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"I Will Tell It Softly": Facing the Limits of Epistemological Certainty Through Touch in The Winter's Tale

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“I WILL TELL IT SOFTLY”: FACING THE LIMITS OF EPISTEMOLOGICAL CERTAINTY THROUGH TOUCH IN *THE WINTER’S TALE*

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS

BY

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ABSTRACT

“I will tell it softly”: Facing the Limits of Epistemological Certainty through Touch in The Winter’s Tale

By Kailey Giordano

While studies on the subject of epistemology in Shakespeare’s plays have long centered on the tragedies or surveyed the romances and late plays as a collective group, few pieces turn to the problems of epistemology in The Winter’s Tale alone. Among those who have undertaken such a study, many simply touch on the limits of knowledge in this play and in turn pass over the manifold comic-restorative ways in which this play helps us come to terms with these barriers. In The Winter’s Tale, Shakespeare enters a dialogue that has been overlooked since the Renaissance and only recently been revived in twentieth-century biological studies, one that thrusts the tactile sense to the forefront of the ways by which we come to interact with others and manage the anxiety that stems from our inability to entirely know them. In this thesis, I revive such a conversation by proposing that touch is able to confront the philosophical “problem of other minds” in ways that the other senses cannot in the play by immersing us into the tangible world and reaching out to less tangible realms at once: the emotions, the social field, and narrative production. By revealing how formative touch is to the processes by which we seek to understand and relate to the minds of others, I illuminate how the play circulates and helps to resolve the epistemological concerns of early seventeenth-century England that still resonate today.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The first references to the following texts include their full titles and each additional reference takes the abbreviation listed.

I. Shakespeare’s Works

WT  The Winter’s Tale
Cor. Coriolanus
Oth. Othello
Tmp. The Tempest

II. Emmanuel Levinas’s Works

EI  Ethics and Infinity
OBBE Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence
TI  Totality and Infinity
Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Robert Watson and Karen Cunningham above all others for bringing me to this play, for stretching the bounds of my thought, for inspiring me to find the intertwined filaments by which this play and Shakespeare so incisively touch the human soul, and, most of all, for encouraging my voice through so many times when I doubted myself.

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And lastly, to the father who never knew his son, Sergeant Adam. G. Kinser of the 304th Psychological Operations Company, U.S. Army, and to the father who lost his own in The Winter’s Tale, for teaching us that there will not always be time, that we must pull our families closer and treasure every moment we have—thank you for what you have shown me and for reaffirming why this play is so dear to my heart. After your example, I am reminded how deeply stories and those with whom we surround ourselves transform our lives, show us who we are, and encourage us to become the individuals we want to be.

For every piece of myself in this work, there are infinitely more pieces of you all, and I am immeasurably grateful for your support.
Introduction

Creation myths of the Hopi Indian tribe tell the story of the Kóhkang Wuhti, the goddess of the earth widely known as Spider Woman who brings the universe and its creatures into being. It is said that the Spider Woman shapes the thoughts of the sun god Tawa into clay, covers these figures with cloth, and animates them through song (Turner 111-12). While this piece of tribal folklore from the heart of the American Southwest may seem a bit out of place, I allude to it in the spirit of tale-telling, for it centers on a figure that appears in oral and literary traditions across cultures, spanning from the classical period to the very moment in which Shakespeare was writing The Winter’s Tale in Elizabethan England. From the myth of Arachne to the Song of Ares and Aphrodite and the test of Penelope in Homer’s The Odyssey (Holmberg 1), the spider is repeatedly portrayed as a site on which weaving and narrative converge. In sum, stories are likened to webs woven by those who tell or write them, joining the spider’s physical form of creation to narrative production, or the “text” in textile. This expansion of the tactile to the literary space is etymologically strengthened by the word “text,” for it can be traced back to the Latin textus and texère, or “to weave” (“Text, n.1”). That this motif persists from the classical to the medieval period through the “The Wife of Bath’s Prologue” from Geoffrey Chaucer’s The Canterbury Tales among other places, reveals an enduring interest in the correspondences among touch, textiles, and texts that surely seeped into the literature of Shakespeare’s lifetime.

In fact, I argue that Shakespeare enters this discourse through one of King Leontes’ most renowned speeches in WT, a speech in which Leontes formulates an allegory of a spider

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1 Additional references to The Winter’s Tale will take the standard MLA abbreviation, WT.

2 The General Prologue states that the Wife of Bath is a cloth-maker (447), and the prologue to her tale explores the intersection of this textile production with texts (337-47), specifically Jankyn’s “book of wikked wyves” (685).
“steep’d” (2.1. 40) in a cup to articulate the psychological process by which he comes to believe that his wife, Hermione, and long-time friend, King Polixenes, are having an affair. While much criticism asserts that sight drives his violent spiral into jealousy, this claim ignores the process of mental fabrication that drives him to leap from an innocent meeting between wife and friend to an act of sexual infidelity. When Leontes says that he has “drunk, and seen the spider” (2.1. 45) in his metaphorical cup, it is not ocular proof of his wife’s infidelity but an invention of the mind that stirs his jealousy, rendering the spider a tactile symbol in two forms: a symbol of the imagined erotic encounter and of the imaginative process itself by which he invents and becomes certain of this rendezvous. To then discount the spider in favor of sight’s role in this scene is to overlook the prevalence of this figure in literature both prior and leading up to the Elizabethan period, its particular presence in the classical mythology with which Shakespeare was so familiar, and the proximity of its symbolism to the psychological state into which Leontes throws himself.

To follow this thread, I propose that the spider’s tactility settles in spaces beyond the physical: in the social field of human interface and in the world of narrative. The spider’s versatility thus renders it a perfect symbol from which to widen our exploration of the forms of touch in this play, perhaps in simpler terms enunciated by a lexicon of phrases that employ metaphors of touch for concepts not manifestly tactile; we “feel” deeply for, are “moved” or “touched” emotionally by, and leave “impressions” on other people. For its affiliation with web, thought, and narrative production, the creator-spider ultimately foregrounds how formative touch is to the processes by which we interact with and relate to the minds of those around us.

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3 The spider is both a symbol of the “paddling palms and pinching fingers” (1.2. 114) he sees and the mental leap to infidelity that immediately follows.
By probing the ways in which touch somatically and figuratively binds us to others, I fill a substantial gap in study on the tactile sense that has occurred since the Renaissance and only recently been revived in twentieth-century biological studies (Harvey 385). In turn, I apply a relatively neglected yet nonetheless fruitful approach to the problems of knowledge acquisition so often raised by studies of this play. Reviving a long latent conversation through a study of WT, I propose that touch is able to confront the philosophical “problem of other minds” in ways that the other senses cannot in this play by immersing us in the tangible world and reaching out to less palpable realms at once: the emotions, the social field, and narrative production. By asserting the primacy of touch to the birth of togetherness between self and other, I illuminate in turn how the play circulates and helps to resolve the epistemological anxieties of early seventeenth-century England that still resonate today.

My thesis will take shape around the manifold forms that touch assumes in the play. I will first refer to Elizabeth D. Harvey’s contemporary study on the tactile sense to articulate its multifarious nature, demonstrating how touch extends beyond a physical form in WT to adopt increasingly abstract forms, and later shed light on Renaissance perceptions of this sense to frame this play as a text in dialogue with the sensory interests of its time. I will then turn to the work of Emmanuel Levinas on the unknowable Other to elucidate the sort of epistemological issues that this sense relieves, centering on his concept of “sincerity” to specify the relationship between self and other that touch brings about in this play. In so doing, I revive an eclipsed history of the tactile sense to reassert its value to a society preoccupied with the limits that men face in their attempts to gain knowledge.

Although my study centers on the period in which Shakespeare was writing, it no less speaks to and helps us manage the worries and uncertainties that walk hand in hand with
adolescent courtship, marriage, political rule, and our interactions with people generally, and in turn reconciles us to a world of which we are intimately and irrevocably a part. Now you might be asking: how will she tell her tale? Well, like Mamillius, “I will tell it softly” (2.1. 30), bringing the father who suspends his son’s winter tale, and each of you, along for my own, steeping us in the world of the play to illustrate how the characters are able to cope with the limits of epistemological certainty through touch in its multiple forms. So as Susan Snyder embarks on her introduction to this play “without presuming to exhaust the vastness and wonder essential to its ‘winter’s-taleness’” (2), for want of space on the one hand and a wish to leave this play the magic of its forgiveness, faith and love on the other, I hope to imagine new ways of thinking about celebrated scenes and to restore neglected ones, to discover one corner of this play that has hidden in damp obscurity until now, and to preserve the enchantment of the play as a whole that at times seems so divine and unaccountable to us that all we can do is accord it the silence it inspires.

Respinning Touch: From Skin to Sentiment, the Social Sphere, and Stories

In order to grasp how touch accosts the limits of knowledge in the play, we must first understand the various forms that it can take. To chart the migration of touch into less material realms, I begin with Elizabeth D. Harvey’s contemporary study for the pithy yet shrewd insight she offers. In “The Portal of Touch,” Harvey traces the movement of the tactile sense through its component spaces to argue that it demands equal, if not more, attention than the other senses. She first observes that the tactile sense is dispersed throughout the body while the other senses are contained entirely within the head (385). She then foregrounds the skin as the principal medium of touch and notes that touch is an “interface” (386) that involves agency and reception,
to touch and to be touched.

While she recognizes the reliance of touch on the proximity of “toucher [to] touched” (387), the rest of her article refuses this limitation. Just as Plato regarded sight as “streams of vision touching” that enable one to “see things at a great distance” (387), I would like to suggest that touch, too, stretches by sinews to great distances and settles in realms less overtly tactile. Harvey remarks that early entries in the OED describe touch as an “interior contact, a physically invasive touch to the brain, the mind, or, most commonly, the heart” (388), and she follows this definition with an older example from Helkiah Crooke’s anatomy Mikrokosmographia (1615) and a more recent example from Didier Anzieu’s The Skin Ego (1989) to demonstrate the ways by which the “physiology of feeling [. . .] links the senses to the passions” (388); a “sensible object” acts upon the surface of the skin, causing the skin to “suffer” a sensation which is then felt and perceived by the psyche (388). In WT, Leontes cries out that the intensity of his affection “stabs the centre” (1.2. 137) of his being and Hermione soon after asks if he is “moved,” (1.2. 149), using touch to give a clear picture of the very impalpable psychological process by which we come to feel or suffer an emotion.4

It is this journey of the tactile sense into the body’s interior that the Renaissance theory of “action-at-a-distance” illustrates, a theory first developed in the fields of astrology and magnetism but that soon invaded other fields because it offered a widely applicable way of conceiving interactions between bodies without physical contact. From the medicinal practice of treating a weapon rather than a victim’s wound (Debus 27) to the medieval practice of

4 See Othello, when Iago says, “touch me not so near: / I had rather have this tongue cut from my mouth / Than it should do offence to Michael Cassio” (2.3. 219-21); or, “for, if [Desdemona’s iniquity] touch not you, it comes near nobody” (4.1. 200-1).
cruentation, this theory liberated the tactile sense by obviating its reliance on proximity. In an article that applies this theory to *Arden of Faversham*, Mary Floyd-Wilson centers on the originally Germanic practice of cruentation that persisted through and just beyond the period ascribed to the Renaissance. This practice helped to identify murderers by “requir[ing] suspects to approach the victim’s body [to see] if the corpse bled or moved” (Floyd-Wilson 189). She cites this procedure as a case of “action at a distance” because “invisible emissions circulating among those present” (189) penetrate the victim’s body until those of the murderer heat the victim’s passions and imagination “to such a degree that ‘spirits’ (fine vapours that flow in the blood) emanate out of the body to stir up the corpse’s blood” (190). By piercing the corpse to incite emotions within it, these emissions reveal themselves to be tactual at heart and as a result widen the jurisdiction of touch to encompass the emotional field just as Harvey demonstrates.

Even sight, a sense that has long outcompeted touch for the top rung on the sensory ladder (Harvey 387), broadens the scope of the tactile sense. Beginning with Plato, it was believed by many thinkers that the eye “emit[ted] pneuma [or eye-beams] to unite with particles projected by the object” on which the eye gazed (Floyd-Wilson 193). Floyd-Wilson observes that this belief was applied to the Neoplatonic theory of love, where eye-beams were said to travel from the lover to pierce the beloved, and to more sinister theories of the eye exemplified by the “evil eye” motif, the *femme fatale*, and the Basilisk. In each case, the eye was said to emit vapors that enter the victim’s body and “infect [them] emotionally” (194), pointing to a larger “manipulat[ion] [of] the bodies and motives of others” (194) that this “action at a distance” facilitated. By invading and influencing bodies at a distance without physical contact, these invisible beams became avenues by which the tactile sense migrated into the body to fasten itself to the emotions.
“Action at a distance” did not however limit touch to the emotional realm; in fact, this method of spelling out certain cosmic and natural phenomena ushered touch into the external world most notably through its application to Renaissance conceptions of pathology. Isabelle Pantin explores this issue in relation to Renaissance studies of the plague, channeling her argument through an analysis of Giralamo Fracastoro’s *De Contagione*. In this work, Fracastoro seeks to resolve the problem posed by the spreading of diseases through a population by elaborating on the theory of “action at a distance” as a function of the universal law of sympathy.

Through the theory of *species*, traditionally used to explain the science of optics and light, Fracastoro departs from the astrological and atomist theories of contagion to offer a theory of disease propagation more palpable than the former but that does not demand the direct contact called for by the latter (Pantin 7). Synonymous with Platonic simulacra, *species* are attenuated representations of “agents” that emanate from the agent to “prints its likeness on the receiver” (6). This imprint, however, requires “a certain degree of resemblance” (6) and similitude between agent and recipient, a “certain potentiality already present in the receiver” (6) that allows the agent’s *species* to imprint its image on its complement. Fracastoro’s argument turns upon this “need for sympathy [. . .] in order for the one to act on the other, and the possible existence of ‘spiritual’ intermediaries” (8), or *species*, to link them and allow the contagion to pass from agent to recipient. The reaction of the corpse to the murderer’s presence in the practice of cruentation also depends upon this relationship, for the victim’s body could not respond to the murderer were it not already inextricably joined to him as victim of his violent deed. As the means by which bodies connect in nature at a distance, *species* therefore become the “main agents of the universal sympathy and cohesion in nature” (7) through an act of touch imperceptible but nevertheless tactile, indirect but no less tangible. By fostering social
interaction between bodies through an act of touch, Fracastoro’s theory of species thus renders this sense the medium by which agent and recipient meet, interact, and in turn traverse the divide between self and other that my thesis seeks to bridge.

It is this dilation of touch’s range beyond the material realm that Camillo demonstrates when he tells Archidamus in the opening lines of the play that King Leontes and King Polixenes “have seemed to be together though absent, shook hands as over a vast, and embraced as it were from the ends of opposing winds” (1.1. 24-6) after having separated due to political obligation. Camillo here uses a tactile metaphor to communicate the ways in which the men have sustained their relationship quite literally “at a distance.” In fact, the “interchange of gifts, letters, and loving embassies” by which this is made possible closely parallels the species of which Fracastoro speaks; Leontes and Polixenes send representations of themselves and their love to each other, enabling them to “shake hands” without direct contact and “be together though absent.” These forms of social exchange thus become the means by which the kings face and challenge the epistemological barrier between the Self and the Other, illustrating how touch morphs from a palpable to a metaphorical handshake performed “over a vast” in order to link one king to the other. The fact that Camillo’s reference to the tactile situates itself within the broader philosophical framework set out at the start of the play, one that begins with the word “if” (1.1. 1) and spirals into a series of vacillating and conditional phrases that introduce the larger problems with knowledge that flood the rest of this play, only further forges the bond between touch and the search for self-other togetherness in WT.

Through the judicial practice of cruentation and the theory of species, Renaissance theories of “action at a distance” thus move touch past the physical realm to the emotional and

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5 “Since their more mature dignities and royal necessities made separation of their society” (1.1. 21-2).
social spheres. If we return to Harvey’s study, she too observes that the affective form of touch quickly morphs into a social form—the “tact” in tactile (386)—whereby behavioral and emotional restraint instantiates social “tact” as yet another “psychic extension of physical contact” (392). Attending to the main focus of her article, Harvey cites the Mars and Venus myth that relates how the lovers are entrapped by Vulcan’s web of chains as a result of their sexual encounter (392). By turning to this myth, she illuminates how quickly physical contact can “convert into powerful feelings or affect that in turn translate into the social actions of war and illicit sexuality” (392) represented by these gods. It is this myth on which Ingrid E. Holmberg elaborates in her analysis of the two appearances of spiderwebs in Homer’s *The Odyssey*: the web of chains in the Song of Ares and Aphrodite and the absence of webs in Penelope’s bed by which Telemachus confirms her fidelity. In both cases, webs become the proof that convicts or acquits women of sexual infidelity (Holmberg 12), drawing the tactility of webs into the social space of erotic and marital relationships.

The social charge of certain tactile acts finds its way into *WT* itself most prominently through the figure of the hand, rendered a symbol on which a range of social institutions condense and are perpetuated. We see the hand and its extension to the Other assume social meaning when the Clown repeatedly avows to help another if they “give” (5.2. 134) or “lend” (4.3. 63) him their hands and thereby enters the social field through somatic gesture. Physical contact registers as “social action” (Harvey 392) through the tradition of handfasting as well, a practice dating to the early fifteenth century by which two people join hands to promise themselves in marriage (“Handfast,” n.3); Leontes tells Hermione that some time passed “ere I could open make thee open thy white hand / And clap thyself my love” (1.2. 102-3); Polixenes reminisces the time when he “handed love” (4.4. 328) as Florizel and Perdita do (4.4. 342); and
the shepherd demands the young lovers to “take hands” (4.4. 363) in order that they may marry. Finally, it is the hand that Leontes obsesses over when he sees his wife and Polixenes “paddling palms and pinching fingers” (1.2. 114), immediately jumping from bodily contact to the social conclusion of marital infidelity. In each case, physical contact takes on social meaning, extracting the fundamentally physical fasting of hands from its material home and forcing it into something much larger than itself—the social field.⁶

Turning away from the social dimension of touch, Harvey shifts focus to the blacksmith god Vulcan as the “figure of the craftsman or artist” (400), linking touch to the “manual and artisanal work” (393) of his web of chains. While Harvey stretches this observation no further, Holmberg extends this artisanal form of touch to the realm of narrative, linking the weaving of webs to the weaving of narratives as noted in the introduction. While her argument ultimately considers the gendered representations of weaving and narrative in the epic, I am more interested in its connection of an artisanal form of touch to a literary one. For Holmberg, the spider’s trade enacts a meditation on narrative central to the epic’s development (3) and overall thrust. She asks: how does this work tell us to “understand the production of narrative” (3)? Finding an answer in Roland Barthes’s *Pleasure of the Text*, she emphasizes the cross-cultural spider

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⁶ Pierre Bourdieu discusses this assimilation of social structures into the actions and gestures performed at the level of the body at great length in his sociological study and critique of taste, *Distinction*. Therein, he introduces the concept of *habitus*, a term absolutely crucial to his theory of the social field: the *habitus* is the absorption and “embedding” (466) of the value systems at work in a particular society into the modes of behavior and “most automatic gestures” (466) of the members of that society. As Bourdieu explains, it is the rooting of “the most fundamental principles of the construction and evaluation of the social world [. . .] in divisions between bodies and between relations in the body” (466) so that an individual’s actions endorse and uphold the social structures in place in his society.
symbolism discussed earlier upon which Barthes draws when he likens the text to a web that “is made, is worked out in a perpetual interweaving” (Barthes 64). By linking the text to the process of weaving, Barthes renders it a product of tactile work and in turn brings the work of Hephaistos, to whom Holmberg connects this passage, into the realm of narrative production, a move necessary to our understanding of the narrative of WT itself.

When Holmberg states that *The Odyssey* as narrative “becomes the web which captures the truth about fidelity or infidelity” (12), her argument distends rapidly from the ensnarement of Ares and Aphrodite by the web of chains to the text at large as a web that reveals the truth about Penelope’s fidelity as the story advances. This statement fits quite perfectly into the narrative of *WT*, whereby Leontes comes to know the truth of Hermione’s fidelity through the progression of the narrative, a journey which links the acquisition of knowledge to a literary form of touch. In other words, we move from the narrative of sexual infidelity imagined by Leontes and allegorized by the spider in a cup to the narrative as a whole that guides Leontes and all of us to truth by the end of the play.

By making visible the invisible filaments by which touch spins itself into a tapestry of forms less evidently tactile, I suggest that this sense at once expresses and helps to construct what it means to live in a social world. In turn, I find that touch helps us to manage the complexities that follow from this sociality, enabling us to cope with the epistemological barrier of the Other by linking self and other as close as possible while maintaining their invariable

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7 The entire passage is reproduced here: “We are now emphasizing, in the tissue, the generative idea that the text is made, is worked out in a perpetual interweaving; lost in this tissue—this texture—the subject unmakes himself, like a spider dissolving in the constructive secretions of its web. Were we fond of neologisms, we might define the theory of the text as an hyphology (*hphos* is the tissue and the spider’s web)” (Barthes 64).
difference. For Harvey, Holmberg, Renaissance theorists, and I argue Shakespeare himself in *WT*, the flesh, the medium of the tangible, serves as a portal into the body’s interior, out to the civic and social world, and to the production of narratives, and it is in this multiplicity of forms that I therefore define touch and navigate through the sea of social relations in which this play is immersed.

“I Cannot Be Mine Own, if I Be Not Thine”: Drawing Self to Other in Levinasian Ethics

Tracing the ways by which touch reaches beyond the physical realm and disperses itself among more abstract realms, these thinkers speak to a larger preoccupation with the place of the self in a world populated by other beings with whom it must inevitably interact. As I have stated, my argument aims to overcome the epistemological barrier that the “other mind” poses to us, but we must understand that in seeking to do so, I do not assume that we can directly and absolutely access the thoughts and mental state of another mind. The field of epistemology, formally the “science of the grounds of knowledge” (“Epistemology, n.1”), asks: what is knowledge, how do we come to know what we know, and how do we judge what *is* in fact knowledge? In particular, the epistemological “problem of other minds” by which I am riveted deals with the problem that we do not possess perfect knowledge of the mind of another, a problem that seems to pervade *WT* and which I aim to accost in my analysis. However, I am not so much interested in actually defeating this problem—for I do not think this endeavor is possible nor that it has any helpful or living applications in the social world—as I am in the ways by which we manage the anxiety of being unable to access the Other’s mind entirely and how we coexist with others in response.

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8 OTHELLO: By heaven, I'll know thy thoughts.

IAGO: You cannot, if my heart were in your hand. (3.3. 162-63)
Like Camillo, who advises Polixenes to “avoid what’s grown than question how ‘tis born” (1.2. 428) with respect to Leontes’ jealousy, I do not think that the tactile sense helps the characters to get at the minds of others in WT so much as it shepherds us as close to the Other as possible in guarding this limitation. It is this social dynamic that brought me to the door of Emmanuel Levinas, whose fascination with the relation between the Self and the Other persuaded me to knock, and whose discussion of their face-to-face encounter where they achieve “true togetherness” (Ethics and Infinity 77)\textsuperscript{9} inspired me to speak. By doing away with the possibility of knowing totally and perfectly the mind of the Other (60), Levinas affords himself the opportunity to chart a map of the self-other interaction more holistic and faithful to lived human experience than one that endeavors to chart the former.\textsuperscript{10} He locates the “true togetherness” of self and other at the moment of the face-to-face encounter, a moment on which I, too, will center my study to suggest that the tactile sense facilitates this togetherness: the greatest proximity possible between self and other.

Yet before I guide you through the dizzying circles of hell that Levinas’s texts incarnate, I refer you to WT itself. After poring over Levinas’s work only to end in frustration and listening to interview after interview in the hopes that, by some miracle of aural osmosis, his ideas would register in my brain, I stumbled across one of Florizel’s vows to Perdita in the fourth act of the

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{9} All additional references to Ethics and Infinity will be abbreviated EI according to standard abbreviation.
  \item \textsuperscript{10} Ken Jackson and Arthur J. Marotti refer to Lisa Freinkel’s Reading Shakespeare’s Will: The Theology of Figure from Augustine to the Sonnets in which she suggests that such changes in the dominant modes of thinking about the self-other dynamic began well before the French phenomenologists of the twentieth century with Martin Luther and the advent of Protestantism. She remarks that Luther struggled with and replaced a Pauline “thematics of reconciliation,” a belief that we can “transcend the ‘flesh’ for the ‘spirit,’ the particular for the universal,” with an “insistence that the alterity of God cannot be realized, that the aporia of self and other be respected” (181).
\end{itemize}
play. Asserting his devotion and love in response to her worries about the status of their relationship, Florizel professes: “I cannot be / Mine own, nor any thing to any, if / I be not thine” (4.4. 43-5). If any one sentence can so precisely illustrate Levinas’s love affair with the dynamic between self and other, it is this one, especially for its presence in a play engrossed in the ways that individuals build relationships with each other. While I am surely not claiming that Shakespeare integrated Levinasian thought into his piece since they separate each other by several centuries, I am proposing that both men find this responsibility of the Self for and commitment of the Self to the Other as fundamental to human relationships.

While Florizel’s oath may seem paradoxical, Levinas comfortably sits in this paradox, finding the only way to exist and to be as an existence “for the other” and “despite oneself” (OBBE 50). In other words, being is always “otherwise than being” (50), or a movement towards the Other. This notion of being as movement has a precursor in the work of Heidegger, whose ideas tremendously influenced Levinas and therefore help to elucidate the reasons that underlie his thinking. Disposing with a nominal sense of being, Heidegger instead asserts being as a “verb,” as a “‘happening’ of being” (EI 38). Levinas adopts this notion but finds issue with the end towards which being moves for Heidegger; rather than moving toward the assurance of its own being (OBBE 17), being is “torn up” from itself (49) and pulled towards, and in turn rendered for, the Other.  

To illuminate how this journey sets in motion, he turns to the encounter with what he terms the Face, or the face of the Other. It is this encounter around which his work turns, showing how the Face draws the Self from its inwardness at home (chez soi) beyond the limits of

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11 All additional references to Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence will be abbreviated OBBE.

12 Cf. Miranda in The Tempest: “O, I have suffered / With those that I saw suffer” (1.2. 5-6).
itself (sortir de soi), towards the Other, and ultimately outside itself (hors de soi) (Totality and Infinity 33). When confronted by the Face, the Self is disturbed, fully exposed, “stripped to the core,” and becomes “vulnerability” itself (OBBE 49). Within this vulnerability, Levinas locates the birth of sincerity, a “dedication to the other” (143) in the fullness of exposure possible for the Self to expose. Sincerity thus becomes the moment for Levinas where the Self is laid bare to the Other and “true togetherness” (EI 77) is achieved.

For the purposes of this project, I therefore use the term sincerity to signal this moment to which I find the tactile sense returning us throughout WT. As I stated earlier, I do not suggest that the tactile sense allows access to the minds of others, but that it enables us to reach this juncture of togetherness that most often manifests in the play either as psychological certainty about or as an emotional commitment to the Other. If we then return to Florizel’s vow, we can now read it in terms of sincerity. By announcing that he cannot be his own if he is not hers (4.4. 43-5), he uses a metaphor of possession to articulate this devotion—a state (possession) and an act (to possess) first and foremost tactile. In so doing, Florizel renders his very being one that exists for Perdita, securing their relationship against the temporal and emotional uncertainties that co-occur with love by signaling a figurative form of touch. Through a form less evidently

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13 All additional references to Totality and Infinity will be abbreviated TI.

14 In an article that explores the ways in which “the turn to religion in early modern literary studies and New Historicism is prefigured by a turn to religion in the French Continental philosophy that informs it” (176), Ken Jackson and Arthur F. Marotti cite French philosopher Alain Badiou on the part played by Levinas in this conversation. Badiou writes: “Whether [we] know it or not, and whether we like it or not, it is this Levinasian ethical/religious strain of twentieth-century phenomenology that underwrites much of early modern studies’ critical interest in alterity” (178).

15 Donald Wehrs takes this commitment to the Other to an ethical realm, using Levinasian philosophy as a
tactile, Florizel’s oath asserts and defends his connection to Perdita against the future’s unpredictability and the social determinants that work to foil their relationship.

“Let No Man Mock Me, for I Will Kiss Her”: Touch as the Solution to Skepticism

These epistemological concerns with the Other and the search to define the Self’s relationship to him did not however begin with Levinas, but began long ago and reached a high point in the very time in which Shakespeare was writing. In order to articulate how touch best brings self and other into proximity, we must understand that my ability to do so relies on the leading thinkers of Shakespeare’s time who asked if the senses could even be trusted, and if so, inquired into the extent to which they could lead us to the discovery of truth. Lee Jacobus explains in the introductory chapter to his book, *Shakespeare and the Dialectic of Certainty*, that “the question of the reliability of human knowledge” (1) and of the senses to its acquisition consumed the minds of many philosophical, political, and religious thinkers of the Renaissance. Including himself among a group of like-minded scholars, Jacobus suggests that this preoccupation brought about a “crisis in epistemology” that became “not only central to the age but central to Shakespeare’s understanding of the age” (1). In a similar spirit, I would like to argue that this emerging discourse carved itself on the words and actions of the characters of *WT*, framing this play as a text in dialogue with the sensory and epistemological concerns of its time.

Jacobus begins his study by contextualizing the classical philosophies of dogmatism and skepticism within the methods of logic education in English universities during the Elizabethan period. He observes that the skeptic philosophies of Pyrrho and Sextus Empiricus and the way of thinking about two different kinds of “good” in *WT* and *Tmp.*: the “absolute satisfaction of needs and desires” on the one hand and “selfless concerns for others” on the other (546).
dogmatic philosophy of Epicurus received attention in the Renaissance through the work of Michel de Montaigne and Petrus Ramus, the former who attacked and the latter who asserted “the validity of the knowledge gathered by the five senses” (3). Jacobus centers the remainder of his argument on the publication and dissemination of handbooks of Ramist logic in English schools and universities, suggesting that their absorption into academic curricula from the mid-sixteenth to mid-seventeenth centuries (13) makes it difficult to believe that Shakespeare was neither exposed to nor influenced by this discourse. He notes that Ramist logic “depend[s] heavily on sensory apprehension” (3) and assert[s] that the objects we perceive in the external world can be “used to argue a case logically” (3); more precisely, we invent arguments by “consulting a prescribed system of loci or places of invention such as definition, genus, species, property, difference, whole, [and] part” from which we can then logically make judgments (13). In this method of reasoning and ironically in the skepticism of Montaigne, Jacobus locates the path that led towards the restoration of “confidence in sensory perception [. . .] that became the basis of the rise in scientific investigation” (4) initiated by Ramus, Bacon, and Descartes. It is this renewed confidence in and incorporation of these ideas into the English educational system that allows Jacobus to argue that a tendency to link the sensorium to knowledge acquisition was particularly high during Shakespeare’s lifetime (19).

This discourse and the larger interest in the means by which we discover truth through the process of “dialectic” (19) that became staples in Elizabethan academia also found their way into various aesthetic and literary forms during the period. Connecting the senses to the pursuit of knowledge, painters, dramatists, and essayists of Shakespeare’s time explored the ways in which touch confronts and alleviates the epistemological problem of the “other mind.”

16 While I do not at length discuss literary texts interested in the tactile sense, two notable examples include
doing, they allow me to reassert the worth and reliability of this sense to this same issue specifically through an analysis of *WT*, a play situated within an artistic and literary milieu that fixated on the alliance between touch and our interactions with the outside world.

During the Renaissance, interest in the tactile sense pivoted around the biblical figure of Doubting Thomas. Thomas appears most famously in the Gospel of John as the apostle who refuses to believe that Christ has been resurrected until he physical touches Christ’s wounds, and he later became a popular subject for Renaissance artists. Addressing Thomas, Christ says: “put thy finger here, and see mine handes, and put forth thine hand, and put it into my side, and be not faithlesse, but faithfull” (*1599 Geneva Bible*, John 20.27). In reply, Thomas says: “thou art my Lord, and my God” (John 20.28). I think Caravaggio’s painting offered below especially speaks to this reliance, directing our gaze to a series of contrasts that condense on the image of Thomas’s finger pressed into the flesh of Christ and that throw into relief the primacy of touch to the resolution of Thomas’s doubts in turn.

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Thomas Tomkis’s *Lingua: Or, The Combat of the Tongue, and the Five Sences* (1607) and Richard Brathwaite’s *Essaies Upon the Five Senses* (1625). The former, an adaption of the mythological Judgment of Paris, depicts Lingua as the personification of language stimulating competition among the five senses for title of the worthiest sense; the crown is awarded to Visus, or vision, and the robe to Tactus, or touch. The latter takes a religious turn, describing the nature of the senses ultimately to propose a model for the “heavenly Exercise of all the five Senses” (*Essaies’ Table of Contents*).
The crimson robes of the apostles and the surrounding dark space that occupy the right side of the image are guided by Thomas’s finger to the white robes of Christ and radiance of the left, rendering this critical gesture of touch the means by which the painting and Thomas are illuminated. In other words, Thomas’s enlightenment becomes figured pictorially as an outcome of Thomas’s bodily gesture through the representation of light and color in the painting. If we consider the biblical verse and iconographic depictions of Doubting Thomas alongside the skeptic-dogmatist debate circulating at this time, we are able to see that the world in which Shakespeare produced *WT* ultimately rendered touch a courier of knowledge we can trust.17

As Thomas resorts to corporeal means to verify the Resurrection, so Mary Magdalene

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17 See *Tmp.*, when Trinculo cries out: “Stephano! If thou beest Stephano, touch me and speak to me: for I am Trinculo—be not afeard—thy good friend Trinculo” (2.2. 97-8), and later when Stephano says, “O, touch me not; I am not Stephano, but a cramp” (5.1. 286). The oracle of Apollo in *WT* also resonates: “By the hand deliver’d / Of great Apollo’s priest” (3.2. 125-26). Here, the hand delivery of the oracle indicates that neither Cleomenes nor Dion have tampered with its message, rendering the hand a testament to its veracity.
relies on touch in the acclaimed *noli me tangere* narrative that appears earlier in the chapter from verse 11 to verse 18. When Mary touches the resurrected Christ or reaches out to do so, Christ says to her: “touch me not: for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and to your Father, and to my God, and your God” (John 20.17). This polysemic verse has sparked much unresolved debate, in response to which a group of theologians and art historians at the University of Leuven in Belgium decided to conduct a study to shed light on its ambiguity. Reimund Bieringer’s contribution to this study illuminates the plethora of meanings that have been attached to the Latin phrase, *noli me tangere*, noting that this phrase originally derives from the Greek “mē mou haptou” or “cease clinging to me” (13) and eventually became the phrase, “touch me not,” used in the Geneva Bible, the Bible read most widely by Elizabethan audiences. These interpretations fundamentally reveal an uncertainty about the gesture of touch; does Mary actually touch Christ, or does she merely reach out to do so? Does Christ prohibit or interrupt the movement of her outstretched arm?

In an analysis of the iconographic history of the *noli me tangere* motif, Barbara Baert observes that the variant positioning of Christ’s and Mary’s hands visually stand for these hermeneutic
differences (45). While I center on the instinctual call to the tactile that Mary’s gesture performs
to substantiate her relationship with Christ, Baert in sum concludes that each of these depictions,
whether Mary has or has not yet touched Christ, point to his post-resurrectional return to an
existence “beyond the realm of tangible reality” (51).

It is Mary’s tactile response to this absolute otherness, this “beyond reality,” that I
propose the characters of WT replicate in the final act when Paulina warns Leontes against
touching the statue of Hermione. After Leontes resolves to kiss the life-like statue,¹⁸ Paulina
prohibits him, saying: “You’ll mar it if you kiss it” (5.3. 81), and “if you can behold it, / I’ll
make the statue move indeed, descend / And take you by the hand” (5.3. 86-8). In the same vein
as the noli me tangere arc, Leontes instinctually resorts to touch when met by the resurrected
figure of his supposedly dead wife. In so doing, the biblical and dramatic figures instantiate this
sense as a natural recourse to the anxiety aroused by the alterity of the Other. Yet when Christ
and Paulina suspend Mary’s and Leontes’ tactile responses, they seem to accent the very
foundation on which faith rests: to believe in and build a relationship with the Other without
being able to fully know or understand him. I think this proximity without fusion renders
Thomas’s and Mary’s relationships with Christ such powerful examples of the ways by which
touch creates a dynamic between self and other so well-articulated by Levinasian sincerity. For
Levinas, the Other is a figure with whom closeness can be established but whose strangeness
cannot be breached. Christ in the Gospel of John and Hermione in WT become precisely these
figures, bringing Thomas, Mary, and Leontes to sincerity and “true togetherness” with them
through the use of touch.

The philosophical, religious, artistic, and dramatic explorations of touch’s role in the

¹⁸ “Let no man mock me, / For I will kiss her” (5.3. 78-9).
social world pronounce this sense as one worthy of higher esteem and absolutely vital to the acquisition of human knowledge and the development of human relationships. Harvey herself discusses this point in her discovery of the substantial gap in study on the tactile sense that stretches from the Renaissance to its revival in twentieth-century biological studies. She begins her article with a belief held by Pliny, Ovid, and Renaissance naturalists “that a bear cub was born as a lump of flesh [and] was licked into ursine shape by its mother’s tongue” (385). She connects this myth to contemporary biological studies that reveal the indispensability of “nurturing contact between a mother and her offspring [. . .] to [the establishment of] the physiological processes that sustain life in the organism” (385). By citing studies on cats, rhesus monkeys, and the plight of Romanian orphans after the collapse of Nicolae Ceaușescu’s regime, Harvey contends that tactile deprivation most often leads to improper psychological development (385). It is this “retrieval of tactility” (385) in which these studies partake that I hope to sustain by recapturing interest in the tactile sense and, moreover, asserting its primacy as the sense that best brings us to sincerity, a proximity with the Other that accounts for his permanent strangeness and distance but that no less seeks to join self to other in a social relationship.

From biblical verses to recent biological studies, touch has become a method by which we deal with the unknowability of others and attempt to build relationships with them in spite of this limitation. Without the contributions of the dogmatists and skeptics, we would not be able to make this argument, and the Doubting Thomas and noli me tangere motifs only reinforce it. It seems no coincidence then that similar discussions appear in WT itself, a play deeply in dialogue with the sensory and epistemological interests of its time and our own, made apparent in the reclamation of touch by modern biology. By navigating through these discourses, I illustrated how WT and the culture in which Shakespeare produced it fundamentally suggest that the self
takes meaning only in its responsiveness to and interaction with the body of another, and in turn that touch best helps us to manage the anxiety that attends our inevitably social existence.

_The Winter’s Tale_

“**I Remain a Pinched Thing**: Leontes and the Onset of His Jealousy

Centering on the figure of Leontes, I now turn to the birth of his jealousy in the first act and the spider allegory in the second, moving away from criticism that regards this development in Leontes’ character as one fraught with dramatic irony (Barton 165) to an analysis of the ways by which he verifies suspicions of Hermione’s guilt. For the purposes of such an analysis, we must pay little heed to the rather obvious falsity of Leontes’ conclusion and instead turn toward a more fruitful conversation that ascertains how Leontes participates in a mode of knowledge acquisition not unlike that used by others throughout the play to reach sincerity. In so doing, I suggest that we widen our perspective of Leontes, reading him not as the person who most flagrantly fails to find “true” knowledge, but instead as a character who finds certitude in his beliefs about others through a series of acts involving touch.

While much attention has been given to the role of Leontes’ sight in the birth of his jealousy, very little criticism accords the same to the role of touch in this birth. After Hermione has successfully persuaded Polixenes to extend his stay in Sicilia, Leontes recounts that she has only spoken better once: when "I could make thee open thy white hand / And clap thyself my love; then didst thou utter, / ‘I am yours for ever’” (1.2. 102-4). In an article on the subject of touch in this play, Evelyn Tribble observes that Hermione’s reproduction of this gesture incites Leontes’ jealousy (69); as noted in the stage direction, “she gives her hand to Polixenes” (1.2. 107), equating the gesture that linked her forever to her “royal husband” (1.2. 106) with the same
that now links her to Polixenes, “th’other, for some while a friend” (1.2. 107). Tribble further suggests that the erotically imbued competition provoked here between Leontes and Polixenes becomes increasingly tense because Hermione is pregnant (69). More importantly, she has been pregnant for the length of Polixenes’s stay, amplifying Leontes’ already taut anxieties.

Notwithstanding the astute quality of this analysis, Tribble’s argument then labels sight as the cause of Leontes’ jealousy and centers less on the ways by which he attains resolve than on the falsity and “seeming” truth of his judgment. She proposes that touch is “contaminated by [his] eyes, signaling the false ‘ocular-proof’ that [seems to allow] sudden epistemological certainty” (70).

It is this criticism that I aim to move beyond, instead proposing that the nuanced forms of touch permeating this scene incite Leontes’ jealousy and ultimately enable him to reach the certainty that Tribble dismisses as false. While she fundamentally asserts that sight and touch alienate Leontes in this scene, I suggest something a bit different from the “solipsistic abyss” (70) into which she sees him fall: that by finding resolve through various avenues of touch,
Leontes participates in a collective pursuit that endures throughout the play. Although he is glaringly wrong in his judgment and alienates himself as a result, he nevertheless links himself to other characters by partaking in a shared endeavor towards sincerity, a method of knowledge acquisition less interested in objective truth than psychological certainty about the Other.

If we then enlarge our perspective of the jealousy plot, each step that leads to Leontes’ conclusion reveals itself a form of the tactile sense. Touch first appears in a physical form through the joining of Hermione’s and Polixenes’s hands and immediately translates into an affective form when Leontes is emotionally moved to jealousy. The physical gesture sends Leontes into a tormented exclamation: “Too hot, too hot! / […] / I have tremor cordis on me: my heart dances, / But not for joy, not joy” (1.2. 107-10). It is unclear what is “too hot” in this tirade; either Leontes is “hot” with anger, linking the feeling of heat to the emotion of anger, or the gesture he sees is “hot,” full of passion and carnal desire. In both cases, the “physiology of feeling [is tied] to the passions” (Harvey 388) and touch takes on an emotional form, an idea that Renaissance medical theory may support on the topic of the four elements, humors, and temperaments. The fact that his “heart dances” and shudders with “tremor cordis” only further foregrounds the physiological pressure that the act of joining hands puts on his emotions. So when Hermione asks Leontes if he is “moved” (1.2. 149), she solidifies the translation of touch into an affective form. She, of course, does not use “moved” in the literal sense of being

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22 Cf. Othello to Desdemona: “Hot, hot, and moist. This hand of yours requires / A sequester from liberty; fasting and prayer; / Much castigation; exercise devout; / For here’s a young and sweating devil here / That commonly rebels” (3.4. 39-43).

23 Bartholomeusz reflects on Ian McKellen’s interpretation of the birth of Leontes’ jealousy at Stratford-upon-Avon in 1976: “McKellen entered with his arm round Hermione” (231) so that his jealousy was born on the stage as the audience experienced it.
displaced but instead in an emotional one, tying the tactility of being physically moved by an external force to the emotions. Although one might continue to assert the primacy of sight in this scene as Tribble does, Harvey’s brief discussion of sight as provided in Plato’s *Timaeus* suggests that sight itself is subsumed under the tactile sense. She remarks that Plato describes sight as “streams of vision touching” (Harvey 387) whereby the object perceived touches the eye. So the joining of hands that affectively touches Leontes demonstrates that his jealousy arrives not by means of sight, but entirely by way of touch.

The mental craft that spurs Leontes’ conviction is the last in a series of acts that affirms this idea. Despite Harvey’s useful association of craftsmanship with touch through the figure of Vulcan (400), this notion of mental craft is better elucidated by an exchange of accusations between Hermione and Leontes at the beginning of the second act. When Hermione accuses Leontes of “mistak[ing]” (2.1. 81) her, the falsity of Leontes’ judgment takes less precedence than its description as an act of mis-taking, an action fundamentally tactile. In fact, Leontes accuses her of this very action when he returns his wife’s charge in the same line, saying that she “mistook [. . .] / Polixenes for [him]” (2.1. 81-2). In a literal sense, Hermione “takes” wrongly by joining hands not with her husband but with Polixenes, yet she also makes the less tangible, mental error of misinterpretation of which she accuses Leontes and by which the definition of “mistake” is more generally understood. This exchange thus transports the tactile sense beyond its physical and affective forms to the process of interpreting, judging, and coming to know others, and in turn points to the liaison forged between touch and certitude through the process of mental invention.

The spider allegory scene in Act 2 further justifies this association of the tactile with the

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24 For an in-depth reflection on this theory of sight and simulacra, see Plato’s *Timaeus* (479-80).
mind’s creative power. By conceiving an allegory to relate how he surmised Hermione’s guilt, Leontes materializes his ability to “mistake a fiction of his own devising for fact” (Barton 177), stating:

There may be in the cup  
A spider steep’d, and one may drink, depart,  
And yet partake no venom, for his knowledge  
Is not infected; But if one present  
Th’abhorr’d ingredient to his eye, make known  
How he hath drunk, he cracks his gorge, his sides,  
With violent hefts. I have drunk, and seen the spider. (2.1. 39-45)

As discussed earlier, the spider represents artisan and narrator at once. Yet in this scene it primarily becomes a symbol of the erotic relationship that Leontes divines between his wife and intimate friend, in turn pointing to his reliance on bodily and psychological forms of touch to make sense of his surroundings. Leontes crafts not just a narrative, but one of sexual infidelity, yielding to the tactility of embrace and of the imagination in an endeavor to resolve his epistemic anxiety. While the assertion will undoubtedly be made that sight leads to this violent response, this claim provides too limited a perspective on the function of the allegory as a whole to the play: to accent the creative power of Leontes’ mind to invent fictions which he then regards as true. Moving from the chief symbol of the allegory to a meditation on the allegory itself as an act of mental production, touch therefore assumes a narrative form in the midst of a reflection on the way Leontes arrived at certainty. The “sad tale” that his allegory interrupts further speaks to the

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25 This allegory bears remarkable resemblance to one in Oth.: “What sense had I of her stol'n hours of lust? / I saw't not, thought it not, it harmed not me: / I slept the next night well, fed well, was free and merry; / I found not Cassio's kisses on her lips. / He that is robbed, not wanting what is stolen, / Let him not know't, and he's not robbed at all” (3.3. 335-40).

26 As Mamillius prepares to “give” his tale “of sprites and goblins” in his mother’s ear, the dramatic action shifts to Leontes’ tale of marital infidelity and platonic betrayal (2.1. 25-32).
presence of touch under the form of mental craft as we dilate our approach to his narrative (Barton 162), infusing the scene with a myriad of references to the creative power of the mind that intimately link to the epistemological issues raised therein.

After employing this allegory, Leontes concludes that he “remains a pinch’d thing” (2.1. 51), recalling his former tirade in which he condemns the “paddling palms and pinching fingers” (1.2. 114) of his wife and Polixenes. It is their act of joining hands that emotionally “pinches” Leontes, as the note to this line testifies, and facilitates his mental leap to infidelity. His conclusion therefore sheathes the many forms of touch, enveloping a physical gesture, emotional response, and mental invention in one verse line to underline just how much he relies on these tactile forms to find a certitude far from objectively “true” but nonetheless unshakable. Through the appearances of touch in its physical, affective, and crafting forms, the scenes in which Leontes’ jealousy and certitude reach fruition ultimately reveal that he engages in a mode of knowledge acquisition quite similar to that used by other characters in WT. We must then center on Leontes neither for the dramatic irony he invokes nor for the isolation that his fallacy fosters as Barton and Tribble suggest, but for his tactile participation in the shared pursuit of sincerity, of togetherness with the Other through psychic resolve, that persists throughout the play.

“**And Those Gates Opened, as Mine, Against Their Will**: The Politics of the Female Body

If we continue to examine the jealousy plot from its inception, we witness this jealousy throw Leontes into a state of epistemological confusion that leaves not just his wife’s fidelity but

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27 This pinching exemplifies the Renaissance theory of “action at a distance”; that Leontes remains emotionally “pinch’d” an act later by their fingers suggests that he is acted upon ‘at a distance,’ reinforcing his jealousy as a derivative of touch.
also his son’s legitimacy in question. Through a series of haptic metaphors, Leontes tries to reconcile his mind to the mysteries that Hermione and Mamillius have now become. During his first and only exchange with Mamillius and the cuckoldry speech that succeeds it, Leontes draws on social forms of touch that work to distance him from the more physical act of sexual infidelity, or what I term “human touch,” that provoked and still underlies his jealousy. This retreat is especially absorbing because Leontes at once refuses and enlists the tactile sense, on the one hand sensual and on the other social, to resolve his paternal and marital doubts. Yet in order to understand the politics of the female body that Leontes undertakes, we must look to an earlier moment when Leontes attempts to verify his son’s resemblance to him, an appropriation that inaugurates a language of territorial possession and ownership that etymologically derives from the tactile. While this struggle ultimately fails and leaves Leontes only further baffled and jealous, it more importantly illustrates his reliance upon touch, among its legal, political and cosmic gradations, to assuage the jealousy that infects his mind.

Just after the onset of his jealousy, Leontes begins to name Mamillius’s traits in a search for likeness of the boy to the father, but this pursuit does little to sort out the variables that his wife and son suddenly present to him. Although his attempt to answer these questions is unsuccessful, it notably demonstrates the ways by which Leontes’ figurative use of touch endeavors to affirm the legitimacy of his son. We see this tactility initially play out under the guise of simile in this scene, specifically in the number of times Leontes uses possessive pronouns and variations of the adjectival “like.” Leontes begins by asking Mamillius, “art thou my boy?” (1.2. 119), and proceeds to examine his son’s traits in search of this likeness; he says

28 William Macready as Leontes in the 1837 performance of WT at Covent Garden “took hold of Mamillius roughly” (Bartholomeusz 231) on this line.
his son’s nose “is a copy out of mine” (1.2. 120-21), that Mamillius lacks certain traits to be “full like me” (1.2. 128), and “looking on the lines / Of my boy’s face, methoughts I did recoil / Twenty-three years, and saw myself unbreeched / [. . .] / How like, methought, I then was to this kernel” (1.2. 152-58). By likening Mamillius to himself, Leontes attempts to capture his son in his own image, and in so doing, he figuratively appropriates the son in terms of the father. It is this metaphoric appropriation of Mamillius that gets extrapolated to a more intrusive discourse of bodily possession and trespass in the cuckoldry speech that follows, where Leontes discards the question of his son’s legitimacy in favor of a quest to determine the limits of his control over his wife’s sexuality. While this effort to resolve his paternal anxieties fails, it more importantly shows a man experimenting with different forms of touch to manage and abate his epistemic crisis.

The persistence of this language in the play becomes clear at the start of the fifth act, when Leontes laments that had he taken Paulina’s counsel, “[he] might have looked upon [his] Queen’s full eyes, / Have taken treasure from her lips” (5.1. 53-4), and soon after, when he says the spirit of Hermione would “again possess her corpse” (5.1. 58) were he to treat a worse wife more kindly. In so doing, Leontes imagines a situation in which he could “take” the treasure of Hermione’s lips just as her spirit would retake her body in the event of his remarriage, referring

29 For more information on the imagery of hereditary likeness in the passage, especially on eggs, and on the confluence of hereditary and poetic likeness see Allen Shoaf’s study. We might also refer to the end of the play when Leontes tells Florizel that his “father’s image is so hit” (5.1. 126) in him, or that his mother “print[ed] [his] royal father off, / Conceiving” (5.1. 124-25) him, drawing on two overtly physical activities—archery and printing—to express Florizel’s similarity to his father.

30 See *Tmp.*: “There thou mayst brain him / Having first seiz’d his books [. . .] / [. . .] / Remember / First to possess his books” (3.2. 87-91).
to the tactile act of taking, seizing, or grasping denoted by the word “possess” (“Possess,” n.5). It is under this sense, though in less invasive terms, that Leontes tries to reaffirm the biological link to his son as Bradin Cormack suggests in a truly insightful article on the problem and redefinition of Leontes’ notion of sovereignty in this play. Therein, he argues that Leontes “collapses the son’s alterity into an iteration of the father” (494) in his desperate search for likeness—the same move toward the Other that Levinas refuses and replaces with the concept of sincerity, a term used to signal the connection of self to other without this collapse. It is for this reason that Leontes’ endeavor fails: in his paternal appropriation of his son on the one hand and in its more dangerous form of sexual control on the other in the cuckoldry speech that follows. Surrendering the pursuit to negotiate whether his son is or is not his, Leontes instead undertakes the pursuit to alleviate his sexual jealousy. While his effort to ascertain the limits of his power over his wife’s body is unsuccessful, in large part since he fails to conceive it as anything more than an iteration of his own sovereignty, this effort more importantly frames touch as a favored medium by which to handle his crisis with the female body.

Turning from paternal to marital concerns, Leontes amplifies the metaphoric appropriation of Mamillius to a more encroaching discourse of bodily trespass and possession. By framing an erotic form of touch in legal-political terms of territorial possession, he attempts to reconcile himself to Hermione’s uncertain sexual behavior by distancing himself from the human touch that forms the basis of his jealousy. For all that he falters in so doing, he more starkly reveals his reliance on touch to grapple with his intense and multiple anxieties. Yet

31 What is interesting about touch in this regard is that it is a form of making contact that is, at the same time, an encounter affirming otherness.

32 Although Leontes remains firm in his desire to avenge his wife’s infidelity after this scene, he employs images of archery and fishing that suggest he still uses touch to deal with his jealousy: “For the harlot king
before turning to the reflection on cuckoldry in question, we must observe that this language of possession is framed from the outset of the play in amatory and political terms. Polixenes’s first concern with his stay in Sicilia gestures to the throne he has left behind, for nine months have passed “since [he has] left [his] throne / Without a burden” (1.2. 2-3). While this line literally denotes that the throne has been empty for this period, the use of “burden” initiates a language of fertility that permeates the passage, that is made physically present in the pregnant body of Hermione, and that inextricably ties the king’s political concerns to those of reproduction.

A notion that would have been familiar to audiences of Shakespeare’s time, this mélange hits a deep-rooted concern with monarchical nations and patterns of royal succession, which depended upon the reproduction of a son and heir to the kingdom to secure its perpetuation into the future. In effect, this process allowed kingdoms to ensure their survival into the future as a force totally unpredictable and wholly other through biological reproduction and the touch necessary to this process. By weaving a familiar concern to readers of WT into the play that deals with the correspondences between politics and procreation, Polixenes offers us a way to uncover similar crossings in the passage to follow.

What I am suggesting is that Polixenes provides us a legend by which to read this

(Polixenes) / Is quite beyond mine arm, out of the blank / And level of my brain, plot-proof; but she / I can hook to me” (2.3. 4-7). While Polixenes lies outside Leontes’ range of touch (2.3. 5-6n1), Hermione does not and thus becomes the vehicle through which Leontes carries out his jealousy, imprisoning her and exiling their newborn daughter.

English and French monarchs of the time commonly practiced what was known as the “royal touch,” whereby monarchs would lay their hands on their subjects to cure them of various skin diseases, especially scrofula, otherwise known as ‘the king’s evil.’ King James, in fact, was known for his aversion to this practice, a revulsion for which we can hardly blame him. Refer to: “By the King: A Proclamation Concerning the King’s Evill.”
linguistic interplay between the erotic and more social forms of touch that play out in legal and political fields here. His signal towards the intersections of the amatory and political in matters of royal concern ultimately allows us to search for similar points of contact in the passages that follow, both in the exchange with Mamillius already discussed and in the cuckoldry speech on which I now center. So while this motif of burdens in the play has been extensively studied for justifiable reason, Polixenes’s opening speech more significantly grants access to passages that have been overlooked or received little attention in this play until now.

For this reason I now turn to the moment at which we find Leontes battling the question of his wife’s sexual fidelity and the extent of his control over it through a series of haptic metaphors. By distancing Leontes from the human touch that spurred his jealousy, these metaphors urge him to acknowledge that he must hand over his assumed sovereignty over the female body to women themselves despite his best attempts to hold onto it. In sum, these social gestures toward touch become a means by which Leontes can expand his notion of sovereignty beyond its self-centeredness to one that encompasses the Other. That he still resists this expansion by the end of this speech is of less import than that, through touch, his notion of sovereignty over the female body is destabilized, giving way to an alternative, explicitly female form. In other words, although he does not fully accept this need to modify his jurisdictional views, the tactile metaphors he employs at the very least begin to redefine them in terms required to achieve sincerity with his wife and her sexual body.

In this reflection on cuckoldry, he begins to accost this epistemological barrier of the

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34 This motif has been examined in relation to the motif of “bearing a part” (4.4. 627), the bear that pursues Antigonus in the fourth act, and the dual sense of “issue” (1.2. 186) as outcome and offspring. For further research on this topic, see Maurice Hunt’s and Dennis Biggins’s articles and Susan Snyder’s introduction to the play (30-33).
sexual female by locating himself among a group of cuckolds whose wives’ bodies have been trespassed by other men. It seems helpful here to elaborate on yet another aspect of Cormack’s argument, one in which he suggests that Leontes’ uncertainty and subsequent leap into madness originates from a notion of sovereignty that fails to recognize its relation to others; a sovereign can only be “sovereign to the Other” (490). In contending that WT is about the “threat of difference to [this] indivisible sovereignty” (490) and the construction of an alternative model to it, Cormack perfectly captures a crisis in Leontes’ jurisdicational conviction that Cormack and I find map onto and are resolved in the amatory field.

Yet where Cormack primarily focuses on Florizel’s model of love as alternate to and redeemer of Leontes’ “self-enclosed” (510) sovereignty, I find that Leontes himself reconstructs this form of sovereignty by way of the tactile in his speech. In other words, while Cormack finds that the Bohemian plot “pluralizes [this] structure that has subtended Leontes’ jealousy” (511), I suggest that Leontes sets this process in motion on his own by way of touch. To do this, Leontes not only enters the amatory field of sex and reproduction to broaden his conception of sovereignty, but in so doing he more importantly employs a language of territorial possession that constitutes the very epistemic crisis of sovereignty that gnaws at him. This interpretation makes visible the role of the tactile in forcing Leontes to accept the limits of his own authority, to allow for the “fact of other similar powers” (500), and thereby recognize this authority’s

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35 Cormack cites and sagaciously probes the following speech for evidence of such a process: “for the King’s son took me by the hand and called me brother; and then the two kings called my father brother; and then the Prince my brother and the Princess my sister called my father father, and so we wept” (5.2. 119-22). He points to David Bergerson’s research on the redefinition of family in this excerpt (511), to which I add that the gesture of taking “by the hand” in part activates this process of redefinition.
inevitable participation in the world.\textsuperscript{36} I therefore propose that, with the help of Cormack’s analysis, Leontes moves beyond a “unique” (485), “singular” (485), and “self-enclosed” (510) concept of sovereignty toward one that understands its relation to the Other.\textsuperscript{37} Though this movement is incomplete, it more importantly demonstrates how Leontes uses touch as a means by which to test the reach of his authority, agree to its limitations, and thereafter endeavor to adopt an alternative model of female sovereignty.\textsuperscript{38}

In a speech highly concerned with his status as sovereign ruler, father, and husband, Leontes reflects on the topic of cuckoldry to reconcile himself to Hermione’s supposed adultery. Cluttered with so many unfinished clauses and detours of thought, Leontes’ speech structurally mirrors his mental struggle to reconcile himself to this anxiety, something he accomplishes by locating himself among a whole group of cuckoldolds:

\begin{verbatim}
Many a man there is, even at this present, 
Now, while I speak this, holds his wife by th’ arm, 
That little thinks she has been sluiced in’s absence 
And his pond fished by his next neighbor, by 
Sir Smile, his neighbor—nay, there’s comfort in’t. (1.2. 190-94)
\end{verbatim}

While Cormack does not cite this passage in his article, I think it wonderfully in line with his argument that the play challenges Leontes’ highly solipsistic notion of sovereignty. Citing Jean Bodin’s and John Selden’s political theories that “the sovereign is the abstract sign of his own

\textsuperscript{36} For further textual analysis on this point, refer to Cormack’s perceptive dichotimization of these models of sovereignty: Sicilia and Bohemia, Leontes and Florizel, Paulina’s use of the superlative “most” to express Hermione’s beauty and the Old Shepherd’s use of “very” to express that of Perdita (499).

\textsuperscript{37} We might look to Coriolanus for an exploration of similar issues, perhaps the last play that Shakespeare wrote before WT.

\textsuperscript{38} Prospero is forced to alter his conception of sovereignty at a similar time in Tmp. when he “abjures” his magic, “breaks [his] staff,” and “drowns [his] book” (5.1. 33-57).
uncommonness” (490), Cormack would argue that Leontes here renders himself remarkably *common*, resisting the “uniqueness” (485) that sovereignty seems to require by situating himself among “many a man” who has fallen victim to infidelity. If we turn to the tactile, we see Leontes begin to cede this position as sovereign husband as he comes to realize that his wife’s sexual behavior exceeds the limits of his control, is capable of encroachment by any Sir Smile, and thus entirely *other* through a series of haptic metaphors. What I find especially gripping is that these jurisdictional borders become apparent through the *limits* of touch, for although “many a man” can “[hold] his wife by th’ arm,” that does not suggest he achieves unique possession of her heart or sexual organs. This particular use of touch does not stop here, but persists through the rest of this speech, framing Hermione’s infidelity as a legal transgression on two fronts: a violation not just of the marital contract, but also of property lines.

It is this more problematic language of possession and trespass in which we can most clearly see Leontes endeavor to accept an autonomous form of female sexuality. We must first remind ourselves that such language is inherently tactile, for to possess oneself of or take hold of something refer to gestures made by the hands though their current meanings have since been abstracted from these fleshly confines. Secondly, we must note that the engagement of this language in social forms of touch works to distance Leontes from the purely physical touch of “paddling palms and pinching fingers” (1.2. 114) that first provoked his jealousy. It is this retreat from the sensual, human touch of Hermione’s and Polixenes’s hands that becomes the means by which Leontes tries to alleviate his worries about his wife in this scene.

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39 Othello demands to know Iago’s thoughts, to whom Iago replies: “You cannot, if my heart were in your hand!” (3.3. 163).

40 Similar legal colorings of touch can be seen in *Oth.*: “No, as I am a Christian: / If to preserve this vessel for my lord / From any other foul *unlawful touch* / Be not to be a strumpet, I am none” (4.2. 81-4). Emphasis mine.
Giordano 37

Leontes first casts this issue into relief by the number of times in which he uses the masculine possessive pronoun, “his,” to claim her body in the passage: five times in the span of four lines. It is this overplayed possession in which the territorial metaphor of marital infidelity as ponds fished and gates opened also participates to explore the amount of control Leontes can or cannot exert over women’s sexuality. By comparing an adulterous wife to “his pond fished by his next neighbor”\footnote{Cf. See Pompey in Measure for Measure on a newly imprisoned man “groping for trouts in a peculiar river” (1.2. 75).} or one “sluiced in’s absence,” Leontes represents the female body as an object to be handled by several forms of touch: to be penetrated, regulated, and owned by men. Yet because the fishing line rather than the phallic pole is inserted into the pond when fishing, Leontes’ depiction of intercourse becomes an indirect one, where sexuality is implied rather than explicitly stated. By giving us a mere silhouette of intercourse, Leontes visually represents his repeated evasion of the human touch that sparked his jealousy, and in so doing, he instantiates social touch as an alternative means by which to relieve it.

Just as the fishing metaphor enacts intercourse, so too the use of the nominal “sluice,” a gate which controls the flow of water, as a verb here depicts a man opening the sluice to a woman’s body. Leontes elaborates on this imagery of trespass to articulate the comfort that he finds in a shared experience of cuckoldry, one he defines as such: “whiles other men have gates, and those gates opened, / As mine, against their will” (1.2. 195-96). Referring to a range of scholarly research, Susan Snyder mentions that this image of the vagina as gate\footnote{This gate motif prominently appears in Cor. in the second scene of the fifth act (5.2. 39-75). For further observations, refer to Sean Benson’s article. Also, for a pastoral form of this motif see Polixenes’s threat to Perdita later in the act: “If ever henceforth thou / These rural latches to his entrance open, / Or hoop his body more with thy embraces, / I will devise a death as cruel for thee/ As thou art tender to’t” (4.4. 417-21). Emphasis mine. In this way,} alludes to the
Petrarchan besieged castle, which compared women to towns under siege (1.2. 197n1). By figuring the female body in terms of property subject to trespass and siege, this metaphor fundamentally reveals the limits to Leontes’ authority through the physicality of these actions and therefore through touch. In turn, this comparison thrusts female sexuality beyond the boundaries of a contained piece of land to a space that cannot be subordinated to the control of a single proprietor. By employing euphemistic metaphors that gesture towards but never fully reach the human touch at the core of his jealousy, Leontes refuses to accept the limits of his authority on the one hand and begins to acknowledge them on the other. His effort to find comfort in his cuckoldry therefore grounds itself, however unsteadily, in touch; he uses a set of tactile images to pursue sincerity with his wife, a state in which the sovereignty of the husband over his wife’s body is refuted and replaced with a distinctly female sovereignty. That he fails to reach this state may indicate touch is unfit to fully allay Leontes’ epistemic crisis at this point and time, but his failure still shows touch as a crucial recourse by which to manage and abate the jealousy that torments him.

This notion of the sovereign female body manifests not only in its resistance to a single, confined territory, but also in women’s control over their own sexual actions as the next line reveals. Leontes notes the absurdity of despairing over female infidelity for “should all despair / That have revolted wives, the tenth of mankind / Would hang themselves” (1.2. 196-98). Here, women become rebellious, not recipients but agents of marital infidelity, suggesting that their sexual behavior is entirely under their control and something they have taken into their own

Perdita is given full authority over her sexual behavior since she opens the latches and encloses his body with her embraces.

Paulina later refers to the charge of marital infidelity as the potential “trespass of the Queen” (2.2. 62) and so fortifies this sexual resistance by placing the power to trespass into the hands of Hermione herself.
hands. It is this tactile behavior that Leontes harnesses to demonstrate how futile to despair over marital infidelity would be, and thus how to manage and alleviate the anxiety that it poses to him. The metaphor of “revolted wives” participates in the image of violence that the previous images of trespassing and siege introduce, again gesturing towards the physicality that it involves. In so doing, this language suggests that touch becomes the means by which Leontes can relinquish any notion of power over female sexuality and in turn work to achieve sincerity with his wife. While he does not surrender these notions by the end of the speech, his tactile language no less speaks to his use of touch as a method by which to eventually accept the autonomy of the Other.

In a last-ditch effort, Leontes cosmically positions female sexuality outside his jurisdiction as he ascribes power over it to the stars, saying that “it is a bawdy planet, that will strike / Where ‘tis predominant” (1.2. 199-200). By attributing the actions of the female body to the “bawdy planet,” Venus, that governs lust in classical mythology and thus becomes a symbol for sexuality, Leontes hints at human touch instead of directly addressing it and so gives us another case in which he avoids the act of marital infidelity to manage the anxiety that sprung from it. We might also note that this personification of the planet as “striking” alludes to Renaissance astrological theories where the cosmos were believed to exert influence on our lives by touching us “at a distance.”

He then goes on to say: “be it concluded, / No barricado for a belly. Know’ t, / It will let in and out the enemy / With bag and baggage” (1.2. 201-4). Bringing the metaphor of gates to a close, Leontes concludes that no “barricado,” no single authority can

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44 Aside from its fluctuations between literal and figurative uses, the verb “strike” in the cases of music usually involve the literal striking of an instrument that then provokes a spiritual response, as when Hermione first descends and Paulina cries, “Music, awake her, Strike!” (5.3. 98).
prevent access to a woman’s body, which will “let in and out” at will the male genitalia, or “bag and baggage.” Oddly however, we do not seem to see any actual point of contact between the “belly” and its phallic invader, again illustrating his evasion of human touch to relieve the anxieties that consume his mind. By lacing erotic to territorial touch through the image of gates here, Leontes thus brings a purely corporeal sense of touch to bear on the fields of property and jurisdiction in order to find “comfort” in his status as cuckold. While Leontes does not ultimately overcome his jealousy in this scene, the series of legal-political metaphors of touch he employs reveal a man simultaneously resisting and coming to realize the futility of his efforts to enclose the female body within the gates of his own jurisdiction. Through a social engagement of touch, he still throws the tactile sense into relief as an integral medium by which to confront his epistemic anxieties about the Other.

“Let Time’s News Be Known When ‘tis Brought Forth”: Time as the Other

If we consider marital infidelity as a force of otherness that operates in the diegetic world of the play, in the same way we may consider Time as the larger force of otherness that hovers above the narrative itself, shapes its course, and informs each scene. In fact, it may be in part due to this otherness that most scholarship on WT, with the exception of the last fifty years, has viewed Time’s speech at the start of the fourth act as a “disruptive presence” and interpolation (Snyder 40). In line with contemporary challenges to this claim however, I too think this point of view overlooks Time’s subterranean yet nevertheless present role throughout the play. In an effort to assert the centrality of Time to the play, I first direct our attention to the various markers by which he exposes himself as a force whose powers exceed our own and therefore surpass our power to articulate them. I then turn to the haptic imagery of the speech for its engagement of
touch to spell out Time’s trade in human terms. Finally, I center on biological reproduction as one way in which the characters respond to the passage of time and the diverse worries that follow from it. In so doing, I propose that this speech is absolutely vital to the alleviation of the assorted temporal anxieties that appear in the play, reconciling characters to the process of time through touch.

While I would like to suggest that Time assumes certain tactile qualities in these scenes, I posit that it is more fundamentally a force of otherness in the play. This feature becomes apparent when Time asks that we “let [his] news / Be known when ‘tis brought forth” (4.1. 26-7). By beginning with the command, “let,” and stating that his “news” can only be known “when ‘tis brought forth,” Time depicts his “news” and its announcement as information we must allow to be brought forth and that we cannot bring forth ourselves. In this way, knowledge of his “news” becomes predicated on patience and a power that surpasses human ability, leaving Time and its news effectively outside the limits of human reasoning and knowledge. The fact that he earlier refers to his powers as “prophesying” (4.1. 26) only further insists that his faculty of foresight and foreknowledge exceed those that we possess. In so doing, he frames himself as a force whose inner workings exceed and escape the powers of the human mind, not unlike the “other mind” with which epistemologists have so long grappled.

It is this otherness that operates on a structural level as well when Time says that he takes upon himself to “use his wings” and pass over sixteen years to the land of Bohemia and the lives of the characters that inhabit it:

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45 In the article addressed earlier, Ken Jackson and Arthur F. Marotti observe that the “respect for alterity, otherness, and difference” around which New Historicist criticism is organized includes both “a marginalized group in a culture or the distant past itself” (175-76). Emphasis mine.
Impute it not a crime
To me or my swift passage that I slide
O'er sixteen years and leave the growth untried
Of that wide gap, since it is in my power
To o'erthrow law and in one self-born hour
To plant and o'erwhelm custom. (4.1. 4-9)

By portraying himself as a winged figure, common to the iconography of the period (Snyder 34),
Time introduces himself as a heavenly figure quite literally out of this world. On a less explicit
front, the “swift passage” of time violates the Aristotelian doctrine of the classical unities that
structurally shaped the drama preceding and during Shakespeare’s lifetime; in short, Time
replaces the expected single day over which a play was to take place by “slid[ing] / O’er sixteen
years.” While Louis Friedland observes that Shakespeare does not explicitly note his familiarity
with this doctrine, he cites Henry V, Cymbeline, and WT as plays that exhibit the playwright’s
consciousness “of the necessity to preserve a certain propriety of [. . .] time” (75), an analysis
that Snyder also supports (4.1. 4-9n1). It is this departure from Aristotelian tradition that seems
to intensify the “disruptive presence” of Time of which many scholars accuse it, and in fact

46 There may be a flood metaphor at work here that alludes to the earlier sluice-gate metaphor, bearing not
just on how the manual labor of farming can be erased “in one self-born hour,” but also that this physical labor has a
cultural analog in “custom.” In this regard, the agricultural metaphor takes part in an array of tactile language that
communicates material activity in the first half of the play yet becomes largely literal in the second. Douglas
Campbell’s 1958 production in Ontario demonstrates this point by leaving Time with his “hour glass and scythe, [. . .]
alone on the darkening stage” (Bartholomeusz 188). With scythe in hand, Time transforms the agriculture
language of the first half into its literalized and tangible form of the second. We should also observe the parallel
between this embodiment and the incarnation of Leontes’ own largely metaphoric use of touch in the final scene of
embrace with his wife.

47 We might also recall Richard II: “Keep time! how sour sweet music is / When time is broke and no
proportion kept” (5.5. 42-3).
contributes to Time’s alterity.\footnote{48 While we are confused when Time asks us to “remember well / I mentioned a son o’th’King’s” (4.1. 21-2) to whom Hermione in fact refers in the first act of the play (1.2. 34), Snyder finds this remark indicative of his role as “a narrator/playwright [who] ventriloquizes the entire dialogue” (4.1. 21-2n1) through the characters themselves.}

On the one hand Time reveals his alterity within this speech, and on the other, he works to make this alterity available to us. If we again refer to the reproduced passage, the fact that Time requests we “impute it not a crime” that he interferes with the unity of time,\footnote{49 Shakespeare defends himself against the accusations of neoclassicists such as Ben Jonson and John Dryden, whose later attack in “Of Dramatick Poesie, an Essay” is reproduced by way of example: “If you consider the Historical Playes of Shakespeare, they are rather so many Chronicles of Kings, or the business many times of thirty or forty years, crampt into a representation of two hours and a half, which is not to imitate or paint Nature, but rather to draw her in miniature, to take her in little; to look upon her through the wrong end of a Perspective, and receive her Images not onely much less, but infinitely more imperfect then the life: this, instead of making a Play delightful, renders it ridiculous” (29).} and that he enumerates the reason for which he is able to do so, places us in the position of judge to the defendant, Time. By defending his case and soliciting us to acquit him, Time works to render his unusual actions accessible to the human mind. Further, this compulsion to tell a “tale” (4.1. 14) to explain his temporal and geographical leap situates Time’s judicial metaphor in a matrix of narrative touch, rooting his effort to express his otherness in the tactile sense. In a similar vein, Time introduces himself as an artisan within this passage, declaring that he “makes and unfolds error” (4.1. 2) and that “it is in [his] power/ To o’erthrow law, and [. . .] / To plant and o’erwhelm custom” (4.1. 7-9). While these verbs have assumed more abstract meanings since their first conception, they primarily represent tactile acts; to make, unfold, overthrow, plant, and
overwhelm⁵⁰ require the hands to perform the actions they denote. As artisan and teller of this “tale,” Time enlists the tactile sense to demystify his powers and corrode the barrier that separates him from the characters of the play.

Beyond his role as artisan and narrator of this speech and the entire play, Time also frames himself as a father, initiating a conversation that laces a language of reproduction with issues of temporality.⁵¹ He mentions “one self-born hour” (4.1. 8) and refers to his news as that which is “brought forth” (4.1. 27), rendering himself a sort of universal parent and authorial figure whose offspring are law, custom, the growth he leaves “untried,” and increments of time among others (4.1. 6-8n1). Emilia participates in this conversation at an earlier moment, when she informs Paulina that the imprisoned Hermione has “something before her time, delivered” (2.2. 24). By alluding to the gestational period as Hermione’s “time,” Emilia accents just how vital time is to the reproduction, development, and birth of offspring. In sum, this intertwined language of procreation and time ultimately marks how touch mutually elucidates and is elucidated by time, and that to further examine their intersections would not be unreasonable.

In fact, characters throughout the play rely upon forms of touch to counteract a certain number of temporal anxieties and to find sincerity with them. While I here center on sexual reproduction as one way by which characters do so, I do not seek to exclude other gestures that may do the same. To discuss the issue of time, the play most often employs a language of

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⁵⁰ Both the OED and footnote to this line (4.1. 9n1) define “overwhelm” as to overturn, overthrow, upset, or turn upside down. This word arose in the late fourteenth century and survived just into the time in which Shakespeare was writing. While our reception of this verb does not immediately lend itself to the tactile, this etymological history suggests otherwise.

⁵¹ We might also think of Jonson’s epitaph on his first son: his “child of my right hand” (“On My First Sonne” 1) and “best piece of poetrie” (10) whom he had hoped would defeat time.
fertility, the onset of which occurs quite early in the play with Polixenes’s first line. Addressing Leontes, he states that “nine changes of the wat’ry star hath been / The shepherd’s note since we have left our throne / Without a burden” (1.2. 1-2). While we must not ignore that Polixenes represents time in strictly pastoral terms through the shepherd, he more importantly colors this pastoral form of time in reproductive terms; the nine months that he has passed in Sicilia corresponds to the gestational period of a pregnant woman, and the “burden” that leaves his Bohemian throne empty also signifies an organism in the womb (1.2. 2n1). These references to pregnancy and procreation add to a discourse that endures through WT, which roots certain political concerns with royal succession in the biological as we have seen earlier. In short, reproduction serves as a method by which to perpetuate a piece and copy of ourselves into the future, to a certain degree immortalize ourselves, and thereby relieve our anxiety over death.

Polixenes continues, assuring that although he could “[fill] up” (1.2. 4) time with his thanks to the Sicilian court for their hospitality, he chooses instead to “multiply / With one ‘We thank you’ many thousands more / That go before it” (1.2. 7-9) so that he not be indebted to them “for perpetuity” (1.2. 5). In sum, this language of increase elicits the image of a pregnant body and the power to reproduce, which engages in a larger discourse of fertility that includes and foreshadows the pregnant body of Hermione that becomes so problematic for Leontes moments later (1.2. 2n1). In effect, Polixenes’s gesture towards sexual reproduction in an effort to avoid “fill[ing] up” time with a thousand thanks fashions touch as a potential solution to the problem that time here poses for him. Whether the question is how to avoid spending time or how to avoid its being lost, each case enacts touch as a method of sorting out the uncertainties that time moves within us.

If we can reconcile ourselves to the passage of time by giving birth to children who in
some way immortalize us, then we can read the death of Mamillius and the abandonment of Leontes’ newborn daughter as the suspension of this possibility. That the loss of Mamillius and Perdita are the unfortunate byproducts of Leontes’ sustained jealousy works in two directions at once: denying him the familial restoration he seeks on a physical level and refusing him reconciliation with time itself on a metaphysical one. In other words, because he fails to allay his doubts about those around him, he is denied the privilege of relieving those he has about the future that the life of his progeny would accomplish. Leontes recognizes this when the servant enters in the third act to announce that Mamillius has died, to which he cries out: “Apollo’s angry, and the heavens themselves / Do strike at my injustice” (3.2. 143-44). Leontes’ personification of the heavens as “striking” down Mamillius again alludes to the Renaissance theory of “action at a distance” by which the cosmos were said to influence an individual’s disposition and interactions with others. What is interesting in this regard is that touch gets extrapolated to the cosmos in an effort to show Leontes the falsity of his suspicions. In this way, the death of Mamillius becomes a final effort on the part of the tactile sense to clear the doubts that fog Leontes’ mind. Since Leontes realizes his mistake specifically in response to the death of his child and his wife—his progeny and the opportunity to procreate—the play makes the loss of reproductive touch, and the celestial touch that caused it, agents of this realization. In other words, it is the heavenly engagement and procreative suspension of touch that allow the process of Leontes’ enlightenment to begin.

That Leontes must lose his entire family, while perhaps too severe a punishment for his simple charge of marital infidelity, points to a much larger issue of procreation and political succession that must be set right in order for any reconciliation between Leontes and those around him to be possible. The oracle’s threat that “the King shall be without an heir if that
which is lost be not found” (3.2. 132-33) then implies that his successive failures to abate his jealousy through touch can only be recovered when Perdita, the offspring of intercourse and so touch, is found. In response to Leontes’ failed haptic attempts to subdue his jealousy, the play does not therefore pronounce this use of touch as futile, but rather that it must be reformed through Perdita in order for dramatic reconciliation to be possible.

“Give Me Those Flowers There”: Perdita and the Touch of Hospitality

The play retrieves this lost touch not only through Perdita’s revival in the fourth act of the play, but also through her own recruitment of touch when confronted with a certain number of epistemic barriers as an adolescent in love and hostess of the sheepshearing feast. In response to a multitude of uncertainties that precede the feast and to her pastoral father’s command to “bid / These unknown friends to’s welcome, for it is / A way to make us better friends, more known” (4.4. 64-6), Perdita asks Dorcas for flowers, which she then distributes to her guests in order to fulfill her duty as “mistress o’th’feast” (4.4. 68). It is her recruitment of touch to make host and guest “more known” to each other that replicates the Levinasian meeting of self and other and so becomes one medium through which the Bohemian plot works to resolve the problems that arose from this encounter in the first half of the play. While I will shortly turn to the commercial and romantic concerns that open the fourth act, we must first observe the ways in which touch serves as an instrument of hospitality during the feast in order to see how this relationship is complicated in those fields and then regained through touch.

52 Partly mediated by plants, this engagement of touch literalizes and embodies the agricultural metaphors that Time uses to communicate his alterity to us. While he “plant[s] and o'erwhelm[s] custom” (4.1. 9), these plants have both real and symbolic functions of linking Perdita to her guests.
As an integral part of classical Greek civilization and literature, the theme of hospitality was expressed by the term *xenia*, or guest-friendship. In an article on hospitality in Sophocles’ *Philoctetes*, Elizabeth Belfiore defines xenia as the “relationship between host and guest [. . .] initiated by definite prescribed acts and sanctioned by the gods, that obligates each of them to carry out certain responsibilities towards the other” (114).\(^5^3\) In this regard, the relationship between host and guest is predicated on the mutual responsibility of host to guest and guest to host\(^5^4\) such that it embodies the Levinasian commitment of the Self to the Other.\(^5^5\) If we are to understand hospitality as responsibility, I then suggest that Perdita’s decision to distribute flowers to “take on [. . .] / The hostess-ship o’th’day” (4.4. 71-2) renders touch the agent by which she carries out this responsibility to her guests and traverses the barrier between self and other that arouses a great deal of anxiety within the characters of the play.

Much criticism overlooks the correspondences between flowers, varying shades of touch, and the relationship of host and guest in this scene, and even more have ignored this scene entirely and opted for the largeness and magic of the last act. Situated amid plots of disguise, false business, and courtship, this scene explores and offers a solution to the problem of the “other mind” through the image of the flower being passed from the hands of Perdita to those of her guests, an image that also points to the joining of hands and bodies in marriage to which courtship looks forward. In a moment that echoes Adam’s act of naming all created beings in

\(^{5^3}\) Belfiore notes that the “formal initiation of xenia was preceded [. . .] by *euergesia*, [or gift-giving.] supplication, and the exchange of *pista,*” or a “ritual handclasp,” and any violation of these terms was considered an “offense against the gods” (115).

\(^{5^4}\) The French word for both host and guest is *l’hôte*, lexically reinforcing their responsibility to each other.

\(^{5^5}\) Levinas himself labels the relationship with the Other as one characterized by hospitality, where the Other disturbs the self “at home” and in response to whom the self cannot approach with “empty hands” (*TI* 51).
Paradise, Perdita gives flowers to the guests of her sheepshearing feast that correspond directly to their age: “These are flowers / Of middle summer, and I think they are given / to men of middle age” (4.4. 106-8). Here Perdita binds flower and man into a temporally parallel relationship, accessing the “true” age of each man through the flower of the corresponding season. Moments later, Perdita wishes that she had flowers to adorn “virgin” (4.4. 115) tresses and “maidenheads” (4.4. 116), and she follows these wishes with a call to Proserpina. In so doing, she layers this gift-giving with a sexual valence at once chaste and violent by addressing virgins and alluding to a much darker history of sexual violence that underlies the mythological rape of Proserpina. Perdita’s speech thus gestures beyond the material touch of passing a flower from one hand to another to the potential for erotic contact between two bodies, an idea underlined earlier in the scene by “gillyvors,” often identified with loose women (4.4. 82n1).

These flowers and the sexual symbolism they appropriate not only foster the relationship between host and guest, but also work to resolve the debate about nature and art in this scene. In response to Polixenes’s claim that all “art itself is nature” (4.4. 97), Perdita’s sustained refusal to plant these artificially produced flowers suggests that she is not entirely convinced by his claim. Like Perdita, neither are we. For if all is finally “natural,” then it follows that there would be much less anxiety about the nebulous territory between nature and what is other than nature in the play than is so vividly and repeatedly displayed. In fact, if we consider this binary in terms of self and other, Polixenes collapses art into nature while Perdita acknowledges the impossibility of this collapse such that she endorses the only relationship between self and other that Levinas deems possible. It seems no coincidence then that Perdita sets about distributing flowers and in fact ends this effort with the desire for Florizel to be “in [her] arms” (4.4. 132), as if responding to Polixenes’s argument with her way of approaching the Other: through the bestowal of flowers,
an act of touch. By using the tactile sense to interact with her guests and address art as a force of otherness, Perdita paves the way for us to locate similar points of contact between touch and problems of epistemology in this scene, especially in its economic and amatory relationships. In the commercial exchanges of Autolycus on the one hand and the relationship of Florizel and Perdita on the other, the bond between host and guest that she initiates assumes two different forms to unfold the ways in which doubts emerge, infect, and are dispelled by touch in the social field.

“My Traffic is Sheets”: Autolycus and the Commercial Exchange

By gifting flowers to the guests of her sheepshearing, Perdita engages in a form of interpersonal exchange that appears in the previous scene through a series of commercial transactions. If we read the low plot as readdressing and sorting out the problems created in the high plot, the Bohemian scenes give us a range of social interactions that offer alternatives to the jealousy and rage with which Leontes reacts to his wife and Polixenes. In this regard, his anxiety spreads to the pastoral scenes as a means of exploring the ways in which touch might palliate that anxiety in the spaces of commerce, hospitality and adolescent love. While this brief reflection on the points of dialogue between the Sicilian and Bohemian plots no doubt deserves more time, I touch upon it for the purposes of framing the latter plot in conversation with the same tactile and epistemic concerns undertaken in the former, especially in the field of economics. Through a set of commercial exchanges between Autolycus and his customers, the play insists on the tactility of the exchange in such a way that it renders the exchange a more successful effort to confront the “other mind” through touch than those of Leontes in the first
half of the play. At the heart of this renewed effort lies Autolycus who, as thieving rogue and fraudulent peddler, comes to stand for the uncertainty that underlies every commercial deal on the one hand yet maintains touch as the leading response to it on the other.

For a play already so immersed in the tactile and epistemological concerns of its time, we should not be surprised that it also engages in a discourse that sought how best to represent and ensure the fairness of the commercial exchange between individuals and across cultures. In an effort to suggest that the pastoral economy of *WT* relies on the tactile, I draw our attention to the mechanics of the commercial exchange. While apparent in the large part of our business deals today, the transaction between buyer and seller in the Renaissance was fundamentally an exchange “between individuals” (Radford 127) for “one’s own favour, or to establish the conditions for fair exchange and prevent fraud” (128). In this sense, the commercial exchange resembles the Levinasian face-to-face encounter where the Self meets and *must* enter into relation with the impregnable and unknowable Other. That the exchange depends on the mutual agreement of merchant and customer and that the passing of money by the hands acts out this agreement establishes touch as the agent by which the transaction is completed. More simply, the commercial exchange becomes the exchange of trust with the “other mind,” where both parties enlist touch to perform this trust. While we might observe that Autolycus’s dealings are far from honest, this claim does not undermine the importance of the tactile gesture to the interchange of goods between buyer and seller.

56 George Rose gave a wonderful visual of this tactility in his interpretation of Autolycus at the Phoenix Theatre in London in 1951. When he exchanged coats with Florizel, “there was money in the old one which had to be extracted” (Bartholomeusz 177-78).

57 After the Clown has promised to match the Shepherd’s payment in return for Autolycus’s aid, Autolycus tells the Clown, “I will trust you” (4.4. 781).
In fact, his deception only further strengthens this bond. By exposing touch’s inability to discern this fraud through a trade that itself relies on this sense, Autolycus reinforces touch as the main instrument by which to contract with other individuals. If we look at his various professions, each violates the proper terms of touch in the exchange and in turn exposes the limits of the tactile sense to ensure the fairness of our economic transactions. So when Autolycus says “money’s a meddler / that doth utter all men’s ware-a” (4.4. 304-5) in his last song, he at once refers to the “go between” (4.4. 304-5n1) nature of money, and complicates this role with an underlying lexical history that reveals the potential for deception in every business deal. His use of the word meddler denotes one who “mixes wares fraudulently” (4.4. 304-5n1) which etymologically supports this claim. The term may also suggest “one who engages in sexual intercourse with additional wordplay” on the medlar fruit associated with prostitutes (4.4. 304-5n1), amplifying the tactility that lies at the center of commercial transactions by bringing a sexual form of exchange to bear on it. Yet the nuances of this etymology work on a more

58 Autolycus himself announces his dishonesty several times during this scene: “Ha, ha, what a fool honesty is!” (4.4. 575); “Though I am not naturally honest” (4.4. 680); “If I had the mind to be honest” (4.4. 787); and, “If I thought it were a piece of honesty to acquaint the King withal, I would not do’t; I hold it the more knavery to conceal it; and therein am I constant to my profession” (4.4. 650-52).

59 Money is also an intriguing mix of the tangible coin and its intangible, socially assigned value.

60 This economic tactility survives into the latter half of the eighteenth century in the work of political economist Adam Smith and his concept of the “invisible hand,” as articulated in his *Inquiry into the Wealth of Nations*. He argues that all transactions stem from the self-love of the merchant, who “intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention” (477). We might think of this invisible hand then as a means of distinguishing between what is in our control and what lies beyond it in the economic exchange: the hands of the merchant, or the thieving hand of Autolycus, looking out for his own security and the unintended promotion of the public good that follows from it.
problematic level, gesturing toward a world of false commercial deals and commodified sexuality that perverts in some way the customary terms of exchange between individuals; the fraudulent sale of wares violates the tactile exchange of trust between buyer and seller, and prostitution turns the female body into a good to be bought and sold. It is precisely through these perversions of touch that we are able to feel the limits of touch in protecting the fairness of our business deals and, at the same time, the degree to which touch nevertheless informs our commercial interactions with others.

These violations make their first appearance when Autolycus introduces himself as a thief: “my traffic is sheets” (4.3. 23) and “my revenue is the silly cheat” (4.3. 27). On a basic level, Autolycus’s trade is petty theft, especially of laundry. While Snyder notes that this trade likely anticipates “the selling of broadsheets” (4.3. 23n2) that he takes up as peddler in the next scene, she does not detect the possible reference to bedsheets as the site of copulation that would align well with his dealings in “doxies” (4.3. 2), “aunts” (4.3. 11), and “troll-my-dames” (4.3. 78-9). In sum, each meaning works to betray the tactility of his trade on the one hand, and the deception involved on the other. By “cheating” others and concealing in his language a sort of underworld of significations not readily in sight, he exposes the limitations of social and narrative touch in the commercial exchange. In other words, his trade precludes both the tactile gesture that performs the exchange and the interpretive power of the mind from detecting any fraud and thus denies touch the ability to ensure the fairness of the deal.

Be that as it may, the fact that Autolycus unmask these limits through a trade founded on

Cf. Iachimo in Cymbeline after he has slipped out of the trunk in Imogen’s room: “Cytherea, / How bravely thou becomest thy bed, fresh lily, / And whiter than the sheets! That I might touch! / But kiss; one kiss!” (2.2. 14-7). Whereas Iachimo wants yet is forbidden to touch Imogen in the sheets, Autolycus makes it his very business.
touch inflates rather than devalues the degree to which touch imbues our economic transactions. As thief, he illegally *takes* goods and bypasses the exchange altogether; as peddler, he discredits the trust that the interchange of money through the hands enacts; and his preoccupation with whores commodifies touch by drawing the female body into the marketplace of goods to be exchanged. While these trades mark the points at which the commercial exchange and the haptic gesture on which it is predicated can be violated, their own engagement of touch only further grounds the economy in this sense. So by demonstrating the economic limits of touch through a trade itself tactile, Autolycus asserts rather than undermines how fundamental touch is to our economic interactions with others: both the fair exchange and the petty theft, the honest deal and the silly cheat. 62

One of the primary exchanges where this assertion plays out is the sale of ballads in the following scene. If we regard ballads as the products of narrative touch, their sale renders the tactile sense as the means by which self and other enter into a commercial contract. Upon the arrival of the peddler, the servant tells the clown that Autolycus “hath songs for man or woman of all sizes; no milliner can so fit his customers with gloves” (4.4. 191-92). This analogy draws our attention to the image of the hands meeting a pair of gloves. In this regard, the analogy asks us to interpret the matching of good to customer as equivalent to the physical meeting of hand

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62 William Burton’s 1848 production at Palmo’s Opera House in New York exaggerates the tactility of the scene through his revisions to the play. In particular, Bartholomeusz notes the scene where Autolycus bribes the Clown and Shepherd: “When the Clown attempted to put the gold away he was prevented by a visor which fell down over his face. The old Shepherd dropped his staff, seized the Clown’s helmet, and turned it round so that the visor stuck out at the back of his head.” Reviewers of Burton’s production go on to observe that Autolycus steals from them so involuntarily as if “it had changed hands by special providence in his favor” (102). For the full review, refer to the listed page.
and glove, rendering the exchange best articulated in tactile terms. The fact that ballads are the narrative creations of the authorial mind only augments this tactile language, and in effect surrounds the commercial exchange in a nebula of touch.

Adding yet another layer to this nebula, the content of Autolycus’’s ballads are intensely sexual and draw on an economic lexis to discuss a variety of carnal scenes. The servant introduces his ballads as “so without bawdry (which is strange), with such delicate burdens of dildos and fadings, ‘jump her and thump her’” (4.4. 193-95). While the set of images here tells us that these songs are anything but delicate and without bawdry, we might more fruitfully look to the use of “burdens” as a word that links the procreative imagery of the play to the songs’ refrains (4.4. 193-95n1). It is this connection that lexically binds narrative touch to an erotic form, something further substantiated by Mistress Tale-Porter whose name homophonically points to tale as narrative and tail as female genitalia (4.4. 193-95n1). By rendering narrative forms of touch in sexual terms, these ballads magnify their tactility and leave touch at the heart of the economic exchange of which they are part.

The three ballads that Autolycus relates elaborate on this sexuality, the first about “how a usurer’s wife was brought to bed of twenty money-bags at a burden” (4.4. 251-52), the second about a woman who “was turned into a cold fish for she would not exchange flesh with one that loved her” (4.4. 266-68), and the last about “two maids wooing a man” (4.4. 276). In the first, we are given the tale of a woman who gives birth to twenty money-bags, an image that exaggerates

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63 Cf. “My tongue in your tail” (The Taming of the Shrew 2.1. 216) and “O, thereby hangs a tale” (Oth. 3.1. 8) among other places.

64 When Autolycus tells the shepherdesses that he “can bear [his] part” (4.4. 281), he laces the actor’s role as tale-teller to intercourse and reproduction, alluding to the “burden” motif that pervades WT and playing on “part” as “male organ” (4.4. 281n1).
the degree to which the material world engrosses the lives of a usurer such that his wife literally
gives birth to “money-bags.” In this way, the bodily actions of the individual absorb the
commercial world and so demonstrate the social charge of human behavior and desires. This
incorporation of the commercial into the reproductive exchange persists through the next tale
where a woman is transformed into a fish for failing to “exchange flesh” or engage in intercourse
with her lover. By assimilating a commercial vocabulary into the relations between bodies, this
tale works to intensify the physicality of the exchange, of how much it relies on the physical
contact of merchant and customer’s hands to exchange money and in turn register as a valid
transaction in the economic world. We should here recall Harvey’s reading of the Mars and
Venus myth as an exercise in social tact where physical contact registers on a social scale. In this
way, the exchange of money and goods in the pastoral plot can be read as a series of haptic
gestures that assume social meaning; they become signs of the completed transaction and enable
us to suspend our fear of being swindled necessary for its consummation. On this account, the
exaggerated tactility offers us a look into sex, storytelling, and ballad-making as ways by which
to interact with others, and the commercial exchange as participating in the same endeavor.

This bond between touch and the suspension of anxiety appears quite prominently in the
shepherdesses’ concerns about the truth of Autolycus’s ballads. After having asked the Clown to
buy a few, Mopsa says that she “love[s] a ballad in print alife, for then we are sure they are true”
(4.4. 249-50). She here refers to the broadside ballad, a ballad “printed on one side of a large
sheet of paper” (4.4. 186n2) which distinguished it from the purely oral form of ballads. Her

65 Relating how he picked the pockets of everyone at the sheepshearing, Autolycus says, “you might have
pinched a placket,” and “’twas nothing to geld a codpiece of a purse” (4.4. 587-88). Placket refers to the female
genitals (4.4. 587n1), and Snyder draws our attention to Dolan’s reading of the codpiece and purse as figuratively
“‘castrat[ing] men” of their genitals (4.4. 588n1).
interest in ballads “in print” rather than those recited orally, Mopsa implies that the truth of the ballad derives from its tangibility; only after it has been given physical form does the ballad become true. Furthermore, behind this simple term hides a tactile history of printing, which in Shakespeare’s time required a considerable amount of technical work with the hands. To print was originally understood as “to press (something hard) into or upon a softer substance or surface, so as to leave an indentation or imprint” (“Print, v.”). In this regard, the tactility of the ballad—both the creative power that imagined it and the labor that physically produced it—validates it. Mistress Tale-Porter’s name fortifies the haptic nature of the ballad, for it alludes to stories and genitalia as discussed earlier. That she herself puts her “name to” (4.4. 257) the truth of the tale of the usurer’s wife, and “five justices’ hands” (4.4. 270) are put to the tale of the woman transformed into a cold fish only adds to the claim that touch attests to the truth of the ballads. In sum, touch emerges as the principal agent by which the shepherdesses dispel their uncertainty and urge the Clown to buy them from Autolycus.

As we can see, the commercial world of Bohemia offers us a fertile place to peruse and survey the ways by which individuals interact with others, and especially see the role of touch in neutralizing an array of anxieties that lie beneath these interactions. As a sign of this suspension of doubt, the tactile interchange of money and goods thus becomes the author of sincerity between buyer and seller. After considering Autolycus’s trade and the rich gradations of the

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66 The “hands” being put to the truth of these tales helps reinforce the sense of Shakespeare’s hand behind the fictions we witness in the diegetic world of the text and the larger fiction that constitutes the play itself.

67 In this regard, we might consider how subordinate reality is to the collective testimony of others. The Clown is persuaded to buy not because he is certain about Autolycus’s honesty, but because the maids pressure him to do so, making our interactions with others of greater import than knowledge about them.

68 In his 1848 production, Burton was said to nod or wink at the audience such that each of its members
scene’s language, I observed just how much the pastoral economy of *WT* operates upon a set of tactile gestures. As a result, I was able to conclude that touch is vital to the execution and articulation of our economic interactions with others. After having turned to Mopsa and Dorcas’s desire for “true” ballads, I once again found the tactile sense at the core of the exchange, responsible for the alleviation of the many doubts that arise when dealing with the value and comparability of goods. At each turn, these layers of touch most largely record the translation of bodily actions into social ones that give meaning to our interactions with others, a movement to which the play continually points in its commercial elements and beyond.

“Come, your Hand”: Adolescent Love and the Handfast

It is this conversion to which Harvey gestures when she extracts the social “tact” from tactile and labels behavioral and emotional restraint as a “psychic extension of physical contact” (392). Ripe with desires and deeds that represent the extremes of this continuum, the Bohemian scenes depict a great deal of sexual looseness and impropriety on the one hand and a concern for decorum and courtesy in love on the other. Since we have already observed the ways in which the former engages touch as the *modus operandi* for an array of interpersonal exchanges between Autolycus and the maids, I now center on the latter to navigate through the anxieties that cloud the blossoming relationship between Florizel and Perdita. Just as we have seen in the commercial exchange and the relationship between host and guest in previous sections, the


69 The Clown expresses his concerns with this indecency when he asks: “is there no manners left among maids? Will they wear their plackets where they should bear their faces?” (4.4. 233-34).
young lovers partake in a language of tactility and perform a symbolic act rooted\textsuperscript{70} in touch that together corroborate my claim that touch helps to alleviate the fears that threaten their relationship.

As the sheepshearing scene opens, the conversation between the lovers oscillates between Perdita’s various doubts about their relationship and Florizel’s consolations, which rely specifically on touch to allay them. Whereas Florizel “bles[s] the time” (4.4. 14) that he stumbled on Perdita, to her “the difference [in their social ranks] forges dread” (4.4. 16). Furthermore, she specifies this fear of “difference” as a fear of Polixenes discovering it by asking: “how would he look to see his work, so noble, / Vilely bound up?” (4.4. 21-2). In much the same way as Time uses haptic language to clarify the ways in which he influences our lives, Perdita enlists the help of a tactile metaphor to articulate the cause and nature of her anxiety. Although the “difference” that socially separates her from Florizel “forges” her doubts in the sense of causation or creation, we cannot overlook its original sense of heating a metal object in a furnace and hammering it from which its less visibly tactile meaning has been gleaned. When Perdita expresses this fear in the form of a question, she relies on yet another tactile process to articulate the terms of her anxiety. As Snyder observes, Florizel becomes a book or “work produced by his father,” “vilely bound up” in the clothes of a poor man when sent out to be bound (4.4. 21n1).\textsuperscript{71} By using a metaphor of bookbinding, a line of work above all physical and

\textsuperscript{70} This word appears in a few early instances as part of a language of agriculture that again becomes chiefly literal later in the play. On Leontes and Polixenes in the opening scene, Camillo tells Archidamus that “there rooted betwixt them then such an affection that cannot choose but branch now” (1.1. 19-21). Despite their continued exchange of letters and gifts, the kings have been physically separated, so while they have not lost touch in the idiomatic sense, they have truly lost touch.

\textsuperscript{71} As with the ballads, the bookbinding metaphor brings the residue of the playwright’s hand into view.
focused on capturing the verbal and imaginative into physical form, to convey the sundry features of her fear, Perdita demonstrates touch as a vital means by which to accost and relieve her doubts.

In response to these concerns, Florizel tells her to “apprehend,” or fear “nothing but jollity” (4.4. 24-5) and soon after declares that his “desires / Run not before [his] honor, nor [his] lusts / Burn hotter than [his] faith” (4.4. 33-5). His choice to express his fidelity as burning hotter than his lust positions touch, the faculty primarily responsible for sensing temperature, as the premier vehicle by which Florizel attempts to relieve Perdita’s fears. While his effort fails, for Perdita immediately responds that his “resolution cannot hold when ‘tis / Opposed” (4.4. 36-7), Florizel resorts to a language of possession not unlike that used by Leontes earlier in the play: “for I cannot be / Mine own, nor any thing to any, if / I be not thine” (4.4. 43-5). We should recall that this testimony encapsulates the Levinasian philosophy of otherness where the Self exists and is prefigured by its commitment to the Other. By placing himself under Perdita’s possession so as to reassure her of his love, Florizel situates touch in a territorial and jurisdictional sense as the factor on which his relationship is conditioned.

He only further reinforces this claim by telling Perdita to “strangle such thoughts as these with anything / That you behold the while” (4.4. 47-8), which elicits an image of the hands constricting her worried thoughts and in turn nominates touch as the potential solution to her anxiety. That the hands in this image take the form of what Perdita “beholds” again immerses Florizel’s discourse in the tactile. He links the element of sight involved in beholding to the tactile not only through the word itself—the hold in behold—but also through notions of sight as

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72 Also see Leontes’ promise to aid the fleeing lovers: “I will to your father; / Your honour not o’erthrown by your desires, / I am friend to them and you” (5.1. 228-30). Emphasis mine.
“streams of vision touching” (Harvey 387) contemporaneous with Shakespeare.

If we move from this series of failed consolations to a moment later in the scene, Florizel discards this tactile language for a gesture that registers on a social plane in the hopes of alleviating the fears of his beloved. After she has set aside her duties as hostess and the play resumes the question of their relationship, the handfast becomes the agent by which Florizel wishes to substantiate so many oaths and vows. Florizel, Polixenes and the Shepherd refer to this symbolic act at least five times in the sheepshearing scene as the ritual by which the young man and Perdita can be legally married and any doubts that impair their relationship can be dispelled. Polixenes refers to “hand[ing] love” (4.4. 328); Florizel entreats her, saying, “your hand, my Perdita” (4.4. 153); he later proclaims, “I take thy hand, this hand” (4.4. 34); and the Shepherd commands the lovers to “take hands” (4.4. 363), saying, “come, your hand, / And, daughter, yours” (4.4. 370-71). This rapid sequence of allusions to the handfast works to foreground the hand as the agent by which Florizel and Perdita can come together in marriage, and in turn instantiates touch as the catalyst for sincerity between wife and husband, never truly able to know each other but who commit to each other all the same.

If we carefully consider each of these instances, it becomes clear that the physical touch of joining hands more effectively brings about this sincerity than the pair’s haptic language.

The fact that the last line of each of Florizel’s and Perdita’s speeches in this scene occupies one

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73 Cf. Romeo in the first balcony scene: “See, how she leans her cheek upon her hand! / O that I were a glove upon that hand, / That I might touch that cheek!” (Romeo and Juliet 2.2. 23-5).

74 This failure of language is also evident when Perdita reduces Florizel’s thoughts to an iteration of her own: “By th’pattern of mine own thoughts, I cut out the purity of his” (4.4. 362-63). It is for this reason that the Shepherd orders the lovers to “take hands” (4.4. 363) as if replacing Perdita’s tactile effort with a tactile gesture that can better join her to Florizel.
half of an iambic pentameter line so that they mutually begin and finish the other’s lines suggests a similar point. Just as the handfast physically binds the one to the other, so they are linguistically bound at the level of the line.\textsuperscript{75} In this regard, both the handfast and the structural continuity of their exchange more successfully weds them than any of their tactile language attempts to do. This success of the structure, of the gesture that procures social meaning thus provides an alternative solution to the failed tactile metaphors, euphemisms, and mental fictions that do little to relieve Leontes’ jealousy in the first half of the play. Working out the marital problems of Leontes in the space of adolescent love, Florizel and Perdita open up what has become a narrowed and cramped approach to the “problem of other minds” by proposing a symbolic ritual of touch that lies beyond the mind and beyond language as a way by which to join one person to another despite the rift of knowledge that will always separate them. In so doing, they renew our faith in the possibility of a reunion of Leontes with his wife and daughter, especially one initiated by touch.

“\textit{O, She’s Warm!”: The Embrace of Faith as a Path to Comic Reconciliation}

For want of space, I touch on the scenes that intervene between the sheepshearing scene and this reunion briefly, which simultaneously paint a picture of the unknowable Other and offer solutions to the anxiety that grows from it.\textsuperscript{76} The reunion of Leontes and his daughter comes to

\textsuperscript{75} There may be a delicate reference to bodily contact in this meeting of poetic feet.

\textsuperscript{76} It is important to note that these solutions are withheld in many ways in the earlier parts of the fifth act.

That Leontes is made to wait for his reunion, to stand in front of his daughter without knowing it (5.1. 176-77), makes room for the play to reveal the extent of his repentance and reformation—a change necessary to the restoration of Hermione and Perdita to the Sicilian court. By opting for reformation over the suicide Robert Greene’s \textit{Pandosto}, this play’s source, imposes on its protagonist, Shakespeare intimates that the fears triggered by the “other
us by way of the secondhand account of three gentlemen and as a result leaves us slightly unsatisfied with and uncertain about the knowledge we have acquired. Yet this dramatic choice speaks to the impossibility of knowing the “other mind,” and its use of the tale to relate what information we can possess suggests touch as a remedy to this problem. If we recall the etymological bond of weaving between texts and textiles, we can read this scene as one in which the narrative touch of the tale becomes the medium through which we are asked to accept it as such without ourselves experiencing the reunion it relates. In this regard, we might also consider the gentlemen’s compiled tale as one of the many miniature tales told within the larger Winter’s Tale, in whose content we, as spectators, must invest to lend it truth and reality.

In the second scene, the Clown asks for Autolycus’s hand and promises that he will avouch Autolycus’s honesty no matter how inaccurate this testimony may be: “If it be ne’er so false, a true gentleman may swear it in the behalf of his friend” (5.2. 140-41). Autolycus’s reply that he “will prove so” (5.2. 146) leaves the Clown’s faith as what inspires the thief to reform his behavior, rendering the simple expression of faith through word and hand that which allows these men to achieve sincerity. In both cases, the play refuses complete access to knowledge about others yet still proposes ways by which to interact with them. In so doing, these scenes

77 That the man who relates this tale is said to “deliver” (5.2. 23) the truth “pregnant by circumstance” (5.2. 27-8) only further supports this claim, describing the tale he tells as an act of sexual reproduction and birth. Additionally, within this tale Paulina’s steward tells us that Paulina “locks” Perdita “in embracing as if she would pin her to her heart, that she might no more be in danger of loosing” (5.2. 65-7). The physical embrace, like fastening a pin to the heart, prevents Perdita separating from Paulina and so emphasizes touch as the bonding agent of self to other, which anticipates the embraces between Leontes and Hermione in the final scene.
initiate the comic reconciliation that fills the final scene and anticipate the awakening of faith (5.3. 95) necessary for Hermione’s statute to come to life.

We can then read the final scene as an energized compression of all that we have observed until this moment. Putting the epitome of otherness on display for Leontes and his companions, Paulina unveils the statue of Hermione whose features appear to have aged so perfectly and move so like breath such that it appears the real Hermione stands before them. After Hermione has been “resurrected” by way of a force so inexplicable that we might only call it magic, a series of physical embraces with Leontes follows that casts touch into relief as the instrument by which Leontes is forgiven by and reconciled to his wife. While this scene has become the object of extensive criticism for its fusion of representation and reality, nature and art, truth and illusion, I suggest that its weight derives more profoundly from the investment it demands of our own faith and imagination; we must believe what is on the stage is the world of the play. In this way, the embrace that brings Leontes to his wife is drawn out to a

78 This scene quite explicitly alludes to the myth of Pygmalion and Galatea, a story long studied for its fluctuation between art and nature and its applications to the stage as a world we must take as true for all its artificiality (Bartholomeusz 237).

79 Bartholomeusz refers to Simon Forman’s account of the Globe performance in 1611, especially his observation of Forman’s “total acceptance of the fact that Autolycus was inseparable from life” made clear in the moral he extracts from the rogue’s deception to “beware of trustinge feined beggars or fawningefellous” (13). Similarly, John D. Cox cites the debate about art and nature “with its extraordinary complement in the statue scene,” as a defense of the transformative powers of fiction: “it can reveal, and may even participate in a mysterious world of superhuman reality; it can be a means of knowing, as well as self-revelation” (225-26). Sir Philip Sidney (Bartholomeusz 6) and Howard Felperin (11) find an inexhaustible sense of the real in this play despite its violation of the classical unities of drama, and director Granville-Barker’s interpretation of faith in this scene in his 1910 production of the play at the New Theatre in New York aligns well with this array of scholars (156).
metatheatrical space where the imaginative power of the mind, again a form of narrative touch, persuades us to accept the terms of the play such that audience and play come together in a way necessary for this miracle of resurrection and forgiveness to play out.

I therefore turn to the intersection of touch with this mystical and religious event, or rather, its secularized complement in “theatrical magic” (Jackson 172) as it commonly appeared in Renaissance drama, for it above all other ways of thinking about the Other best conveys the Other’s absolute alterity.\textsuperscript{80} While Ken Jackson and Arthur J. Marotti do not deny that the field of early modern studies has recognized the “impossible demand of the other” and turned to religion as a space in which to work out this issue, they more importantly suggest that the greater part of early modern scholarship “remain[s] blithely unconcerned or unaware that deconstructive thought still wrestles with the aporia of self/other relations” (178) and that the properties of this relationship are still unresolved. In an effort therefore to renew a discussion of alterity “that has been undertheorized” (178) in early modern studies despite the applications of Levinasian and Derridean thought to its own interest in the Other, I center on faith in this scene to shed light on the myriad of ways in which the problem of the “other mind” is resolved. Were we to ignore the role of faith, our understanding of the play would be seriously limited, for without the characters’ suspension of disbelief while Hermione’s statue returns to life, the succession of embraces that follow and give physical utterance to this faith would not speak as intensely to the power of touch to reconcile the self to this paragon of otherness.

In stark contrast to his almost instantaneous leap to jealousy in the first act, Leontes

\textsuperscript{80} Jackson and Marotti explicitly state that we cannot think about Levinas’s epistemology and “struggle to engage the other” without religion (181), for his concept of the Other is deeply rooted in Descartes’s “very Catholic, Christian notion of the infinite” (179).
labors in the last scene to make sense of the animate features of Hermione’s statue. His assorted questions that lead up to her resurrection engage the tactile sense as a method by which to determine whether she is alive or not, a method that Paulina repeatedly suspends in order to delay this discovery. She forbids Perdita and Leontes from touching the statue because “the colour’s not dry” (5.3. 47-8) and “the ruddiness upon her lip is wet” (5.3. 81). By contradistinction we are then able to see through this refusal of touch that touch alone will reveal the truth about Hermione. Furthermore, Leontes enlists the word “warm” three times in the last scene to describe the sculpture, a variation of which appears only one time earlier in the play, augmenting his use of touch as a mode by which to discover information about the Other. Even the sound of the language in this scene reinforces this idea, which Snyder locates in Howard Felperin’s incredibly acute observation of the “succession of monosyllabic words composed of short vowels chopped off by dental stops” which resemble a “chisel tapping through its medium” (5.3. 79n1) when Leontes cries: “What fine chisel / Could ever yet cut breath? Let no man mock me, / For I will kiss her” (5.3. 78-80). This aural effect reproduces the sound of a chisel chipping at a sculpture and in turn highlights sculpting as an intensely physical craft that uses touch to capture an image and sense of the Other.

When we arrive at the climactic moment of resurrection, it should therefore come as no surprise that touch enables the reconciliation between Leontes and his wife. Paulina commands Hermione to “strike all that look upon with marvel” (5.3. 100), suggesting that the wonder she arouses is tactilely produced. Paulina then tells Leontes to “present [his] hand” (5.3. 107), in

81 “O, thus she stood, / Even with such life of majesty—warm life / As now it coldly stands” (5.3. 34-6); “The very life seems warm upon her lip” (5.3. 66); “O, she’s warm!” (5.3. 109).

82 “I lost a couple that ‘twixt heaven and earth / Might thus have stood, begetting wonder, as / You, gracious couple do” (5.1. 131-33). Emphasis mine.
response to which he cries “O, she’s warm!” (5.3. 109), and Hermione “embraces him” (5.3. 111) and “hangs about his neck” (5.3. 112) such that bodily contact becomes the bond that finally seals wife to husband. The fact that no speech passes between them and the only language exchanged with Hermione comes from the mouth of Perdita serves to isolate Leontes’ moment of reconciliation solely in touch, in other words, the forgiveness and reunion upon which the play hinges is ultimately resolved not in language but in silence—in his belief that his wife is truly alive and the physical embrace that acts out this belief. Paulina expresses a similar idea by following this succession of embraces with the following assertion: “were [that she is living] but told you, should be hooted at / Like an old tale; but it appears she lives, / Though yet she speak not” (5.3. 116-18). Here silence takes precedence over the sound of storytelling, and confirmation that Hermione “lives,” and has therefore forgiven Leontes, rests in the movements

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83 Polixenes heightens this tactility by describing Hermione’s resurrection as her having been “stol’n from the dead” (5.3. 115), or restored through the tactile act of theft. We should note that this phrase uses the verb ambiguously however; it could link Autolycus to classical and Christian scenes of rescue from the underworld, but could also simply mean, “sneaked away.” Nonetheless, this plurality of meanings shows the residue of touch in our language that surfaces so often in this play.

84 Helen Faucit, who played Hermione for William Macready’s production of WT in the late 1830s at Covent Garden, praises Macready’s captivating oscillation between his awestruck “distract[jion]” from and his overjoyed “movement towards” embrace as Leontes in this scene (Bartholomeusz 68-70).

85 Many scholars find issue with this silence, citing it as evidence that Leontes is not redeemed and as a result that comic reconciliation is not fulfilled by the end of the play. For more information, see Evelyn Tribble’s work. On the other hand, Helen Faucit and I find great power in this silence. Her testimony can be found in Bartholomeusz’s work and is reproduced here: “It was such a comfort to me as well as true to natural feeling, that Shakespeare gives Hermione no words to say to Leontes, but leaves her to assure him of joy and forgiveness by look and manner only, as in his arms she feels the old life suspended, come back to her again” (74).
and gestures of her person and embrace rather than in her speech. If this reunion hinges upon the tactile gesture and pledge of faith that it performs, then the investment of our own faith and imagination in this scene becomes just as integral to the play’s comic ending. Like Leontes, we too must believe in the magic of this scene in order for it to play out, for Hermione to be reborn and return to the world of the play. In this regard, the bodily embrace of the married couple alongside the narrative touch of the characters’ and our own minds become the agents of reconciliation in the play. Just as the characters are reconciled to each other and thereby achieve the Levinasian moment of “true togetherness” (EI 77), so too we achieve this moment with the play, fully immersing ourselves in the world it presents to us regardless of its illusory and fictive nature.

Leontes elaborates on the role of narrative touch during his epilogue as that which induced yet also delivers him from his jealousy. He asks of Hermione and Polixenes their “pardons / That e’er [he] put between [their] holy looks / [His] ill suspicion” (5.3. 147-49), indicating that he understands that his own mental fiction of marital infidelity first “dissevered” (5.3. 155) them rather than their “paddling palms and pinching fingers” (1.2. 114). The use of the verb “put” in this line enhances this idea, for it brings a more physical notion of placing his suspicion between their looks to bear on the principally narrative touch that created his suspicion. That he juxtaposes the holiness of their “looks” with his “ill suspicion” further endorses this assertion, figuring their interaction as one of angelic innocence and his charge of

86 Bartholomeusz suggests that this forgiveness “works here as a psychological metaphor, as does the metaphor of incarnation, of the child [Perdita] who redeems the time, who is as welcome as is the spring to the earth [5.1. 151].” Macready interpreted this scene such that Faucit, as Hermione, “embodied the idea of an inner resurrection, a great rush of life, a tenderness which was physical in its expression” (234).

87 See note 79.
marital infidelity as just the opposite. By taking responsibility for his actions, repenting, and in
turn reconciling himself to his wife and friend, Leontes replaces his fatal sexual jealousy with a
much more successful means of coping with the “other mind.” His labored thought process,
faith, and appeal for forgiveness offer several forms of narrative touch that redeem him from an
ugly past of touch and restore him to his wife. He adds yet another valence to this comic
reconciliation by asking Camillo to take Paulina “by the hand” (5.3. 144) and saying that Florizel
is “troth-plight” (5.3. 151) to Perdita, joining the one to the other in each pairing through the
handfast. Lastly, his request that “each one demand and answer to his part / Performed” (5.3.
153-54) in a time and space outside the world of the play denies us a comprehensive account of
what has come to pass, at once intensifying the “problem of other minds” and leaving us the
tools by which to cope with this problem.

Leontes’ epilogue then merges concerns about alterity and knowledge acquisition with
touch, ultimately offering touch in its multiple forms as the best way to confront and relieve the
fears that derive from our interactions with others. Yet what seems most powerful about this
scene is not its recognition of the insurmountable mystery of the Other, but its insistence on the
possibility of forgiveness, reconciliation, and redemption in spite of this limitation; although
Mamillius has died and his story is left untold, Perdita has been found, Hermione has been
restored, and Leontes has been reformed. Each tug with alterity then seems to matter so little
next to the reunion of the husband and father to his loved ones and the extraordinary faith,

88 “Go play, boy, play; thy mother plays, and I / play too, but so disgraced a part” (1.2. 185-86). This line
foreshadows Leontes’ request that “each demand and answer to his part” played and so links two strikingly different
senses of the word “play” through which we can see the trajectory of Leontes’ path from sexual jealousy to
forgiveness and an idea of love that rests in faith. Bartholomeusz notices this “echo[ing]” of moments (235) but does
not mention this particular meeting.
forgiveness, and love that bring them back together, allow them to “[shake] hands as over a vast” and “[embrace] as it were from the ends of opposed winds” (1.1. 25-6), and draw the play to its cyclical close.

Conclusion

So having “too much believed [his] own suspicion” (3.2. 148), Leontes returns this belief to us in renewed form as Hermione descends to embrace, and in that embrace forgive, him. All is redeemed in this expression and reciprocation of faith; what was lost is found, we have met “with things dying” and now meet “with things newborn” (3.3. 101-2), and we are left with Paulina’s message that “what’s gone and what’s past help / Should be past grief” (3.2. 219-20). I find that through these remarkable complements, these moments that echo each other in the first and second halves of the play, we are able to trace Leontes’ own path to forgiveness and reconciliation. From the “paddling palms and pinching fingers” (1.2. 114) that incited his jealousy to the final embrace with his wife, Leontes’ journey becomes as a kaleidoscope, moving and changing in a flux of so many recycled hues and forms of touch as the play turns from scene to scene. And by following precisely these transformations, we experience just how far Leontes has come and how much the relationships that he destroys early in the play have been healed by forgiveness and love.

It is his epistemic crisis with the “other mind” and his own recruitment of touch to allay it that gives my intention to renew a discourse of alterity that has been “undertheorized” (Jackson 178) in early modern studies a space in which to do so. I suggest that the play does not so much offer a way out of so much as a way of dealing with the “problem of other minds,” encouraging us to proceed in our interactions with others in spite of this limitation. As we have seen, the
tactile sense paves this way, helping us to abate the anxiety rooted in our encounter with the Other without trying to collapse his difference into an iteration of the Self. Through an analysis of Harvey’s contemporary study on touch and Renaissance theories of “action at a distance,” I suggested that touch reaches beyond the purely physical realm to appropriate forms emotional, social, and literary. To connect this sense to issues of alterity, I then turned to the philosophy of Levinas for an expression of the self-other relationship more faithful to social interaction than those voiced before his arrival on the twentieth-century epistemological and phenomenological scene. I then labeled touch as a solution to skepticism in aesthetic and literary forms contemporaneous with Shakespeare, locating a trend in biblical iconography and Elizabethan academia that considered touch a messenger of knowledge on which we can rely. In so doing, I not only determined that there was an explosion of interest in the tactile sense during this period, but more importantly that it was a common and even preferred recourse to our fears about the Other. In turn, these discoveries allowed me to observe how the sensory and epistemological concerns of Shakespeare’s time inscribed themselves onto the text of *WT*.

As I moved through the play, I threw light on the myriad of ways in which characters experiment with touch to manage the doubts that arise from their interactions with others. While they fail to fully dispel their fears in many cases, they still instantiate touch as a popular medium by which to confront the Other, amplifying this sense to such a degree as to anticipate the succession of touches in the final scene which cure the many failures that have come before it. After studying the onset of Leontes’ jealousy and his jurisdictional crisis with the female body, I grappled with the problematic figure of Time and turned to the spaces of hospitality, commerce and adolescent love in the pastoral scenes to demonstrate the ways in which touch works to accost and subdue the anxiety that grows from the Other. While the characters’ efforts to do so
fail or only partially succeed in many of these instances, they more critically prepare us for the final scene in which the intensely physical embrace of wife and husband redeem and replace an ugly past of touch with a touch that “works”: an embrace that forgives, reconciles, and reforms.

To carry on this same trajectory, further research might study the intersections of this play and *Othello*, a play that realizes the extreme loss that only threatens the world of *WT* and therefore serves as tragic complement to it. While I have noticed many points of contact between these plays among several others, I have by no means exhausted them and therefore bequeath this task to another time and another mind. We might also listen for the colonial reverberations of the play’s struggle to represent, capture, and engage the Other, turning to the monumental work of Edward Said or even Italian film director Pier Paolo Pasolini on the problem of free indirect discourse as a narrative method which seeks to faithfully portray a sense of the Other without destroying its difference in so doing.\(^8^9\) While I can only touch on these politically charged and culturally germane issues at this time, I urge that we continue to study this play in dialogue with them, of which I have given only rudimentary utterance in this thesis.

As I stated early on, what I did not exhaust in this play, I have left untouched in the spirit of preserving the awe, inspiration, and silence of its miracle of forgiveness. In a world where we have become increasingly aware of the “problem of other minds,” this play has given me the answers I have needed to march on in many ways that no other play, tale, or piece of literature has done. It has given me not so much a way out of this problem as a way of meeting the Other on open ground with the help of language, rituals, and narratives grounded in touch that allow for

\(^8^9\) Refer to Edward Said’s *Culture and Imperialism* and Pasolini’s essay on free indirect discourse in *Heretical Empiricism*, which searches for a narrative technique that an author might use to represent the thoughts and express the words of the Other without “bringing all other life experiences back to a substantial analogy with his own” (Pasolini 87).
our absolute difference yet encourage and facilitate our interaction all the same.

So, how did I tell my tale? Like Mamillius, I told it softly, offering a way to meet the Other without capturing or taking hold of his alterity. By weaving so many fibers of this play together, I sought to reveal how the characters face the limits of the “other mind” through touch as a means of reasserting the primacy of this sense to the unresolved problems of alterity in Elizabethan England that still resonate today. For all that I may have missed, the scenes on which I have touched remain just a fragment of the places in which the tactile sense comes to bear on concerns with otherness in WT, and compose an even smaller fragment of places that lie beyond it. So in the same way that Leontes weaves a tale of marital infidelity to make sense of what he sees, I have woven my own in an effort to understand and more thoroughly appreciate this “winter’s tale.” Rather than ask that “each one demand and answer to his part / Performed in this wide gap of time” (5.3. 153-54), like Leontes, I leave that to a space outside the pages of this project and instead ask that we leave a piece of this tale to its own alterity: to the enchanting silence it inspires, to its miracle of resurrection, and to its healing powers of forgiveness made tangible by the physical embrace.
ARTICLES IN PERIODICALS


ELECTRONIC TEXTS


IMAGES

“By the King: A Proclamation Concerning the King’s Evill.” London, 1616. EEBO. Web. 26 Jan. 2014.


PRINTED BOOKS


Bartholomeusz, Dennis. “*The Winter’s Tale* on the Open Stage—1611-1634.” The Winter’s Tale


TERMS


Appendix

The following images have been reproduced as visual tools by which to see the physical intensity of the social interactions presented in *WT*, from the first touch that sparks Leontes’ jealousy to the final touch that reunites him with his wife. Each image has been cut and enlarged to draw attention to the movement and meeting of hands.

A4. The Commercial Exchange (4.3-4).