



## The Polyxena Pattern

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### Abstract

The title of this article is based on Seneca's description of the sacrifice of Polyxena in "The Trojan Women." The fear, desire, and transcendence that the sacrificed maiden elicits in the audience put the feminine at the center of an experience of fear and wonder that characterizes Shakespearean romance. This paper explores the paradoxical, early modern concept of "amazement" in relation to traumatic wounding and gender. Focusing on Shakespeare's late romances, especially *Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale*, I link the experience of terror to a traumatizing "evil queen" archetype. This fantasy inspires a sense of amazement as terror and results in the punishment of another archetypal character, the sacrificed maiden. When the female figure returns as the redeeming maiden at the end of Shakespeare's romances, she allows the male spectator to approach the terror and desire that the feminine inspire in him by providing him with an escape into fantasy.

### Keywords

Early modern, theory of the soul, amazement, terror, romance, transformation

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In Shakespeare's *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, and *The Winter's Tale* the men succumb to their fantasies of feminine threat and allure. If we think of Shakespeare's plays chronologically, this is not surprising given the sharpening polarization of female characters in his late tragedies, which directly precede the romances: the malevolent sisters and the misunderstood, sacrificed daughter in *King Lear*; maligned Desdemona, who in Othello's mind flutters between irresistible goodness and repugnant evil; the polar opposite wives, Lady Macbeth and Lady Macduff; and, of course, the seductive, but debauched temptress Cleopatra and the self-sacrificing, chaste Octavia. The same tragic ambivalence is explored further in three of the four romances that mark the end

of Shakespeare's career: here we see imagined an evil, deceitful, and licentious queen over and against the beautiful, innocent, and chaste maiden. The contrary feelings of hatred and longing that this splitting arouses spawn images of maidens repeatedly abandoned, sexually violated, or threatened by predators. A male hero sacrifices the innocent daughter to punish the evil queen of his fantasy. However, this sacrificed maiden later becomes the object of desire and his redeemer.

The lack of resolution of the split feminine in the tragedies leads directly to the fatal outcome. Had Lear not split his daughters into two polarized camps, he would not have catalyzed a tragic spark that could not be extinguished. Likewise, in *Macbeth*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Othello* the split of good and evil woman—real or imagined—leads ineluctably to tragic endings. In contrast, in Shakespeare's romances the feminine as redeemer allows the male protagonist's fear and aggression to change into something manageable—"admiration," which is a kind of amazement that aestheticizes its object and is bound up with erotic desire. Although it manages the problems posed by the duality woman as persecutor and the victim of violence, the fantasy of the feminine redeemer is unstable. Precisely because the concept of the redeemer is tied up with the complex of the feminine persecutor and sacrificed maiden, it is unstable, always in danger of leading him back to his original nightmare. Thus, at the end of Shakespeare's *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, and *The Winter's Tale*, the redeemer comes perilously close to being sacrificed again through death or incest. The experience of "admiration," a species of fear that also combines aestheticization and erotic desire, is a spectral, i.e., ghost-like and mirroring, doubling of his experience of terror and aggression with the earlier archetypes of femininity, the evil queen and the daughter whom he sacrifices.

The figure of Polyxena in Seneca's *Troades*, which I argue was a direct influence on Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*, and a model for the other romances, focuses male aggression and raw erotic desire, the instinct to violate, and the longing to be redeemed by the woman whom he sacrifices for his fantasies. Like Iphigenia, Polyxena is sacrificed because of a male fantasy that requires retribution—the idea that Artemis would necessitate the death of a virgin or that the ghost of Achilles would crave a young woman's blood. The admiration that Polyxena inspires in Greeks and Trojans alike helps them manage the continual trauma that they inflict on women (the dehumanization of Hecuba, Andromache, Cassandra, and even Helen's daughter Hermione). The figure of Polyxena, building upon Iphigenia whom she mirrors, is the link between tragedy and romance, focusing terror and turning it into wonder. The focus here is on Polyxena, rather than Iphigenia, because she mirrors the earlier episode, and therefore becomes a repetition of the traumatic event of female sacrifice. Secondly, the assassination of Polyxena is overtly associated with sexual desire and mourning, Pyrrhus' fantasy that his father's ghost craves the

maiden's blood. Thirdly, the sacrifice itself, as it is described in Seneca,<sup>1</sup> transmutes terror into admiration in a way that the story of Iphigenia does not. Finally, there is a correspondence not just of themes, but also of nomenclature of the cast of characters in *Troades*, and those in the romances, and particularly *The Winter's Tale*.

Seneca seizes the sacrifice as an energetic Stoic moment in which the people are terrified “mutus,” while Polyxena faces her death courageously:

*...The girl looked down  
modestly, but her cheeks were bright, and at the last  
she was more beautiful than ever before,  
just as the light of the sun is often sweeter  
as it sets and the stars are taking up their places  
and doubtful day is pressed by the neighbouring night.  
The whole crowd was dumbfounded: indeed, people  
have more respect for things about to die. Some notice her beauty,  
others her youth, while some are moved to think  
of Fortune's mutability. All are affected  
by her courage in meeting death. She walks before Pyrrhus.  
Everybody quivers with pity and wonder... (Seneca 2010b, 1136-48)*

Seneca displaces the center of gravity of the moment from grief to aestheticization. He renders the reaction of the crowd in powerful language, but there is no picture of the crowd; they are faceless symbols of emotions—“terror attonitos tenet/utrosque populos.”<sup>2</sup> He depicts Polyxena using a beautiful metaphorical analogy that describes an ephemeral sliver of time, a liminal temporal and visual place in that line between day and night when night impresses itself on the day, and the day filters through night like a palimpsest. Seneca's distancing of the moment by pointing to this break in a natural cycle alludes to the philosophical purpose to which he puts the scene; it is an analogy of the way in which stoicism breaks the cycle of terror with calm, and even beauty. Polyxena's face is revelatory to the crowd, and it allows terror and pity to turn into wonder: “omnium mentes tremunt,/mirantur ac miserantur” (Seneca 1921b, 1147-8). Seneca's depiction demonstrates the central role the young woman plays in turning terror into something like wonder, but how underlying this is a profound emotional sacrifice.

Polyxena, as she is viewed by the *populos*, turns fear into *admiration*, as Edward Reynoldes describes it in 1640. In his summary of Chapter XXI of *A Treatise of the Passions and Faculties of the Soule of Man*, he explains that

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<sup>1</sup> It is much more likely that Shakespeare encountered Polyxena in Seneca than in any Greek version of her story.

<sup>2</sup> Seneca. *Troades*. L. Annaeus Seneca. *Tragoediae*. Ed Rudolf Peiper and Gustav Richter. Leipzig: Teubner, 1921. 1136-7. *Perseus Digital Library*, 2014.

“the opposite passion to this of Hope is Feare,” and one of these fears is the “intellectual Fear of Admiration, when the excellency of the Object dazleth our Eye.”<sup>3</sup> Seneca’s description turns the raw fear into something “intellectual,” that is, of the intellect, rather than just the fantasy, but only gets there through the aestheticization of an otherwise unbearable scene. Reynoldes details in the chapter how admiration is a subspecies of fear:

Admiraton is a kind of feare: it being the property of man, not only to feare that which is Against, but that also which is above our Nature, either in regard of natural and civill dignity, which worketh a fear or Reverence...of Morall Excellency and Excesses above the strength of the faculty, which worketh a Fear or Admiration. (Reynoldes 285, PP1r)

He goes on to describe admiration as a “broken knowledge, and commonly the first step, which we make in each particular science,” relating how the experience of something that dazzles the eye through something of a Longinian magnitude, something “above our Nature,” creates fear (Reynoldes 285, PP1r). When the terror that accompanies pity moves from the fantasy into the intellect, it allows the scene of fear to be internalized and remembered without taking the spectator back into the natural cycle of repetition. Seneca’s analogy above conveys a psychic process in which repetition is interrupted when the “broken knowledge” of the traumatic event becomes part of an intellectual puzzle that seeks to understand and contain it.

The figure of Polyxena plays a central role in Shakespeare’s romances by embodying the redeeming maiden, the object of admiration, as an expression of traumatic repetition. Polyxena is the mythological and literary response to the earlier Iphigenia. By transmuting terror into admiration, the figure of Polyxena stands for the possibilities of romance to turn tragedy around emotionally. The specific correspondence of Polyxena with characters and themes in Shakespeare’s late romances, however, can be deduced not just from literary echoes, but more convincingly, from nomenclature. Most of the important male protagonists’ names begin with a P: Prospero, Pericles, Posthumus, Polixenes, and the heroine who most resembles Polyxena, Perdita. Paulina, the feminine protagonist, who at different points has the most toxic fantasy of the female, the witch, projected onto her, later asserts a male role at the moment when she creates an alternative female archetype out of her own fantasy. Leontes believes Polyxena’s closest namesake, Polixenes, to be the lover of Hermione, and indeed, Polixenes is the catalyst that triggers the fantasy of evil queen, cast out maiden, and through his later persecution of Perdita, of sending her home to become the redeemer. Shakespeare’s version of Greene’s *Pandosto*, changes most of Greene’s names, and significantly he replaces them with names that conjure up Polyxena. He adds Hermione and

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<sup>3</sup> Reynoldes, Edvvard. *A Treatise of the Passions and Faculties of the Soule of Man. With the severall Dignities and Corruptions thereunto belonging*. London: Robert Bostock, 1640. 274, Nn3v.

Polixenes to *The Winter's Tale*, the former being straight out of *Troades*, and the latter a modification of Polyxena. In choosing the name of Odysseus' grandfather, Autolycus, for the rogue in *The Winter's Tale*'s last two acts, he gestures to the legendary Autolycus' shape-shifting, cunning grandson, Odysseus, who is central to bringing about the sacrifice of both Iphigenia and Polyxena. That the grandfather, Autolycus, should make up for the sins of the children, Odysseus and Pyrrhus (Achilles' cruel, young son), in Shakespeares' use of the figure, is a dream-like inversion of the pattern of ancient tragedy, where the children pay for the sins of the fathers.

In Seneca's *Trojan Women*, the sacrifice of the maiden creates the figure of the evil queen—the Trojan queen Hecuba, whose daughter has been killed and who avenges herself later in a bloody fashion by killing Greek children. And it creates the redeemer. This splitting of the feminine into three archetypes reappears in romance, but not until *The Winter's Tale*, is there a sense of how all of these are constructed. And so we have in the first scenes of *Pericles* and *Cymbeline* an anonymous evil queen that just appears, as if she had always existed. She creates a sense of doom and paralysis in her male victims. However, Shakespeare shows how the sacrificed daughter is dynamically produced by men negotiating their homosocial bonds and using her as a focal point of desire. The archetype of the evil queen is produced in just the same way. And the archetype of the redeemer proceeds from both of these—as a spectral movement between them. For these are archetypes, which are in their essence unknown psychic factors. Marie Louise von Franz, a Jungian analyst and fairy tale scholar, explains, “In the unconscious all archetypes are contaminated with one another. It is as if several photographs were printed one over the other; they cannot be disentangled.”<sup>4</sup> What I am proposing, then, is that the Polyxena Pattern dramatically takes us through a series of archetypes of the feminine, which are, to use a different visual metaphor, part of a wheel, that we are viewing from above. At any given time we see only one archetype fully, one peripherally, and one not at all. Both the archetype of the evil queen and the sacrificed maiden produce fear. They are so distressing that they require, to lift us out of numbness and fear, a kind of amazement with a transcendent value, admiration, in order to stave off that sense of being overwhelmed.

This rotation, then, takes us through a dramatic course of events. It maps out a plot: evil queen, sacrificed maiden, redeemer. In *Cymbeline*, for example, when the British king forbids the marriage between his daughter, Imogen, and his charge, Posthumus, the queen drives the wedge further, so that her own son can wed Imogen and be next in line for the throne. Posthumus is forced to leave the kingdom, and he goes to Italy where shortly thereafter, a secondary plot hatches. A swaggering Italian, Iachimo, persuades Posthumus that his wife could easily stray if given the chance. He sends Iachimo to the

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<sup>4</sup> von Franz, Marie Louise. *The Interpretation of Fairy Tales*. Boston: Shambhala, 1996. 10.

court where the Italian gathers details to incriminate Imogen. Meanwhile, the queen's plan to marry her son off seems to be failing, and the queen sends Imogen off with what she believes is poison, but is actually a sleeping potion. Condensing the events as much as possible, Imogen discovers her long-lost brothers in the wilderness (although she does not recognize them as such) and returns with them to court where she confronts Posthumus, redeems him from his suicidal melancholy, and reunites her father with her lost brothers. We learn that the evil queen has died a painful death. We can trace, then, this rotation of archetypes. First the evil queen, second the sacrificed maiden, then the redeemer accompanied by the destruction of the queen. This is the Polyxena Pattern. It provides an emotional shift out of fear into escape.

## 2

Iachimo hides himself in a trunk in Imogen's room, and climbs out when she is sleeping. He takes notes on the arrangement of objects in the room. He studies her body and finds a mole on her breast that is sure to damn her when her lover finds out that he has had the opportunity to discover it. Having gathered all he needs, he pauses, "No more: to what end?" but he then continues to scrutinize her bedtime reading.<sup>5</sup> Earlier, he had interrupted his poetic description of her body with the short, staccato phrases of his legal mind, "But my design./ To note the chamber: I will write all down," (II.ii.23-4). Here, "the tale of Tereus" (v. 45), the book Imogen reads before falling asleep, is turned to the page where "Philomele gave up" (46). The story of the raped woman whose tongue is cut out by her rapist delivers a shock of fear to Iachimo.

*I have enough;/  
To th' trunk again, and shut the spring of it.  
Swift, swift, you dragons of the night, that dawning  
May bare the raven's eye! I lodge in fear;  
Though this a heavenly angel, hell is here.* (II.ii.46-50)

The reason for this moment of astonishment is ambiguous. Iachimo's words do not specify whether it is dawn's light or the content of the tale that causes him to "lodge in fear;/Though this is a heavenly angel, hell is here." Until this point he's alternated between erotic desire for the sleeping woman and careful observation. Behind the eroticism is a desire to find evidence to accuse her, an instinct that Iachimo follows seemingly without any conscience. Hell is there where he is, and this recognition makes him panic. Iachimo's response vivifies

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<sup>5</sup> Shakespeare, William. *Cymbeline. The Arden Shakespeare*. Ed. J. M. Nosworthy. London: Methuen & Co., 1955. II.ii.42

the association between the sleeping woman and the male sense of being overcome by terror. The image of the “dragons of the night,” tied to that of the inert Imogen, manifests the male terror of being overcome by some diabolic force in and through the figure of the sleeping woman.

What Iachimo does not unpack is the relationship between the story of Philomele and his own fantasy. In Iachimo’s and Posthumus’s dreams, Imogen is also muted, like Philomel. Symbolically, the story enacts the idea of the sacrificed daughter, who is raped and whose tongue is cut out of her mouth. Imogen’s beauty and the admiration that she elicits as this “heavenly angel,” who must nevertheless be sacrificed to quench her perpetrator’s lust, recall the story in Ovid. There are a lot of spectral figures here now—Polyxena, Philomel, and the sleeping Imogen, reduced to an image in the fantasy. This woman who will be condemned falsely is intertwined with these through the production of terror and of admiration—admiration at her beauty and terror at the sense that his fantasy is causing Iachimo to do violence to the “angel.” The terror comes forth, as in Seneca’s description of Polyxena’s sacrifice, during a liminal space in which night turns into a dawn that will “bare the raven’s eye.” The raven is not Imogen, of course, because the story with which she is connected here casts her in the role of the nightingale. The “raven’s eye,” the eye of the black scavenger bird, is the eye of Iachimo’s conscience, which flickers. He momentarily awakens in the presence of the slumbering woman. He sees himself for what he is: a traitor to the truth, a victim of his fears, a violent man.

The sense of being overcome by terror is no doubt also the feeling that Imogen’s guilt is a product of his lust. In his epistle to the 1567 edition of *The Metamorphoses*, the translator Arthur Golding carefully positions the story of Philomele in contrast to Medea—the sacrificed daughter against the evil queen—and uses it as an example of “the man in whom the fyre of furious lust dooth reigne,” who “Dooth run too mischeefe like a horse that getteth loose the rene.”<sup>6</sup> This pivotal insight into the male fantasy that creates the Polyxena Pattern unconsciously mirrors Seneca’s description in which the sadistic male gaze gets turned on by feminine vulnerability. He is astonished by the unveiling of his desire for what it is, and this offers us a glimmer of how the archetype is created by the combined force of fear and desire.

### 3

The analogous construction of the archetype of the evil queen inspires similar emotions of amazement as fear and overwhelm. In *Cymbeline* and *Pericles*, the evil queen is presented as if she were always there, a permanent archetype.

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<sup>6</sup> Ovid. *The. xv. bookes of P. Ouidius Naso, entytuled Metamorphosis, translated oute of Latin into English meeter, by Arthur Golding Gentleman, a worke very pleasaunt and delectable.* Trans. Arthur Golding. London, 1567. Ovid A3<sup>r</sup>.

But *The Winter's Tale* shows how in fact she is also constructed, and that she is a product of longing and fear. We see the construction of the evil queen archetype as a dynamic process between Hermione, the queen of Sicily and her male interlocutors, her husband, Leontes and his childhood friend and king of Bohemia, Polixenes. Only when Hermione has taken on the assumed guilt of women for getting in between the princely love, and teases Polixenes not to come to the conclusion that his wife and she are “devils,” does she win Bohemia.<sup>7</sup> She speaks of sex as “offences we have made” to which she will “answer” (1.ii.83). When Hermione gives her hand to Polixenes, as the stage directions dictate twenty lines later, she has already taken on the role of accused. Shortly after, Leontes has a moment of “tremor cordis,” the attack by strange fantasy—a fantasy so strong that he will direct all his powers to confirming it through a trial.

The “tremor cordis” that Leontes feels early on reveals the onset of this fantasy of the evil queen. Note the structural similarity with Iachimo’s reaction to the sleeping Imogen. The dangerous syncope follows shortly after his reminiscence of an ideal moment in an idealized past:

*what we chang'd  
Was innocence for innocence; we knew not  
The doctrine of ill-doing, nor dream'd  
That any did. Had we pursu'd that life,  
And our weak spirits ne'er been higher rear'd  
With stronger blood, we should have answer'd heaven  
Boldly 'not guilty' (I.ii.67-73)*

Leontes reimagines his childhood friendship as a guiltless time, but the fact that this dream has ended arouses in Leontes the need to charge an interloper with the crime of interrupting it. By the end of his description he is already foreshadowing his indictment and arraignment of Hermione for treason. In the court of heaven he would have been found blameless had he not been tempted by Hermione. The queen of Sicilia plays along with Leontes’ fantasy, not realizing the minefield of his dreams. She supplies the words he has not mentioned, speaking of herself and Polixenes’ queen as “devils,” their “offences” being to tempt the young princes to have “first sinn’d” with them (I.ii.82, 83, 84). In Leontes’ fantasy the language of innocence, guilt, and temptation, cast into the cosmic terms of the Garden of Eden, reveals a dormant fantasy that has reawakened. After Hermione completes her persuasion of Polixenes to stay by saying that she is putting her hand in that of another man for the second time, the fantasy that she awakens is not merely of adultery.

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<sup>7</sup> Shakespeare. *The Winter's Tale. The Arden Shakespeare*. Ed. John Pitcher. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010. I.ii.82.



“Tremor cordis” marks the onset of a deep-seated fear, which in the early modern imagination is associated with an intrusion in the fantasy of a malignant outside force. This visitation by an outside force, causing a shocking fear, has all the feeling of an acute violation. It is no coincidence, then, that Hermione imaginatively is positioned in the role of demonic perpetrator. Nothing really happens in this scene; it is all dream and reminiscence. And yet this scene possesses the shock value of a classic *perepитеia* scene, as if something had happened unexpectedly and suddenly. Edward Reynoldes writes on the suddenness of something, which produces fear: “Vnacquaintance then and Ignorance of an approaching Evill, must needs worke Amazement and Terroure; as contrarily a foresight there of worketh Patience to undergoe, and Boldnesse to encounter it” (Reynoldes 278 Oo1v). The unexpected evil causes a paralyzing terror that renders the individual impotent. Reynoldes’ definition of “amazement” incorporates a vulnerability to the possibility of annihilation by “an approaching Evill.” It is the approach of something inchoate that Leontes feels, and the audience witnesses.

Describing this feeling, Robert Burton writes, “Many lamentable effects this Feare causeth in men, as to be red, pale, tremble, sweat, it makes sudden cold and heat to come over all the body, palpitation of the heart, Syncope, &c.”<sup>8</sup> We know of the palpitation of the heart, and syncope, because Leontes admits it. But the relationship of these symptoms of fear to his fantasy is unknown to him. Early modern psychology presents a model for the ideal form of the imagination, and a corresponding explanation of the violation of the ideal. The violation is a bodily, sexualized penetration of the boundaries of the body. This can occur through the fantasy, but medical theorists had to explain by what means the Imagination could be so affected absent any obvious causes of terror. Demonic spirits, and the Devil himself, can terrorize the body, taking over its functions. Burton quotes the scholastic physician Jason Pratensis,

*the Divell being a slender incomprehensible spirit, can easily insinuate and winde himself into humane bodies, and cunningly couched in our bowels, vitiate our healths, terrify our soules with fearefull dreames, and shake our minde with furies.* (Burton 94)

The devil conquers the fantasy through the body, and the overthrow of reason is pictured as a violation. At the heart of this conquest is the will of the other, permeating and ruling the conquered body, and it is “incomprehensible.” The effects of terror, materialized in frightening dreams and the degradation of the physical body, are the direct manifestations of an enigma. The Devil is a placeholder name here for the entity responsible for the invasion of the fantasy and the concomitant feeling of bodily penetration (expressed as *syncope* and

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<sup>8</sup> Burton, Robert. *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. Eds. Faulkner, Kiessling, and Blair. Vols. 1-3. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989. 249.

the consequent disorder of the body). Imogen creates a feeling of hell, and Hermione assumes the guilt of the devil. Both amaze their male spectators, “terrify [their] soules with fearefull dreames, and shake [the] minde with furies.”

#### 4

How, then, is the identical negative amazement that the sacrificed daughter and the evil queen create in their male spectators wiped out? *Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale* provide examples, but I will turn to the most famous and illustrative— that of Perdita, Leontes' daughter's homecoming to Sicily. In amazing her spectators with “admiration,” she provides a route of escape from earlier feelings of terror associated with the other two archetypes. However, she still brings with her all the dangers of female sexuality, which can keep the pattern endlessly repeating itself in time.

The return of Perdita still keeps us in the circle of male fantasy. Her return serves as a focal point for men to love each other. A trio of gentlemen of Sicilia recounts the “amazedness” (V.ii.5) of Leontes being reunited with the best friend he had accused of adultery and the counselor he claimed had helped him flee:

*I make a broken delivery of the business; but the changes I perceiv'd in the King and Camillo were very notes of admiration. They seemed almost with staring on one another, to tear the cases of their eyes. There was speech in their dumbness, language in their very gesture; they look'd as they had heard of a world ransom'd, or one deestroy'd. A notable passion of wonder appear'd in them; but the wisest beholder, that knew no more but seeing, could not say if th'importance were joy or sorrow; but in the extremity of the one, it must needs be. (V.ii.9-19)*

The “extremity” of emotion marks the awakening of consciousness through the force of pivoting between one powerful surge of feeling and another contrasting one. Amazement as admiration signals the sudden arrival of something “from above”; of course it is the redeemer who makes it possible, but the admiration is directed not at her, but at him—at the various “hims” in the scene. Like the fantasy of the evil queen, the fantasy of the redeemer makes it possible for men to look upon one another with love and longing. The scene invokes the intensity of homosocial desire in the beginning of the play, which leads catastrophically to the expulsion of the queen and her daughter. This meeting is a prelude to the *liebestod*-like reunion of Polixenes and Leontes:

*There might you have beheld one joy crown another, so and in such manner that it seem'd sorrow wept to take leave of them, for their joy waded in tears.*

*There was casting up of eyes, holding up of hands, with countenance of such distraction that they were to be known by garment, not by favor.* (V.ii.43-9)

While this all comes about because of the “found daughter” (V.ii.50), the reunion of Leontes with his spiritual brother and his father figure are the focal point. The image of the two men so merged that their features cannot be distinguished, “garment, not...favor,” marks an emotional return to the Edenic past before women that Leontes longed for so vehemently that he was willing to set fire to his reality. Amazement as admiration operates here because there is a clear reference to verticality, to “up above”: “casting up of eyes, holding up hands.” The whole scene points upward to the heavens. But at this point, we are also closest to the scene of Polyxena’s sacrifice because the focal point of the returned daughter provides the occasion for the reunion of the men. Perdita has repeatedly escaped death at the hands of these very men—first, Leontes, and then Polixenes—and in her return she echoes these encounters. The continual nearness of her sacrifice is part and parcel of the erotic value of this scene. It is not what happens, but what is narrowly averted that also occupies a spectral place here—here at the same time that this reunion is happening.

In the ending of *The Winter’s Tale*, however, we see the Polyxena Pattern shattered, and this is Shakespeare’s lasting contribution to romance. Because the Polyxena Pattern is based on fantasy, there always remains the possibility of returning to terror—the ascendance of the archetype of the evil queen when that figurative wheel of amazement turns again. From terror, we go to admiration, which allows us to process that early fear, but the reunion of father and daughter is typically dangerous—in Greene’s version of this story, it is followed by the king’s suicide; in *Pericles*, the reunion is colored by the threat of becoming incestuous, and in *Cymbeline*, Imogen is nearly killed—again.

Paulina, Hermione’s ally who for sixteen years has been a reminder to Leontes of the destruction he has caused, invites them all to her studio. She promises to show a likeness of Hermione to Perdita, who has never seen her mother. In Paulina’s studio, a deliberate feminine artistic illusion is created in which we see the earlier archetypes are petrified. The figure of the redeeming daughter becomes like the statue of the mother. They are replaced by a new art: Paulina presents them with what is supposed to be a painted statue of Hermione.

In Paulina’s studio, everything begins moving again because hearts are brimming with feeling. This is not the spectral, emptied image of femininity. This scene centers around three real women: Paulina, Hermione, and Perdita. Paulina cautions that reality will begin to fall away through a vertiginous process: “...resolve you/For more amazement. If you can behold it,/I’ll make the statue move indeed, descend,/And take you by the hand” (V.ii.86-9). The experience of amazement and marvel (Paulina’s command to “look upon” the coming to life “with marvel” [V.ii.100]) centers around the reunion of mother

and daughter: “Turn, good lady,/ Our Perdita is found” (120-1). However much he comes to life through this, Leontes is on the sidelines in contrast with his position in the trial scene where Hermione lived only in his fantasy. In Hermione coming to life, the Polyxena Pattern is pierced because this is no longer the product of a chain of emotions and a pattern of actions centered on male fantasy. Both suffering and joy participate, but not through the sacrifice of another due to fantasy. In Seneca, Hermione, Helen’s daughter, is the one who leads Polyxena to her sacrifice, and indeed that is what Shakespeare’s Hermione does at the end of *The Winter’s Tale*. She releases Polyxena and amazement structures the release of this fantasy, opening up a new pattern of relationship between men and women.

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In Greek mythology, Polyxena (/pɒˈlɪksɪnə/; Greek: Πολυξένη) was the youngest daughter of King Priam of Troy and his queen, Hecuba. She does not appear in Homer, but in several other classical authors, though the details of her story vary considerably. After the fall of Troy, she dies when sacrificed by the Greeks on the tomb of Achilles, to whom she had been betrothed and in whose death she was complicit in many versions. A male hero sacrifices the innocent daughter to punish the evil queen of his fantasy. However, this sacrificed maiden later becomes the object of desire and his redeemer. The lack of resolution of the split feminine in the tragedies leads directly to the fatal outcome. Had Lear not split his daughters into two polarized camps, he would not have catalyzed a tragic spark that could not be extinguished. @inproceedings{Weiner2016ThePP, title={The Polyxena Pattern}, author={Jeffrey Neil Weiner}, year={2016} }.