

“MONEY’S A MEDDLER”:  
JEANETTE WINTERSON’S COVER VERSION  
OF *THE WINTER’S TALE*

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Come to the pedlar, money’s a meddler  
That doth utter all men’s ware-a.  
(*The Winter’s Tale*, IV. 4: 317-318)

ABSTRACT: First published in October 2015, Jeanette Winterson’s *The Gap of Time* translates *The Winter’s Tale* into a contemporary novel about our own market-saturated twenty-first century environment. As if taking her cue from the trickster Autolycus’s acknowledgment that ‘money’s a meddler’ that infiltrates every aspect of human life, Winterson brings out the strong monetary undercurrent of Shakespeare’s tragicomedy, delving into the potential of its narrative of loss and gain, revenge and redemption for a critique of the late-capitalist world and its all-pervasive monetary ethos. In this sense, her creative intervention is aligned with the more recent economic criticism of Shakespeare’s work that is so well represented in this volume; as I argue here, however, Winterson’s distinctive contribution to this debate is in her special emphasis on the economic aspects of Shakespeare’s metatheatrical discourse. In *The Gap of Time* the sustained self-reflexivity of *The Winter’s Tale*, culminating in the inset performance of Hermione’s resurrection, is substantially refocused in economic terms, pointing to the commodification of art and its deep entanglement with money as a powerful latent theme in Shakespeare’s play and a key aspect of its continued relevance today.

KEYWORDS: Jeanette Winterson; Shakespeare adaptation; *The Winter’s Tale*; economic criticism

When Jeanette Winterson agreed to write an adaptation of *The Winter’s Tale* for the newly launched Shakespeare project at Hogarth Press, the relocation to a contemporary setting was part of the editorial remit: *The Gap of Time*, published in October 2015, was the inaugural volume in a series of prose retellings of Shakespeare’s plays commissioned from acclaimed novelists with the ambitious aim of reimagining the entire canon for a present-day audience.

The key move enacted by Winterson to draw *The Winter's Tale* closer to her target readership was to bring out the strong monetary undercurrent of the play, delving into the hermeneutic power of Shakespeare's narrative of loss and gain, revenge and redemption, for a critique of our late-capitalist world and its all-pervasive monetary ethos. In this respect, Winterson's creative intervention is closely aligned with the new economic criticism that is so well represented in this volume; but her distinctive contribution to the debate, I will argue, is in the novel's special emphasis on the economic implications of Shakespeare's metatheatre, an aspect that has attracted relatively little attention in contemporary readings of *The Winter's Tale*.<sup>1</sup> Winterson's 'cover version', according to her own definition (Winterson 2015: 284),<sup>2</sup> is literally teeming with artists – especially female artists – and the narrative relentlessly exposes their problematic relationship with money in a market-saturated environment. The sustained self-reflexivity of *The Winter's Tale*, culminating in the inset performance of Hermione's resurrection, is translated by Winterson into a rich visual score that points to the commodification of art and its deep entanglement with money as a powerful latent theme in Shakespeare's play and a key aspect of its continued relevance today.

## Filling the gaps

As also advertised by the titular Shakespearean quote, Jeanette Winterson's stated intent, in engaging with *The Winter's Tale*, was to fill the gaps in the story – not only the bold sixteen-year temporal hiatus that literally splits Shakespeare's play in two, but especially the

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<sup>1</sup> The economic associations of Shakespeare's metatheatrical discourse are only tangentially investigated in the available scholarship on *The Winter's Tale*. This is also true of the more comprehensive economically-oriented study of Shakespeare's late plays to date, namely, Forman (2008). While arguing that Shakespeare's tragicomic plot holds explanatory power with regard to early modern economic practices as well as present-day ones, Forman's fundamental study does not specifically engage with self-reflexivity as a site of actual or potential critique.

<sup>2</sup> Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

internal drives and traumas that motivate the characters' actions. As Winterson has explained, much of her fascination with *The Winter's Tale* came from the things that Shakespeare intentionally left blank in the narrative and the considerable space for creative reinvention they opened up for her.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, in *The Gap of Time* the characters' backstories are expanded – most notably, Leontes and Polixenes's childhood bonding and subsequent estrangement – and we are invited (sometimes mockingly) to trace their actions to a believable personality. This is especially the case with Leontes's baffling, apparently groundless jealousy, which is here spelt out as a misogynist's simultaneous fear and hatred of women, while his tyrannical behaviour is diagnosed as a roaring case of the Alpha Male syndrome by Winterson's psychologically-savvy version of Shakespeare's Paulina.<sup>4</sup>

Equally crucial to Winterson's reframing of Shakespeare's play as a contemporary tale is her parallel foregrounding of economic themes. Locating the Sicilian part of the story in twenty-first-century London, *The Gap of Time* refigures King Leontes as Leo Kaiser, a finance mogul who trades in the global market from his office in the City. Leo, we learn, was fired from his bank in 2008 but he readily seized on the enhanced opportunities afforded by the global financial crisis for 'making money out of thin air' (GoT: 23), starting out on his own with a hedge fund named Sicilia, soon to make stellar profits. By replacing Leontes's court with today's financial markets as the real seat of contemporary power, *The Gap of Time* reflects back to us an image of *The Winter's Tale* as a play 'engulfed' – to use Stanley Cavell's term (Cavell 1987: 200)<sup>5</sup> – by the more

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<sup>3</sup> Vintage UK (2015).

<sup>4</sup> Winterson's Pauline profiles Leo as 'a typical Alpha Male' who has 'got his own way all his life so he can't control his emotions, desires, rages, affects' (GoT: 57).

<sup>5</sup> As Cavell notes, the economic lexicon of *The Winter's Tale* includes 'beyond the terms tell and count themselves, and beyond account and loss and lost and gain and pay and owe and debt and repay money, coin, treasure, purchase, cheat, custom, commodity, exchange, dole, wages, recompense, labour, affairs, traffic, tradesmen, borrow, save, credit, redeem and – perhaps the most frequently repeated economic term in the play – business' (Cavell 1987: 200); to Cavell's list one should also add 'pawn', 'boot', 'prize', 'fee', 'dear', 'gold',

urgent economic topics of the day. Just as in Shakespeare, so too in Winterson the all-encompassing sway of money instantly makes void the surface opposition between the tragic realities of court life and the ideal world of pastoral. Winterson's New Bohemia is a thinly disguised New Orleans, more of a destitute, post-Katrina urban landscape than an Arcadian setting. This is clearly established by the episode of Antigonus's violent death, here moved to the opening of the novel. The Sicilian lord's '*Exit pursued by a bear*' in the source text (III. 3: 57) is reimagined by Winterson as a car chase where Tony Gonzales, Leo's Mexican gardener and hired courier, is killed by thugs who are after Perdita's money. The old shepherd who raises the abandoned baby – here recast as Shep, a black musician – uses the unexpected affluence that comes with the foundling to buy a bar named 'The Fleece' which he turns into a truly bohemian enclave where good food, good music and good company are valued over profit.

In her new-found home, Perdita has been brought up on the humanist, anti-business values that underpin Shep's version of the American pastoral. This lineage is clearly underscored through the girl's fondness for H.D. Thoreau's seminal anti-consumerist manifesto, *Walden*, which she summarizes as being 'about only doing enough work to make enough money to live simply so that you can live in a more meaningful way' (GoT: 161). Perdita's mindset is also shared by her boyfriend Zel (Florizel). In Winterson's hands, the prince of Bohemia's disobedience is given a markedly twenty-first-century twist: a philosophy major who works as a mechanic in protest against his rich but emotionally absent father, Zel identifies economic and social insecurity as today's real global threat and calls for freedom from 'corporate control that runs the world for the few and ruins it for the rest of us' (GoT: 162). Zel and Perdita's common belief in the possibility of opting out of the system, however, is seriously undermined by Autolycus, Shakespeare's thief and trickster, when he intervenes in the courtship scene with a teasing

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'buy/buyer', 'ware', 'purse', 'treasure', 'rich', 'ransom', 'surplus', as well as the uncannily prescient 'derivative' employed by Hermione in the trial scene: 'For life, I prize it / As I weigh grief, which I would spare: for honour, / 'Tis a derivative from me to mine, / And only that I stand for.' (WT, III. 2: 41-44).

reminder of the global reach of the market: 'the rich are always with you. Drop out of the world and find an island where you can live on lettuce, and some venture capitalist will back a sea-plane shuttle service and they'll build a spa that offers a detox using only the world's most exclusive lettuce' (GoT: 175).

The story as a whole lends support to Autolykus's argument, and Shep himself is open-eyed about the fact that unchecked capitalism has definitively killed the American dream: as he insists during his final confrontation with Leo, 'the way guys like you have fixed the world only a lottery ticket can change it for guys like me. Hard work and hope won't do it anymore' (GoT: 261). The ultimate irony, of course, lies in the fact that Shep's life-changing lottery ticket is a direct emanation of Leo's Sicilia: his anti-capitalist sanctuary in New Bohemia was bought using the money stacked in baby Perdita's attaché case; Shep's ethical business, *The Fleece*, owes its existence to the highly unethical profits made in London by a hedge fund speculator. Other details in the narrative underscore the interconnectedness of Leo's London and New Bohemian dissidence: Shep took over his bar from the local Mafia; Leo, we are told, is half German and half Sicilian by birth and 'looks like a German banker, acts like an Italian Mafioso' (GoT: 210). At all levels, moreover, Winterson's version of *The Winter's Tale* elevates money to the be-all and the end-all of the narrative. Shakespeare, too, points to the role played by money in bringing a tragic plot to a comic resolution,<sup>6</sup> but Winterson goes one step further and turns money into the precipitating circumstance that sets in motion the whole cycle of loss, suffering and redemption. In *The Gap of Time* money causes Perdita's loss in the first place: Leo's ill-fated go-between, Tony, has not been instructed to abandon the baby in the wilderness, but only to take her to Xeno/Polixenes, her supposed real father; and Perdita goes missing as the result of a deadly robbery, an assault by a 'bear' moved by greed, not natural hunger.

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<sup>6</sup> Bristol (1991: 166) in particular insists that in Shakespeare's plot it is not so much Perdita's native attractiveness as her financial endowment that enables the social reconciliation at the end.

## The time machine

The much-expanded role of money in Winterson's retelling is closely related to her intensification of the self-reflexive aspects of Shakespeare's narrative. In part, this is an effect of the more direct link established in *The Gap of Time* between Autolycus, Shakespeare's businessman, thief and 'essential entertainer' (Orgel 2008: 52), and the enlarged contingent of artist characters that people the novel. The peddler in *The Winter's Tale* becomes fittingly reincarnated as a used car dealer, the modern-day epitome of chicanery and deception. Even more obviously than in Shakespeare's play, where Giulio Romano's superlative craft as mentioned in the climactic resurrection scene is prefigured by the mountebank's command of make-believe at the sheep-shearing festival, in *The Gap of Time* Autolycus's professional skills put him on a par with the other artists in the novel. Winterson's peddler deals in dodgy retro cars, but the real commodity in which he traffics, as he never tires of explaining to his audience, is time. Upon his first appearance, he easily dupes Clo into trading his family's brand new Silverado for a dud Delorean as a special gift for his father's seventieth birthday. This classic car, Autolycus insists, is in fact a time machine, like the iconic Delorean that enabled Michael J. Fox to travel back in time in the popular 1980s movie, *Back to the Future*: 'and who wouldn't want the gift of time for their seventieth birthday?' (GoT: 148), he persuasively adds.

While Shep does not seem to be particularly impressed by the Delorean or its purported wonders, the desire to control time is pervasive among the other characters, and rises to a long-ingrained obsession for Leo/Leontes. Even before the tragic events begin to unfold, Leo shares with his son Milo (Mamillius) a passion for the *Superman* movie where 'Lois Lane is dead in her car and Superman reverses time by flying round the earth so fast that he shifts the axis and time goes backwards. The dam doesn't burst. Lois Lane doesn't die' (GoT: 60). And of course *The Winter's Tale* itself is all about winding back the clock, about undoing a tragic ending through a wondrous feat of illusionism which results in forgiveness and redemption after calamitous mistakes and devastating losses. This reading is endorsed by the authorial coda to the novel, when Jeanette Winterson steps into the narrative as a latter-day witness to the

final reconciliation among her characters, and as the author of the 'cover version' of a play 'about forgiveness and a world of possible futures' (GoT: 284), a play that shows that 'time is reversible' (GoT: 285) and that even the 'nuclear wastes of Leontes's fallout' (GoT: 288) can be remedied by the next generation, as long as they do not allow 'the past . . . [to] mortgage the future' (GoT: 285).

Winterson's distinctly economic framing of the topic of time defeated or redeemed is sustained through her treatment of Autolycus's more established and respectable colleagues in the novel. The two Shakespearean characters that are recast by Winterson as professional artists – Polixenes and Hermione – are also traders in time. This is immediately evident in the case of Xeno, here refigured as a visionary videogame designer caught between the desire to innovate and a crippling market logic. In Xeno's intentions, the complex game he is designing should offer 'a chance to get lost and find yourself again' (GoT: 61); inspired by Gérard de Nerval's dream about a fallen angel trapped in a narrow Paris courtyard, Xeno's virtual world features Time as a key player in the struggle by the Resistance to find a lost child before it falls into the hands of the Dark Angels that are ravaging their city. Predictably, however, the age of algorithm-powered recommendation has no use for Xeno's boldly experimental game, and 'The Gap of Time', as it is called, only exists as a private obsession for its embittered creator.<sup>7</sup>

At first sight, Xeno would seem to stand in direct opposition to Winterson's updated version of Hermione, who appears in *The Gap of Time* as the widely acclaimed French-American singer and songwriter Hermione Delannet, 'better known by her mononym MiMi'

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<sup>7</sup> In the revelatory conversation between Xeno and Perdita that concludes the Bohemian part of the story, Winterson clearly hints at the growing role of algorithms in shaping the future of art, at the very distinct possibility that creative risk-taking will be supplanted by a safe play of computation based on past consumer choices. Commenting on his share of responsibility in the tragic events that have befallen them all, Xeno accounts for his culpable inaction in these terms: 'Free will depends on being stronger than the moment that traps you. It isn't fate. I don't believe in fate. . . . Our habits and fears make our choices. We are an algorithm of ourselves – *if you liked that you may also like this.*' (GoT: 209-210)

(GoT: 41), according to her Wikipedia page in the novel. No longer simply a work of art that is 'awakened' by music in the resurrection scene, Winterson's Hermione has graduated to becoming an artist in her own right, and has even bequeathed her musical talent to her daughter, whose name she scribbles along the top of a piece of sheet music that identifies the lost child as 'Perdita'. (GoT: 104) Unlike Xeno's, MiMi's creativity is apparently unconstrained by financial considerations: her last public appearance before the catastrophe is for a charity concert at London's Roundhouse, where she gracefully waves aside her paying spectators' request for endless encores by pleading a very pregnant belly. Apparently, MiMi's success would seem to have put her in the position to control the market, rather than be controlled by it. With dramatic irony, however, MiMi's economic strength is ultimately exposed as a vulnerability. Readers learn that back in 2008, when he was fired from his bank, Leo lived for a year off his wife's money, and that this 'made him feel worse than being in debt' (GoT: 78). MiMi's independence, financial and otherwise, is at once a cause for veneration and a source of deep anxiety for Leo, dangerously adding firepower to his easily ignited jealousy.

Even if in a more indirect way, MiMi shares in the other artists' penchant for tampering with time. Breaking the duality of Sicilia and Bohemia, Winterson adds Paris to the play's geography. In tune with Shakespeare's exotic locales, Winterson's Paris is an ambivalent, shape-shifting space: at once the real city where Leo first met MiMi, and where Xeno returned to woo her on his friend's behalf; the surreal limbo in which this Hermione remains frozen for sixteen years; and the virtual setting of Xeno's apocalyptic videogame. Winterson's Paris is a liminal space where art and life, but also past and present, intersect and interact. Accordingly, the Paris interludes swell the ranks of the novel's artists by bringing into play some of the city's most eminent writers-in-residence: there are recurrent references to Ernest Hemingway and other members of the so-called 'lost generation' of Anglo-American authors between the two wars, but also to an earlier generation of local *poètes maudits*, here represented by Gérard de Nerval and Charles Baudelaire. In the Paris sections of the novel, Autolycus's garish Delorean is replaced by a far more highbrow time machine, namely, 'Shakespeare and Company', the world-famous inde-



pendent bookshop on rue de l'Odéon where Hemingway, Pound, Scott Fitzgerald, Joyce and other top exponents of Anglo-American modernism found shelter as expats in Paris (akin to the Resistors in Xeno's videogame). In intertextual terms, the bookshop acts as a force multiplier. Repeated mentions of 'Shakespeare and Company' facilitate the unlocking of some less manifest allusions to Winterson's fellow rewriters of Shakespeare that are scattered across the novel: an unattributed quotation from T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*, for example,<sup>8</sup> or the Woolfian echoes in the transsexual receptionist at Leo's Sicilia, one Miss Lorraine LaTrobe – a namesake of the author and producer of the inset Elizabethan pageant in Woolf's *Between the Acts*. With a final sleight of hand, the author claims her own place in this lineage by superimposing the original bookshop, which closed in 1940, and the new 'Shakespeare and Co.' in the 5<sup>th</sup> arrondissement, which was opened in 1951 by George Whitman and since 2008 has been the home of a biennial literary festival that ranks Jeanette Winterson among its distinguished guests.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Xeno sceptically rebuts his son's and Perdita's belief in the possibility of love by evoking the ominous image of the shirt of Nessus in words borrowed from 'Little Gidding': 'Love is the unfamiliar name behind the hands that wove the intolerable shirt of flame' (GoT: 211). Eliot's philosophical meditation on the interconnected themes of time, travel, loss and redemption in his *Four Quartets* strongly resonates with *The Winter's Tale*; akin to Shakespeare's tragicomedy and Winterson's reworking of it, Eliot's poem is equally haunted by music and by the ghost of Shakespeare.

<sup>9</sup> Winterson is all over her rewrite of *The Winter's Tale*. The author has spoken of Shakespeare's play as a 'private text' (GoT: 284) for her, not least because of her own upbringing as a foundling. Significantly, the wealth of autobiographical detail generated by this long-held intimacy with the Shakespearean source often works to strengthen the author's connection with the group of artists in the book. Through MiMi's Wikipedia page, for example, we learn that the versatile singer 'made her acting debut in 2002 on stage at Théâtre National de Chaillot in Deborah Warner's adaptation of *The PowerBook* – a novel by the British writer Jeanette Winterson' (GoT: 42). The renowned British theatre director and Winterson were partners for six years in real life; when they broke up, in 2007, Winterson suffered a severe bout of depression. An adaptation of *The Power Book* by Warner, her iconic actress Fiona Shaw, and Winterson herself was staged at the National Theatre in London in 2002.

## Giulio Romano's sisters

This proliferation of artists, past and present, real and invented, paves the way for Winterson's updating of the resurrection scene, the metatheatrical climax of *The Winter's Tale* and also the moment in the novel where the fundamental imbrication of art and money, as well as of Shakespeare and money, becomes fully thematized.

In *The Gap of Time*, the scene of Perdita's restoration to her father – the precondition for MiMi's return – restages the main characters' visit, in Shakespeare, to Paulina's art gallery as they head for the chapel where Hermione's statue is allegedly placed. As Leontes reminds his host,

we came

To see the statue of our Queen. Your gallery  
Have we passed through, not without much content  
In many singularities, but we saw not  
That which my daughter came to look upon,  
The statue of her mother. (WT, V. 3: 10-14)

Winterson departs from her source in that Perdita is alone when she visits the gallery; the latter, moreover, is no longer situated inside Paulina's house but at the very epicentre of global finance, within the corporate headquarters of Leo's Sicilia Ltd which, in turn, are said to be 'above an art gallery' (GoT: 234). Filling yet another gap in the play, the unspecified 'singularities' that Shakespeare's characters observe as they walk through the gallery are identified by the narrator as a series of Tracey Emin prints that line the walls of the stairs leading to Leo's office. Emin, the controversial millionaire artist, is the first of Winterson's two female avatars of Giulio Romano, the avowed author of Hermione's statue in *The Winter's Tale*.

As Stephen Orgel has pointed out, Shakespeare's attribution of the (nonexistent) masterpiece in Paulina's gallery to Giulio Romano is intriguing in at least two respects: firstly, Giulio was a painter, not a sculptor; secondly, this is the only allusion by Shakespeare to a modern artist, and one of the earliest references to Giulio in England. Shakespeare could easily have named a historical figure like Phidias as a likely provider of art works to a collector in ancient Sicily; through this blatant anachronism, he was deliberately adver-

tising his knowledgeability of, and maybe even affiliation with, the avant-garde in the visual arts (Orgel 2003: 112). Winterson's stand-ins for Shakespeare's Renaissance master – Tracey Emin and, a little later, Roni Horn – are just as cutting-edge; their work is marked by a parallel eclecticism; and through them, as I will argue, Winterson astutely leverages the potential for economic criticism that is embedded in Shakespeare's statue.

This critical firepower is initially activated through Winterson's implicit association of Giulio Romano with his present-day British 'sister'. Although the actual visual content of the prints in Leo's Sicilia is left undisclosed, readers who are familiar with this part of Tracey Emin's production will be quick to see their thematic relevance to *The Winter's Tale*. Emin's monoprints often have an autobiographical aspect, recalling (traumatic) events from her past; and the prime subject of Emin's drawings is the female body, an eroticized self-exposure of the artist's figure that is often frankly and provocatively pornographic.<sup>10</sup> The Emin artworks displayed on Sicilia's walls thus read as an objectification of the paranoid fantasies about women's insatiable appetite that Leo shares with his Shakespearean antecedent. They also evoke the other invisible, because no longer existent, work of art by Giulio Romano that haunts the picture in *The Winter's Tale*, i.e. the obscene drawings of sexual positions known as *I Modi* which were suppressed by papal order and only survived through their explanatory texts, Pietro Aretino's sonnets (Orgel 2003: 112).<sup>11</sup>

When Perdita reaches the waiting area before Leo's office, Sicilia's art collection is enriched by 'a big neon sign that [says] RISK=VALUE' (GoT: 235). Emin has consistently used neon signs throughout her entire career, and most of her work with this medium is text-based. Although Leo's motto does not appear in her actual output, some readers might recall the huge neon sign by Emin, 'Foundlings

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<sup>10</sup> A broad selection of Emin's artworks can be browsed at <http://www.traceyeminstudio.com/type/artworks/>. Accessed 12 June 2016.

<sup>11</sup> As Orgel goes on to specify (2003: 114), two prints from the original series are actually still extant, and we know about the rest through the woodcut replicas of the entire suite collected in a volume that also includes Aretino's accompanying texts.

and Fledglings – Our Angels of this Earth’, which spread across the façade of the Foundling Museum in London in 2010, on the occasion of a joint exhibition featuring work by herself, Paula Rego, and Mat Collishaw. Emin’s contribution to the exhibition consisted of the monoprints of mothers and children which she had drawn during a pregnancy that ended in a botched abortion. Further adding to the resonances with the Foundling and abandonment, Emin also displayed some of her own collection of ‘baby things’, placing them alongside a selection of the museum’s foundling tokens – i.e., the mementos that mothers left with their babies to enable identification should they ever come back to claim them.

As happens in Shakespeare with Giulio’s *Modi* and Hermione’s statue, the memory of Emin’s real neon haunts Winterson’s invented one, enabling it to chime with the interconnected themes of art, procreation, loss, and finance in *The Winter’s Tale*. The highlight in Leo’s collection, moreover, comes with a backstory attached. In the first part of the novel, the narrator almost casually mentions a ‘red neon wall sign designed by Tracey Emin’ as the only element of colour in Leo’s pristine white office in the City. The text, we are told, was ‘part of a quote he’d seen at an OCCUPY demonstration: *What You Risk Reveals What You Value*. The quote had bothered him until he changed it. When he started his new company he had commissioned the neon’ (GoT: 24).<sup>12</sup> The bespoke neon has neutralized the critique of casino capitalism by Occupy activists, while at the same time bending Emin’s disturbing art into a trendy endorsement of Leo’s economic credo.

The pitfalls of corporate sponsorship are conclusively laid bare in Winterson’s recreation of the statue scene. Shakespeare, it bears repeating, teases us with the mention of a sculptor who is not a sculptor at all, and the promised display of a statue that turns out not to be a statue: the figure that Paulina unveils is the living queen. In *The Gap of Time*, the ‘piece many years in doing and now newly performed by that rare Italian master, Giulio Romano’

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<sup>12</sup> To the best of my knowledge, no such slogan was used by Occupy London activists; the quote-turned-exhibit, however, rings a note of truth since Occupy London placards were acquired by the Museum of London in 2012 and currently feature in its collection.

(WT, V. 2: 94-95) is replaced by a performance in its own right: a surprise closing number to Perdita's gig with her girl band at the Roundhouse, when MiMi suddenly appears on stage, standing 'like a statue' in the follow spotlight, to give a rendition of her lost song 'Perdita' while Leo cries 'long tears of rain' (GoT: 284). In Winterson's version, Hermione's resurrection is no longer the product of Paulina's impeccable stagecraft; still, it continues to be significantly connected to female creativity by way of Giulio Romano's other 'sister' in the novel, the American visual artist Roni Horn.

When Perdita arrives in London from New Bohemia, Leo's Sicilia is set on demolishing the theatre venue where MiMi's last concert took place, the Roundhouse in Chalk Farm, in order to erect in its place twenty-storey towers dedicated to 'purposeful contemporary living'. Sicilia's development plan also includes a block of 'purposefully affordable homes facing the mainline railway into Euston Station' (GoT: 223), tactically shielded from the prestige part behind a wall of water that Leo has commissioned from Roni Horn. As with Tracey Emin earlier on, Horn's artwork (conceivably, a rough equivalent of her much-celebrated library of water in Iceland) has been fully enlisted in the service of a ruthless economic enterprise. Under cover of a magnanimous gift to the community, her wall of water will enforce economic segregation, shielding the luxury apartments from railway noise while exposing the less affluent residents to the further disturbance of 'a perpetually flushing toilet' (GoT: 223).

Winterson's version, then, offers a distinctly economic understanding of the power to 'mend' nature that is ascribed to art in *The Winter's Tale*. Corporate sponsorship has become inevitable in an age of ever-shrinking public expenditure on cultural production: as Leo complacently remarks, 'private money has to fill the gap' (GoT: 249). In return, the works of art that Leo commissions lend both cultural and ethical legitimation to Sicilia's 'responsible capitalism' (GoT: 239), the defining twenty-first-century oxymoron. That this is a damaging perversion of art's remedial powers is emphasized through the paradox whereby Leo, who painfully longs for the possibility to reverse time and undo the terrible losses he has suffered, is at the same time unwittingly bent on destroying the closest equivalent to a time machine available to him, that is to say the Roundhouse theatre. As he himself reveals to Perdita, the venue

where MiMi will eventually perform her resurrection act used to be 'a turning shed for the trams. Trams can't reverse, so this is where they changed direction – by going round in a circle – in this vast theatre space here' (GoT: 249).

While mainly animated by contemporary preoccupations, Winterson's warning about art's subjugation to economic values also offers critical insight into Shakespeare's own involvement in the narratives surrounding, and even sustaining, the emergence of capitalism. In her extensive critical engagement with the economics of *The Winter's Tale*, Natalie Forman convincingly argues that Shakespeare's tragicomic plot of losses turned into gains should be understood as an apology for the self-generating power of money and an endorsement of capitalism's narrative of productivity. Forman's emphasis on tragicomedy as a genre depending on the possibility of creating 'value, and especially surplus value, out of nothing, absence, loss, and even material poverty' (Forman 2008: 20) is of a piece with Michael Bristol's seminal reading of Leontes as a prototypical venture capitalist, and of his redemption as the profitable outcome of a strategic long-term investment, an initial sacrifice which yields valuable returns in the fullness of time.<sup>13</sup> Bristol's contention gains weight once we consider the strong financial overtones to the play's central theme of loss and recovery. In *The Winter's Tale*, Perdita's life is literally bundled up with money and specifically connected to its circulation, and the equation of children with currency is playfully picked up in one of the pirated ballads sold by Autolycus at the sheep-shearing festival, which the peddler advertises as being about 'how a usurer's wife was brought to bed of twenty money-bags at a burden' (WT, IV. 4: 263-265). If breeding is germane to minting, this also involves the possibility for children to be circulated like

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<sup>13</sup> 'The queen's fidelity and her voluntary return to Leontes seem as utterly groundless and also as unmotivated as the jealousy of Leontes. In the spatiotemporal economy of the play, however, Hermione's resurrection makes sense as the result of a strategic calculation on the part of Leontes . . . Viewed in this way, Leontes's "redemption" is not brought about by grace and by forgiveness but is rather the result of his own bold, risk-taking decisions combined with his patience and enormous capacity for deferral' (Bristol 1991: 165).

coins and for their ownership to be transferable, as happens when Perdita is adopted by the Shepherd.<sup>14</sup>

Economic metaphors of procreation, insisting on the homology between breeding and finance, are common in early modern culture; crucially for my argument, though, in *The Winter's Tale* they are stretched to also include artistic creation, thus enhancing the bond between money and Shakespeare's own art. In the well-known debate about the grafting of plants between Perdita and Polixenes in Act Four, Perdita's suspicion of artificially-induced growth is rebutted by the disguised king who vindicates the legitimacy of nature 'made better' (WT, IV. 4: 89) by art, which, he maintains, is also a part of 'nature'. Polixenes's claims are ironically substantiated by the foundling's own upbringing among the Bohemian shepherds: like the 'gentler scion married to the wildest stock' (WT, IV. 4: 93) in order to support its development, Perdita's grafting to the Shepherd's family tree has enabled the abandoned child to survive and, indeed, flourish. For an early modern audience the process of grafting would have been easily legible as a horticultural correlative of usury, the artificial increase of wealth through its exchange, the magical human art through which money, which is naturally barren, can be made to breed (see Hawkes 2015: 143-160).<sup>15</sup>

With this joint defence of art and finance as human activities that are equally capable of improving on nature, *The Winter's Tale* seems to provide discursive backing for the dawning market economy. The play, however, also sounds a self-reflexive note of warning about the alliance between the aesthetic and the economic. The context in which the grafting metaphor is presented – the sheep-shearing festival hosted by Perdita – is of particular relevance here. Shakespeare suggests from the very start that the provision of entertainment at the festival is inseparable from the shepherds' business enterprise. The actual feast is preceded by the Clown's staggering calculations of revenues from the shorn wool in an attempt to figure out his budget for refreshments. Shortly afterwards, as the revels are in progress, the arrival of the peddler's cart unequivocally

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<sup>14</sup> See on this Cavell 1987 and especially Ellerbeck 2010.

<sup>15</sup> Of course the knowledge that money cannot 'breed' goes back to Aristotle and his critique of chrematistics: see Hawkes 2015: 3-16.

inscribes the rule of the market and the practice of the cheat upon the pastoral scene. Autolycus's artful junk sale ironically hints at the business opportunities afforded by 'the commodity fetishism fostered by nascent consumerism', as suggested by David Hawkes,<sup>16</sup> but his figurative 'fleecing' of the rustics also acts as a pointed reminder about the more problematic economic subtext to the popular festivity: in early seventeenth-century England, sheep-keeping was intimately bound with the violence of the enclosures,<sup>17</sup> the historical process of 'primitive accumulation' which Marx identified as the foundation stone for the subsequent growth of capitalism. That this process developed basically through theft and extortion is further underscored by Shakespeare through Autolycus's purported ancestry. Upon his entrance, the trickster introduces himself to the play's audience as the progeny of Mercury, the god of commerce and the market, and a messenger and thief by profession. Autolycus's claim is wholly pertinent not only to his area of business – the pastoral world – but also to its ethos, given that Mercury began his career by ingeniously stealing Apollo's herds, and subsequently made up for his felony through the compensatory gift of the lyre, in what reads as yet another tale of art being called upon to 'mend' and obscure the unlawful operations of capital.

### **'If this be magic...': Hermione and her replicas**

While primarily addressing the supplanting of humanist values by monetary ones in the arts as well as in society at large, Winterson's critical updating of the statue scene also significantly heightens our perception of a more general, deep-seated linkage between Shakespeare and money. This is particularly evident in the third and final part of the novel. Here, Winterson's removal of the resurrection

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<sup>16</sup> See Hawkes 2015: 93. Bristol (1991) and Cavell (1987) similarly emphasize the entrepreneurial and economic aspects of the sheep-shearing festival.

<sup>17</sup> Autolycus's figurative fleecing of the rustics has been read as a 'historical footnote' whereby Shakespeare reminded his audience that 'pastoral settings may be inhabited by More's man-eating sheep and the violence of the enclosures' (Correll 2003: 60).



scene 'proper' results in a veritable proliferation of statues, a gesture that powerfully conveys the self-reproducing potential of financial symbols in the age of global capitalism. During her long exile in Paris, MiMi can be sighted walking down to the Seine at dawn 'in dark glasses and a scruffy coat' and standing on the river bank 'like a statue' as she stares into the water (GoT: 227). The narrator informs us that MiMi feels 'trapped in stone' like the countless statues or carvings of angels that she comes across every day in Paris, and that remind her 'of what Michelangelo said; that when he took a block of granite or marble he saw the figure trapped there and his duty was to free it' (GoT: 228).<sup>18</sup> A statue-like MiMi can also be spotted in Xeno's videogame, where she appears in her self-inflicted solitary confinement 'Lying like a tomb knight in a chapel. White and made of stone' in her room overlooking the Seine (GoT: 217). MiMi's condition also partly extends to Leo and Xeno, who are likewise trapped in a petrified and petrifying past and upon their reunion stand frozen 'like statues' (GoT: 259). The episode of Leo's visit to Highgate Cemetery where his son Milo is buried raises further visual associations with the numerous statues of angels and mourning figures there, but also with the famous outsize bust of the London cemetery's most illustrious resident, Karl Marx – a giant among economic critics of Shakespeare.

On one level, this surplus of statues reads as an allusion to the commodification of art in the age of mass production and the global market. As a narrative strategy, however, this iteration is imbued not only with thematic but also with performative meaning. Through this profusion of metaphorical or proxy sculptures, Winterson's narrative predisposes the reader to respond to Paulina's prompt in *The Winter's Tale* and retrospectively see a statue even where none is actually mentioned. The cue for this uncanny apparition is in the conversation between Perdita and Zel about their favourite books during Shep's birthday party at The Fleece. When Perdita tells him that she is into *Walden*, Thoreau's bible of civil disobedience, Zel replies that he is reading Benjamin Franklin's autobiography, adding: 'The guy on the hundred dollar bill? I mean,

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<sup>18</sup> MiMi's mention of Michelangelo seems playfully meant to rectify Shakespeare's misattribution of the statue to Giulio Romano.

we spend the money and we don't know anything about the people on the bills' (GoT: 162). Zel's gloss triggers the association with another distinguished 'guy on the bill', one who ironically stands in much closer relation to the characters in the novel: Shakespeare on the obverse side of the twenty-pound note issued by the Bank of England between 1970 and 1993.

It would be superfluous to go into detail about the Shakespearean banknote as a quintessence of the intersection of bardolatry, commodification and power: the key facts about its cultural and political significance have been amply and authoritatively established by Graham Holderness's groundbreaking analysis in *The Shakespeare Myth* (Holderness 1986). In light of my argument here, however, it is worth pointing out that the particular shape taken by the 'guy on the bill' who authored Winterson's characters is that of a statue; more precisely, an image of the famous sculpture of Shakespeare produced under public commission and erected in Westminster Abbey in 1741 as a tribute to the national poet. The concomitant reification and monetarization of Shakespeare on the twenty-pound note, moreover, finds a parallel in another instance of 'profitable transformation' that hovers over its iconography, one which Winterson's novel subtly mirrors through the awkward intrusion of the dollar bill into Zel and Perdita's romantic interlude. The composite design work on the banknote also includes a vignette of the balcony scene from *Romeo and Juliet*, in what amounts to a truly 'pocket' version of this most popular and iconic instance of Shakespeare's genius. As Holderness fittingly remarks, the Bank of England's choice of play is only superficially at variance with the 'sordid and banal symbols . . . of monetary value' which surround the romantic scene. Shakespeare's 'great poetic protest of romantic passion against mercenary morality and commercialised relationship' (Holderness 1988: xii) actually ends with the dissident lovers being turned into the statues 'in pure gold' (*Romeo and Juliet*, V. 3: 298) which Montague and Capulet will erect to commemorate their tragic fate, thereby paradigmatically attesting to the full and definitive overlap between aesthetics and economics.

Likewise conceived as an effigy, Hermione's statue in *The Winter's Tale* constitutes Shakespeare's ultimate embodiment of the colonization of the aesthetic sphere, and of human experience at

large, by monetarist values. For an early modern audience, a statue by a contemporary Italian artist displayed in a connoisseur's gallery would have raised immediate associations with the art collecting instinct that was burgeoning in England in the 1610s and the commodifying impulse it entailed.<sup>19</sup> But differently from Romeo and Juliet's golden replicas, the statue in *The Winter's Tale* is not only a representation, however valuable, of the queen; the statue *is* the queen, a human being who has been literally objectified into a luxury good. Surprisingly, moreover, Hermione's condition is accentuated, rather than redeemed, by her miraculous awakening in Shakespeare's play. During the resurrection scene, Leontes hails the appallingly lifelike sculpture as 'royal piece' (WT, V. 3: 38), an expression that unmistakably alludes to the practice of stamping coins with the head of the reigning monarch (Forman 2008: 108). The queen's restoration to the realm of the living is thus framed by her verbal construction as the issue of Leontes's mint, a status that Shakespeare also seems to underscore through the quasi-homophony of 'Hermione' and 'her-money'. Beyond its manifest reconciliatory thrust, then, the redemptive 'magic' (WT, V. 3: 110) which enables the comic resolution in *The Winter's Tale* must have struck Shakespeare's audiences as an eloquent image of the two-fold process at the heart of modern economy: money coming alive, and human beings becoming reified. Four centuries later, through a kindred act of performative magic, Winterson conjures up the effigy

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<sup>19</sup> Orgel 2003: 121-122. Orgel further observes that King James had commissioned statues of Queen Elizabeth and Mary, Queen of Scots as tomb effigies for their monuments in Westminster Abbey. Although he was not a collector or a connoisseur, the Stuart monarch nevertheless 'relied on the power of art to memorialize, reconcile and restore' – a crucial resource for Leontes in *The Winter's Tale* and, in a more conscious way, for Winterson's modern-day tyrant in *The Gap of Time*. Unlike Shakespeare, who never met Giulio Romano or saw any of his works, Winterson became personally acquainted with Roni Horn in 2012. Following their meeting, Winterson posted on her website an intriguing comment in which she fantasizes about her own ideal gallery in these terms: 'And I got to visit Roni Horn in her studio and talk about art and Iceland and touch one of those deep circular resin pools that she makes. If I ever get rich I am buying a Roni resin and a Tracey blue.' See <http://www.jeanettewinterson.com/archive/may-2012/>. Accessed 12 June 2016.

of Hermione's creator in the shape of a golden statue and holds up to our gaze the monetarized face of Shakespeare – the thought-provoking, highly timely face that she so compellingly dis-covers in her cover version of *The Winter's Tale*.

Jeanette Winterson. Photograph: Gary Calton. Jeanette Winterson. So when I was thinking about my prose version of *The Winter's Tale*, I decided to keep the device of the interval, levering the reader out of the action for a short time. I wasn't interested in copying Shakespeare – this isn't a retelling. I wanted to track Shakespeare in the same way that he tracked other people's ideas, innovations, solutions, follies, even failures, and used them to his advantage. *The Winter's Tale* itself is a remix of Robert Greene's lurid and dull story *Pandosto*. Greene hated Shakespeare and spent years attacking him in print, mainly for being a) uneducated and b) ripping *The Winter's Tale* tells the story of Perdita, the abandoned child. All of us have talismanic texts that we have carried around and that carry us around. I have worked with *The Winter's Tale* in many disguises for many years, Jeanette says of the play. Shepherd uses the money he finds with the baby to open a bar, restaurant and music venue where, sixteen years later, she meets and falls in love with Xenon's son Zel (Florizel in the play). Their love will be the catalyst that brings all the characters together for the final climactic moment of rediscovery and forgiveness. Jeanette Winterson through this cover version of Shakespeare's *Winter's Tale* allows us access to the wisdom and insight of Shakespeare which sometimes are inaccessible due to opaqueness of his poetry. Jeanette Winterson's cover version of *The Winter's Tale* vibrates with echoes of Shakespeare's original and tells a story of hearts broken and hearts healed, a story of revenge and forgiveness, a story that shows that whatever is lost shall be found. Emotionally wrought and profoundly intelligent A supremely clever, compelling and emotionally affecting novel that deserves multiple readings to appreciate its many layers Mail on Sunday. Jeanette Winterson's cover version of *The Winter's Tale* vibrates with echoes of Shakespeare's original and tells a story of hearts broken and hearts healed, a story of revenge and forgiveness, a story that shows that whatever is lost shall be found. Emotionally wrought and profoundly intelligent A supremely clever, compelling and emotionally affecting novel that deserves multiple readings to appreciate its many layers Mail on Sunday. *The Winter's Tale* is one of Shakespeare's "celate plays." It tells the story of a king whose jealousy results in the banishment of his baby daughter and the death of his beautiful wife. His daughter is found and brought up by a shepherd on the Bohemian coast, but through a series of extraordinary events, father and daughter, and eventually mother too, are reunited. In *The Gap of Time*, Jeanette Winterson's cover version of *The Winter's Tale*, we move from London, a city reeling after the 2008 financial crisis, to a storm-ravaged American city called New Bohemia. Written with energy and wit, this is a story of the consuming power of jealousy on the one hand, and redemption and the enduring love of a lost child on the other. From the Hardcover edition. This book is currently unavailable.