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# SHAKESPEARE

# THE WINTER'S TALE

EDITED BY BARBARA A. MOWAT AND PAUL WERSTINE
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# THE WINTER'S TALE

BY
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## *THE NEW FOLGER LIBRARY SHAKESPEARE*

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Barbara A. Mowat is Director of Academic Programs at the Folger Shakespeare Library, Executive Editor of *Shakespeare Quarterly,* Chair of the Folger Institute, and author of *The Dramaturgy of Shakespeare's Romances* and of essays on Shakespeare's plays and on the editing of the plays.

Paul Werstine is Professor of English at King's College and the Graduate School of the University of Western Ontario, Canada. He is general editor of the New Variorum Shakespeare and author of many papers and articles on the printing and editing of Shakespeare's plays.

# The Folger Shakespeare Library

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# From the Director of the Library

For over four decades, the Folger Library General Reader's Shakespeare provided accurate and accessible texts of the plays and poems to students, teachers, and millions of other interested readers. Today, in an age often impatient with the past, the passion for Shakespeare continues to grow. No author speaks more powerfully to the human condition, in all its variety, than this actor/playwright from a minor sixteenth-century English village.

Over the years vast changes have occurred in the way Shakespeare's works are edited, performed, studied, and taught. The New Folger Library Shakespeare replaces the earlier versions, bringing to bear the best and most current thinking concerning both the texts and their interpretation. Here is an edition which makes the plays and poems fully understandable for modern readers using uncompromising scholarship. Professors Barbara Mowat and Paul Werstine are uniquely qualified to produce this New Folger Shakespeare for a new generation of readers. The Library is grateful for the learning, clarity, and imagination they have brought to this ambitious project.

Werner Gundersheimer,
Director of the Folger Shakespeare
Library from 1984 to 2002

# Editors' Preface

In recent years, ways of dealing with Shakespeare's texts and with the interpretation of his plays have been undergoing significant change. This edition, while retaining many of the features that have always made the Folger Shakespeare so attractive to the general reader, at the same time reflects these current ways of thinking about Shakespeare. For example, modern readers, actors, and teachers have become interested in the differences between, on the one hand, the early forms in which Shakespeare's plays were first published and, on the other hand, the forms in which editors through the centuries have presented them. In response to this interest, we have based our edition on what we consider the best early printed version of a particular play (explaining our rationale in a section called "An Introduction to This Text") and have marked our changes in the text—unobtrusively, we hope, but in such a way that the curious reader can be aware that a change has been made and can consult the "Textual Notes" to discover what appeared in the early printed version.

Current ways of looking at the plays are reflected in our brief prefaces, in many of the commentary notes, in the annotated lists of "Further Reading," and especially in each play's "Modern Perspective," an essay written by an outstanding scholar who brings to the reader his or her fresh assessment of the play in the light of today's interests and concerns.

As in the Folger Library General Reader's Shakespeare, which this edition replaces, we include explanatory notes designed to help make Shakespeare's language clearer to a modern reader, and we place the notes on the page facing the text that they explain. We

also follow the earlier edition in including illustrations—of objects, of clothing, of mythological figures—from books and manuscripts in the Folger Library collection. We provide fresh accounts of the life of Shakespeare, of the publishing of his plays, and of the theaters in which his plays were performed, as well as an introduction to the text itself. We also include a section called "Reading Shakespeare's Language," in which we try to help readers learn to "break the code" of Elizabethan poetic language.

For each section of each volume, we are indebted to a host of generous experts and fellow scholars. The "Reading Shakespeare's Language" sections, for example, could not have been written had not Arthur King, of Brigham Young University, and Randall Robinson, author of *Unlocking Shakespeare's Language*, led the way in untangling Shakespearean language puzzles and shared their insights and methodologies generously with us. "Shakespeare's Life" profited by the careful reading given it by the late S. Schoenbaum, "Shakespeare's Theater" was read and strengthened by Andrew Gurr and John Astington, and "The Publication of Shakespeare's Plays" is indebted to the comments of Peter W. M. Blayney. Among the texts we consulted, we found Stephen Orgel's edition in the Oxford series especially helpful. We are immensely grateful to Robert K. Turner for allowing us to consult in manuscript the commentary to his New Variorum edition. We, as editors, take sole responsibility for any errors in our editions.

We are grateful to the authors of the "Modern Perspectives"; to Leeds Barroll and David Bevington for their generous encouragement; to the Huntington and Newberry Libraries for fellowship support; to King's College for the grants it has provided to Paul Werstine; to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, which provided him with a Research Time

Stipend for 1990–91; to R. J. Shroyer of the University of Western Ontario for essential computer support; to the Folger Institute's Center for Shakespeare Studies for its fortuitous sponsorship of a workshop on "Shakespeare's Texts for Students and Teachers" (funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and led by Richard Knowles of the University of Wisconsin), a workshop from which we learned an enormous amount about what is wanted by college and high-school teachers of Shakespeare today; and especially to Steve Llano, our production editor at Pocket Books, whose expertise and attention to detail are essential to this project.

Our biggest debt is to the Folger Shakespeare Library—to Werner Gundersheimer, Director of the Library, who made possible our edition; to Deborah Curren-Aquino, who provides extensive editorial and production support; to Jean Miller, the Library's Art Curator, who combs the Library holdings for illustrations, and to Julie Ainsworth, Head of the Photography Department, who carefully photographs them; to Peggy O'Brien, former Director of Education at the Folger and now Director of Education Programs at the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, who gave us expert advice about the needs being expressed by Shakespeare teachers and students (and to Martha Christian and other "master teachers" who used our texts in manuscript in their classrooms); to Jessica Hymowitz and Wazir Shpoon for their expert computer support; to the staff of the Academic Programs Division, especially Amy Adler, Mary Tonkinson, Kathleen Lynch, Keira Roberts, Carol Brobeck, Kelleen Zubick, Toni Krieger, and Martha Fay; and, finally, to the generously supportive staff of the Library's Reading Room.

Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine

# Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*

*The Winter's Tale,* one of Shakespeare's very late plays, puts onstage a story so filled with improbabilities that the play occasionally seems amused at its own audacity. Near the story's end, for example, as incredible details accumulate, one character says "This news which is called true is so like an old tale that the verity [i.e., the truth] of it is in strong suspicion"; he has just exclaimed "Such a deal of wonder is broken out within this hour that ballad makers [the tabloid writers of Shakespeare's day] cannot be able to express it." As the "old tale" spins to its remarkable conclusion, another character tells us that what we are about to see, "Were it but told you, should be hooted at / Like an old tale."

The sense of the incredible and the wonderful seems built into the design of the play, as the play's title indicates. And the play's dialogue forces upon us an awareness of the title's significance. "Pray you sit by us / And tell 's a tale," Queen Hermione says early in the play to her young son Mamillius, who replies, "A sad tale's best for winter. I have one / Of sprites and goblins." The tale that the play tells, like that promised by Mamillius, is indeed of "sprites and goblins"—of ferocious and murderous passions, of man-eating bears, of princes and princesses in disguise, of death by drowning and by grief, of Greek oracles, of betrayal, and of unexpected joy. And the play draws much of its power from its heavy dependence on Greek myths of loss and of transformation.

Yet the story the play tells is at the same time solidly

grounded in the everyday, while the play itself is closely tied to Shakespeare's earlier, more straightforward, tragedies and comedies. The monstrous jealousy that descends upon Leontes, for example, is mythlike in its resemblance to the madness sent by the gods to punish Hercules in classical drama, but it seems not unfamiliar as an emotional state that can threaten anyone who loves someone else and who is thus vulnerable to loss and betrayal. Leontes' actions are so extreme that one at first discounts them as rather un-Shakespearean, yet his story is recognizably a retelling of Othello's (with the Iago-figure here incorporated into the hero's own psyche), as well as being a retelling of the Claudio-Hero plot in *Much Ado About Nothing*.

A "winter's tale" is a story to be told or read in front of a fire on a long winter's night. Paradoxically, this *Winter's Tale* is ideally seen rather than read. Its sudden shift from tragedy to comedy, its playing with disguise, its startling exits and transformations seem addressed to theater audiences, not readers. But the imagination can do much to transform words into living characters and stage directions into vivid action, and thus to turn this play that is quintessentially for the stage back into a tale of wonder, a tale "of sprites and goblins."

After you have read the play, we invite you to turn to the essay printed at the back of this book, "*The Winter's Tale:* A Modern Perspective," by Professor Stephen Orgel of Stanford University.

# Reading Shakespeare's Language: *The Winter's Tale*

For many people today, reading Shakespeare's language can be a problem—but it is a problem that can be solved. Those who have studied Latin (or even French or German or Spanish), and those who are used to reading poetry, will have little difficulty understanding the language of Shakespeare's poetic drama. Others, though, need to develop the skills of untangling unusual sentence structures and of recognizing and understanding poetic compressions, omissions, and wordplay. And even those skilled in reading unusual sentence structures may have occasional trouble with Shakespeare's words. Four hundred years of "static" intervene between his speaking and our hearing. Most of his immense vocabulary is still in use, but a few of his words are not, and, worse, some of his words now have meanings quite different from those they had in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the theater, most of these difficulties are solved for us by actors who study the language and articulate it for us so that the essential meaning is heard—or, when combined with stage action, is at least *felt*. When reading on one's own, one must do what each actor does: go over the lines (often with a dictionary close at hand) until the puzzles are solved and the lines yield up their poetry and the characters speak in words and phrases that are, suddenly, rewarding and wonderfully memorable.

## Shakespeare's Words

As you begin to read the opening scenes of a play by Shakespeare, you may notice occasional unfamiliar

words. Some are unfamiliar simply because we no longer use them. In the opening scenes of *The Winter's Tale,* for example, you will find the words *sneaping* (i.e., nipping), *bawcock* (i.e., fellow), *pash* (i.e., head), and *hoxes* (i.e., cuts the hamstring muscles). Words of this kind are explained in notes to the text and will become familiar the more of Shakespeare's plays you read.

In *The Winter's Tale,* as in all of Shakespeare's writing, more problematic are the words that we still use but that we use with a different meaning. In the opening scenes of *The Winter's Tale,* for example, the word *embassies* has the meaning of "messages," *subject* is used where we would say "people," *jar o' th' clock* is used where we would say "tick of the clock," and *fabric* where we would say "edifice." Such words will be explained in the notes to the text, but they, too, will become familiar as you continue to read Shakespeare's language.

Some words are strange not because of the "static" introduced by changes in language over the past centuries but because these are words that Shakespeare is using to build a dramatic world that has its own space, time, and history. In the opening scenes of *The Winter's Tale,* for example, Shakespeare conjures up the "magnificence" (meaning "splendid ceremony, liberal expenditure, and good taste") with which "Sicilia" (i.e., King Leontes) has been entertaining his lifelong friend "Bohemia" (i.e., King Polixenes) for "nine changes of the wat'ry star," or nine months. ("Sicilia" and "Bohemia" are used to name both the kingdoms and, on occasion, their kings.) The conversation among Leontes, his queen, Hermione, and the couple's friend Polixenes recalls the kings' "unfledged days," when they were "pretty lordings." Then suddenly for no good reason Leontes suspects an affair between Hermione and his

friend Polixenes; he drops out of the three-way conversation, heaps abuse on Hermione as a "slippery" wife, a "hobby-horse," and a "bed-swerver," and describes the covert sexual activity of the couple—"paddling palms," "meeting noses," "horsing foot on foot." Leontes' queen and court suffer intolerably as they are subjected to his "dangerous unsafe lunes," "tyrannous passion," "humor," and "weak-hinged fancy."

Then as suddenly as Leontes' court is transformed by his insane jealousy, the world of the play is transformed again when the scene shifts from Sicilia to the fictional seacoast and countryside of Bohemia. First, Bohemia is created as the site of terrifying natural disasters with terms such as "grimly" skies, "blusters," and "creatures of prey." Shortly thereafter, the play's language constructs it as beautiful and desirable, a place where "gillyvors," the "crown imperial," and the "flower-de-luce" grow, and the people perform in "Whitsun pastorals."

## Shakespeare's Sentences

In an English sentence, meaning is quite dependent on the place given each word. "The dog bit the boy" and "The boy bit the dog" mean very different things, even though the individual words are the same. Because English places such importance on the positions of words in sentences, on the way words are arranged, unusual arrangements can puzzle a reader. Shakespeare frequently shifts his sentences away from "normal" English arrangements—often to create the rhythm he seeks, sometimes to use a line's poetic rhythm to emphasize a particular word, sometimes to give a character his or her own speech patterns or to allow the character to speak in a special way. When we attend a good performance of the play, the actors will have worked out the sentence structures and will articulate

# PANDOSTO
# The Triumph
## of Time.

VVHEREIN IS DISCOVERED by a pleaſant Hiſtorie, that although by the meanes of ſiniſter fortune Truth may be concealed, yet by Time in ſpite of fortune it is moſt manifeſtly reuealed.

*Pleaſant for age to auoyd drouſie thoughts, profitable for youth to eſchue other vvanton paſtimes, and bringing to both a deſired content.*

Temporis filia veritas.

*By Robert Greene* Maiſter of Artes *in Cambridge.*

Omne tulit punctum qui miſcuit vtile dulci.

Imprinted at London for I. B. dwelling at the ſigne of the Bible, neare vnto the North doore of Paules.
1592.

Title page of the novel dramatized in *The Winter's Tale.* From Robert Greene, *Pandosto; The Triumph of Time* . . . (1592).

Father Time. (4.1)
From Jean de Serres, *A generall historie of France* . . . (1611).

the sentences so that the meaning is clear. (Sometimes the language of *The Winter's Tale* steadfastly resists being reduced to any clear meaning. But the actors will, nonetheless, clarify as far as the words and sentence structure allow.) In reading for yourself, do as the actor does. That is, when you become puzzled by a character's speech, check to see if words are being presented in an unusual sequence.

Shakespeare often, for example, rearranges subjects and verbs (i.e., instead of "He goes" we find "Goes he"). In *The Winter's Tale*, when Leontes says "So stands this squire" (1.2.214–15), he is using such a construction. Shakespeare also frequently places the object before the subject and verb (i.e., instead of "I hit him," we might find "Him I hit"). Hermione's "This satisfaction the bygone day proclaimed" (1.2.40–41) is an example of such an inversion, as is her "Th' offenses we have made you do we'll answer" (1.2.105). (The "normal" order would be "The bygone day proclaimed this satisfaction" and "We'll answer the offenses we have made you do.")

Inversions are not the only unusual sentence structures in Shakespeare's language. Often in his sentences words that would normally appear together are separated from each other. Again, this is often done to create a particular rhythm or to stress a particular word. Take, for example, Hermione's "But *I*, though you would seek t' unsphere the stars with oaths, *should* yet *say* 'Sir, no going'" (1.2.60–63). Here, the clause "though you would seek t' unsphere the stars with oaths" separates subject ("I") from verb ("should . . . say"), while the adverb "yet" divides the two parts of the verb "should say." Or take Leontes' lines to Camillo:

> Ay, and *thou*,
> His cupbearer—whom I from meaner form
> Have benched and reared to worship, who mayst see