bear their faces?" (IV.iv.236-37). Perdita is not only modest in her language and attitudes, but she is also respectful to her elders.

In addition to Perdita's modest and good language, her manners are also admirable. Florizel tells her, "Each your doing, / So singular in each particular, / Crowns what you are doing in the present deed, / That all your acts are queens" (IV.iv.143-46). Perdita's general conduct and manners attract everybody around her. When Polixenes praises her grace in dancing, the Shepherd

remarks,

> So she does anything, though I report it
> That should be silent. If young Doricles
> Do light upon her, she shall bring him that
> Which he not dreams of.
> (IV.iv.197-80)

Although Perdita and Mopsa seem to be the same age, Mopsa is completely different in her attitudes. She repels us by her childish, immature behavior. As soon as Autolycus enters the feast, Mopsa starts urging the Clown to buy her ribbons and gloves. Here, we discover the difference between Perdita's and Mopsa's character when the disguised Polixenes--to test Florizel--suggests that he buy Perdita a few things. Florizel's answers show a disdain for material goods:

> Old Sir, I know
> She prizes not such trifles as these are.
> The gifts she looks from me are pack'd and lock'd
> Up in my heart, which I have given already,
> But not deliver'd.
> (IV.iv.346-50)

Florizel's comment indicates that Perdita's sense of understanding and experience of life are much higher than those of Mopsa, and these facts show Perdita to be more mature than her years would indicate. Consequently, another main distinction between Perdita and Mopsa is Perdita's displeasure at singing ballads. Gentles in Shakespeare's plays usually sing ayres, madrigals, and motets--in general, such music as was reduced to notational form--whereas non-gentles like Autolycus, Mopsa, and Dorcas sing ballads, folk songs, and catches. Mopsa and

Dorcas show no skittishness about Autolycus' obscene ballads. Their liking for ballads--something not seen in the characterization of Perdita--is a lower-class characteristic. Ballads, like catches, were sung without music and therefore lacked status. The Renaissance author of repute did not condescend to write ballads--a genre that waits for prominence until the beginnings of the Romantic movement. Besides her lack of interest for ballads, Perdita even dislikes mingling with Autolycus, Mopsa, Dorcas, and the Clown; she is not seen talking with the shepherds, yet none of the peasants in the play disparages Perdita for acting above her status. Surprisingly, though Perdita is in a peasant society, she is not of it. Malvolio in Twelfth Night, on the other hand, as soon as he exhibits a desire to "gentle" himself by marriage egregiously becomes a butt with Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, Feste, Fabian, and Maria.

By creating Perdita, Shakespeare clearly expresses his belief that gentility takes its origin from blood and, therefore, denies any role of environment in forming one's personality. He endows Perdita with distinctive beauty, rapid and intuitive learning, courage, patient resistance against afflictions, a wide range of emotion, and rational control of the passions (except mutual love at first sight) and thus singles her out among her rustic associates. Specifically, Shakespeare--by endowing Perdita with elevated language and behavior--distinguishes her from

Mopsa. So, as long as Shakespeare counts blood and its attributes as the main distinction between gentles and non-gentles, he disparages those trying to "gentle" themselves through such derided efforts such as wearing elegant clothing. Shakespeare ridicules the pretensions of the Shepherd who imagines himself gentle through being Perdita's foster-father; the Shepherd is fooling himself because no blood relationship exists between him and Perdita. The old Shepherd's notion that as foster-father of a princess he becomes gentle is a proper parallel to Cloten's proclaiming his blood's quality by being the son of the Queen. Shakespeare makes sport of the Clown who, being in Florizel's clothing, supposes himself gentleman-born. The following lines explicitly reveal the Clown's notion about this matter:

> You are well met, Sir. You denied to fight
> with me this other day, because I was no
> gentleman born. See you these clothes? Say
> you see them and think me still no gentle-
> man born. You were best say these robes are
> not gentleman born.
>
> (V.ii.120-25)

So, in order to make his ideas of gentles cohere, Shakespeare unites Perdita with the gentle Florizel and with her royal parents. It seems that Shakespeare is aiming at creating harmony by joining those of the same blood quality--an observance of appropriate hierarchical ranking that means happiness. No non-gentle in the Shakespearean canon is ever "gentled" except the plebeian members of Henry the Fifth's expeditionary force in France

immediately following the victory of Agincourt; and this mass gentling is owing to Shakespeare's sources rather than to his free invention. One gathers that thus *The Winter's Tale* teaches that all's well with the world when the gentles are properly placed, and that the world is out of joint when this happy condition does not prevail.

ENDNOTES

[1] The theme of gentility occurs in other Shakespearean plays such as _Cymbeline_, _King Lear_, _Henry the Fifth_, and _The Tempest_.

[2] Irving Ribner and George Lyman Kittredge, _The Complete Works of Shakespeare_ (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1971). All subsequent references to Shakespeare's works are from this edition, and line-numbers are parenthetically cited.

[3] J. H. P. Pafford, ed., Introd., _The Winter's Tale_, by William Shakespeare (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), p. lxxxvi.

[4] Andrew J. Solomon, "Aspects of _The Winter's Tale_," _DAI_,35A (1974), p. 224.

[5] Robert Browning, "The Lost Leader," in _Victorian Poets and Poetics_, 2nd ed., ed., Walter E. Houghton and G. Robert Stange (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1968), p. 203.

[6] Pafford, Introd., _The Winter's Tale_, p. lxxxv.

[7] William J. Rolfe, ed., _The Winter's Tale_, by William Shakespeare (New York: American Book Company, 1898), p. 20.

[8] Patricia Southard Gourlay, "O My Most Sacred Lady:

Female Metaphor in _The Winter's Tale_," _ELR_, 5 (1975), 338.

[9] Irene G. Dash, "A Glimpse of The Sublime in Warburton's Edition of _The Winter's Tale_," _Shak S_, 11 (1978), 163.

[10] Dash, pp. 163-64.

[11] Count Baldassare Castiglione, _The Book of The Courtier_, trans. Sir T. Hoby (London, 1561), sig. $c2^v$--$c3^r$.

[12] S. L. Bethell, _The Winter's Tale: A Study_ (London: Staples Press Ltd., n. d.), p. 98.

[13] Bethell, p. 96.

[14] Bethell, p. 97.

[15] Peter Lindenbaum, "Time, Sexual Love, and The Uses of Pastoral in _The Winter's Tale_," _MLQ_, 33 (1972), 14-15.

[16] Henry N. Hudson, ed., _The Winter's Tale_, by William Shakespeare (New York: Ginn & Company, 1880), p. 22.

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