

# “Our Perdita is found”: Loss and Restoration of Trust in Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale*”

Tetsuya Motohashi

## Foreword

In order to investigate the modern and elusive phenomenon of ambivalence between ostensible risk and invisible trust, this paper proposes to look at *The Winter’s Tale*, which has baffled its critics for its description of seemingly inexplicable and unreasonable emotion engulfing the protagonist and its supernatural presentation of the magical denouement. This paper takes issue with “realistic” interpretation of the play, by examining the 2017 Shizuoka Performing Arts Center’s (SPAC) production directed by Satoshi Miyagi (first performed in Shizuoka Arts Theatre in January 2017). This production would arguably expand the play’s “unrealistic” horizon through the company’s distinctive “Two Actors in One Role” method that technically divides one character between a narrator and a mover. This essay will hopefully provide an insight into how multiple risks in modern society could become problematic through apparent restoration of trust in a theatrical format.

## There was a Loss in the First Place

Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale* is a play in which risks aggravated by the King’s jealousy lead to loss of trust which results in devastation of human lives and patriarchal structure of society, which could ultimately be resolved through an apparent restoration of trust. Within a framework of conventional Shakespearean criticism, the last four of Shakespeare’s plays have been called “romance” which suggests a tragi-comic format where betrayals and separations in a family or society end up in reunion and reconciliation. Among these plays, *The Winter’s Tale* has been generally regarded more tragically colored than the others, as the unforeseen events in the community involve unredeemable death of its members, and the reconciliation and reunion suggested in the

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end appear to be ambiguous and questionable.

### **“Two Actors in One Role” and “One Actor in One Role”**

In the SPAC production of *The Winter’s Tale*, Satoshi Miyagi adroitly employs the “Two Actors in One Role” method where one theatrical character is represented by two players/performers, a speaker and a mover. Miyagi explains:

I think words will bring a tremendous feeling of disjunction into human bodies: words cut apart the natural flow which bodies desire, and consequently become the enemy of physiologic pleasure. .... Human beings are vessels in which bodies and words fight against each other. If that is the case, the actor on stage should reveal that struggle rather than conceal it, I thought. That is why I came upon the idea of “Two Actors in One Role” method. (“A Director’s Note” in *Theatre Culture: The Winter’s Tale*, SPAC Autumn-Spring, 2016–2017, pp. 2–3.)

According to Miyagi, there is a disjunction between the human desire and the language as a means of expressing what is inside the human bodies, and the “Two Actors in One Role” method serves to illuminate that rupture. This rupture is highlighted by the percussion music played by the actors, which significantly enhances not only the disjunctive gap between body and speech but also the reciprocal intercession between the two. Through the incessant exchanges of fragmentation and integration overriding our hearing and eyesight, the audience are led to be more aware of the friction, a fault line or noise that we are not conscious of in our daily lives, making the overall theatrical experiences uncannily vibrant.

The “Two Actors in One Role” method does not necessarily liberate the speaker from action, and the mover from speech. Rather, both the speaker and the mover for the immobility and silence respectively are to bear a heavier burden than actors that follow the conventional “One Actor in One Role” method of modern European theatre. When the “Two Actors in One Role” functions on the stage, the audience will detect stronger physical drive within the speech, and observe more linguistically complex logic in the movement, being overwhelmed by the sparking traffic between the two different yet intricately connected theatre media. To borrow Miyagi’s words, “there are languages flying around one actor who speaks lines without moving, and another actor who moves

without speaking”. (In the post-performance talk, 12<sup>th</sup> February, at Shizuoka Arts Theatre). With their acquisition of languages, human beings were separated from the natural beauty and happiness of other animals. Miyagi creates a uniquely theatrical beauty on the stage by unnaturally prohibiting the performers from either speaking or moving.

### Oracle and Prophecy

Ulrich Beck notes, “in class and stratification positions being determines consciousness, while in risk positions consciousness determines being” (23). Miyagi’s “Two Actors in One Role” method brilliantly proves Beck’s point, by focusing on the moment of Leontes’ own utterance “Too hot, too hot! To mingle friendship far, is mingling bloods” (Act I, Scene ii, Line 108-109) binding his consciousness that is determined by the presence of jealousy. By manipulating the “Two Actors in One Role” method, Miyagi stages this scene with Hermione’s soliloquy that potentially leads to inciting jealousy on Leontes’ part due to a time-gap between speech and movement:

Tis Grace indeed.  
 Why lo you now; I have spoke to th’purpose twice:  
 The one, for ever earn’d a royal husband;  
 Th’other, for some while a friend. (I, ii, 105-108)

Here, the “Two Actors in One Role” method through the time-gap between the speaker and the mover reveals the very moment of Leontes’ realization of his own jealousy by his linguistic utterance.

As well as highlighting the tension between consciousness and being, the “Two Actors in One Role” method tests the significance of theatrical silence and dialogue. In order to illustrate this point, let us look at the two scenes in which the Delphic oracle is defied by Leontes and Hermione prophecies that Antigonus will abandon her daughter. Thanks to the “Two Actors in One Role” method, Miyagi is able to present a revealing ambivalence between risk and trust in the Oracle scene which immediately follows the scene in which Leontes hears of Mamilius’ death.

Leontes devastated by the news of Mamilius’ death is physically yet gently supported by Hermione, which I suspect will be theatrically unattainable in a realistic rendition,



**Figure 1** The Delphic Oracle (Hermione: Mikari, Leontes: Koichi Otaka; photo by Koichi Miura)

which has to depict the human relationship in psychological terms. In the SPAC’s production, on the other hand, as Hermione’s mover who supports the collapsing body of Leontes’ mover has a strong presence in spite of her silence, a tremendous gap between the logical consequences of the King’s unredeemable error and the unrealistic compassion towards him by the Queen is at once revealed and stitched together theatrically. (Figure 1) In terms of the complex relationship between risk and trust in European modern patriarchal society, the King’s excessive jealousy leads to aggravation of risk inherent within the modern family structure, and it will inevitably result in the loss of trust not only among his family members but in the Kingdom as a whole. Anthony Giddens, utilizing Luhmann’s distinction between “trust” and “confidence”, remarks:

Trust presupposes awareness of circumstances of risk, whereas confidence does not. Confidence ... refers to a more or less taken-for-granted attitude that familiar things will remain stable (31).

In these terms, we could argue that Leontes’ jealousy comes from too much confidence in his own patriarchal power based on his belief that the “familiar” things in the “familial” dealings will remain stable, which in turn makes him unaware of the

intricate relationship between trust and risk. It is the “Two Actors in One Role” method that reveals these contradictions in a uniquely theatrical way.

Let us consider the scene in which Antigonus recounts his last night’s dream where Hermione’s “ghost” told him to name the baby “Perdita” and abandon her in a Bohemian seacoast. Whereas an Oracle binds people by the supernatural force, a prophecy which is more relative and ambiguous will afford its listeners some freedom of interpretations.

When Antigonus, being played by both a speaker and a mover, recalls Hermione’s words, there appears the silhouette of Hermione, whose silent presence sublimate the division between speech and movement. In other words, Hermione’s “will” is here embodied by the movers of Antigonus and Hermione who turn out to be theatrically more eloquent in their silence. Thanks to the “Two Actors in One Role” method, the name “Perdita” which symbolizes the most important theme of the play is handed over from Hermione to Antigonus, and the audience accepts this gift, thus transforming the prophecy into a trustworthy promise. As if to confirm the validity of this inheritance in trust, Antigonus sacrifices himself to save the baby, as a result of which, Hermione’s prophecy becomes a sign of trust which is handed over to the Shepherd and his son, ultimately bringing about the reunion at the end of the play.

### **Is There Any “Restoration” at the End?**

In the scene where Paulina leads the main characters into her house where Hermione’s “statue” is kept, the SPAC presents Hermione on a podium with one half of the face facing towards the audience while the other towards the back. Paulina constantly vexes the onlookers by trying to “draw the curtain”, but finally she perplexingly says to Leontes, “I could afflict you farther (V, iii, 75).”

Why does moving Hermione’s statue “afflict” rather than delight Leontes? It is quite probable that for 16 years since he first heard of Hermione’s death, Leontes has been dreaming of her coming back to life, while being aware that his pain and affliction would get more acute than before. Therefore, even if the statue moves now, how can he be sure that this is not another “nightmare”, and how can he forbear the frightening realities?

Anthony Giddens comments on the relationship between “faith” and “trust”, by saying that “the individual involved is not called upon to display that “faith” which trust involves in its deeper meanings” (30). When Paulina finally agrees to “make the statue move



**Figure 2** Paulina invoking the audience’s “faith” (Paulina: Miki Takii; photo by Koichi Miura)

indeed”, she stresses “You do awake your faith” with the silent mover directly addressing the audience to “resolve you / For more amazement” (V, iii, 86-87). Here, Paulina’s mover attempts to reveal the “deeper meanings” involved in “trust”, by involving the theater audience into the network of “faith” spoken by her speaker. Again, I think, it is the “Two Actors in One Role” method, with its gap in time and space, that dramatically bridges the religiously archaic notion of “faith” and the modern notion of individual “trust”. This is a rare moment in which the theatre auditorium as a whole becomes one integral space with the absolute “Trust”. (Figure 2)

As Paulina beckons the statue by saying, “’Tis time; descend; be stone no more; approach” (V, iii, 99), Hermione’s mover descends from the podium and first approaches Leontes. They take hands (rather than a full embrace), yet their respective gazes do not

meet, as if to suggest that they still do not belong to the same time-space.

When Paulina says to Hermione, “Turn, Our Perdita is found” (V, iii, 120-121), Hermione’s mover turning to Perdita embraces the latter’s mover, and Hermione’s speaker says her only speech in this scene. It is important to remember that Hermione’s speaker is Perdita’s mover, and Perdita’s speaker is Hermione’s mover: in other words, “Two Actors in One Role” here indicates “two characters in one integral whole”. Perdita’s mover while embracing Hermione’s mover’s body speaks Hermione’s speech, but as the audience cannot see her face, we are uncertain as to who owns this speech. As we witness the bodily embrace of the two movers and the interactions between the speaker and the mover, we get an impression that Hermione and Perdita share the concurrent time-space. At the same time, however, the “Two Actors in One Role” method reminds us that nobody owns this speech, which leads us to a crucial question: how and why can we be confident in owning our properties, from speech to body, from family to kingdom, from blood to offspring, from a right to one’s own body to a right to mourning others’ death, as the ownership is at the very basis of risk in such modern economies as colonialism, capitalism, genderism and racism?

Hermione’s speech summarizes the central theme of the play:

..... Tell me, mine own,  
Where hast thou been preserv’d? where liv’d? how found  
Thy father’s court? For thou shalt hear that I,  
Knowing by Paulina that the Oracle  
Gave hope thou wast in being, have preserv’d  
Myself to see the issue. (V, iii, 123-128)

The final word “issue” which has multiple meanings from an offspring to a difficult problem is critical in terms of our own concern toward the intricate relationship between risk and trust. For, on one hand, Leontes’ patriarchal interest in keeping the eldest son was endangered by his excessive fear of blood contamination which led to his awareness of a risk in having another child born of Hermione, and on the other hand, Hermione’s as well as Perdita’s self-preservation results in the restoration of the tie between the mother and the daughter, thus indicating some restoration in trust within the family and the kingdom. Furthermore, thanks to the “Two Actors in One Role” method, the word “issue” and the daughter’s concrete body becomes one integrated whole while at the same time

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shared by the mother and the daughter. Namely, here, Perdita is a listener and a narrator in one, Hermione is a narrator and a listener in one. Interestingly, in this scene, Perdita after a few words in the beginning keeps silent, yet that does not mean that her presence is negligible. Rather, in the process of restoring the lost “trust” by Leontes’ violence through the power of “faith”, Perdita is the most potent “issue”, and it is the “Two Actors in One Role” method that fantastically illuminates it.

Perdita’s presence in the last scene is not insignificant but vulnerable. However, by performing this play in the conventional “One Actor in One Role” format which inevitably culminates in a “happy ending” with reunion of the family, forgiveness through reconciliation and restoration of patriarchy, it would be difficult to capture the ambiguous yet crucial mode of Perdita. She is finally discovered sixteen years after the unredeemable errors were made, and it is impossible to suppose that the loss of trust is completely recovered. If I am allowed a rhetorical indulgence, Paulina’s crucial statement “Our Perdita is found” seems to indicate a Shakespearean ambiguity similar to Cordelia’s “No cause, no cause” or Macbeth’s “Signifying nothing”: we could even say, “Our Perdita is NOT found; rather, our own sense of loss invoked by her name is confirmed”.

The SPAC’s performance is ambiguous to the degree that we are uncertain that reconciliation is finally possible. We are reminded of the cruel fact that we cannot possibly redeem all the loss in terms of time and human lives: so, we can’t completely forget and forgive, but we can possibly put faith in the time to come. Let us consider what happens in the very last moment of the play, which Miyagi made unworldly beautiful in his innovative manners.

How to present this final scene is not so much a matter of textual interpretation but of ethical choice as to whether we can still trust in others and hope for preserving ourselves “to see the issue”. If you already know that Hermione is alive as in a realistic version it is NOT “requir’d / You do awake your faith” (V, iii, 94-95), because you merely have to wait for a spectacle in which she will finally move. On the contrary, the SPAC’s Hermione, being rendered as a liminal figure between a statue and a human, stirs in order to test our own “faith”, as she is herself the “issue” or the seed that has been waiting to regeminate.

To conclude, the SPAC’s “Two Actors in One Role” method, with its separation and reconnection of the body and the speech, takes issue with the “realistic” interpretation of the play by questioning the value of reconciliation and forgiveness in the modern society. When Leontes says the last words, “... and answer to his part / Perform’d in this wide





**Figure 3** The Final Scene (Hermione: Mikari; photo by Koichi Miura)

gap of time, since first / We were dissever'd" (V, iii, 153-155), everyone on the stage freezes, as if each has become a statue. In this dead stillness, Hermione's mover alone starts to move and glance at the others one by one. Her final gaze falls upon Paulina's mover, as if to thank her for staying with Hermione for 16 years because of her guilty conscience over the loss of the new-born baby. Hermione, in the end, glimpses up into the air as if to move the time forward when she will be absent, and then serenely moves back to and remains in the frame on the podium, absolutely still in her original position at the beginning of this scene. After all, this whole scene may be a dream that every person on and off the stage has been dreaming in his or her own awoken consciousness: with the bitter sweet tenderness and regret on our part, the stage is dissolved into a dark void. (Figure 3)

When every character except Hermione becomes a statue, we find that two dreams with different time-spaces mingle momentarily, whilst only the ghostly dream of Hermione's remains for a short time before vanishing. The audience may wonder, with an ultimate blend of delights and regrets, that all that happened after Hermione's death has been our own dream, and that the lost trust will never be restored consequently. Nevertheless, this ending is also enormously fulfilling, as it will redeem all those risks involved in the play, Leontes' guilt, Paulina's remorse and Perdita's vexation, finally

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leading us to what Anthony Giddens calls “the utopias of utopian realism” as an antithesis “to both the reflexivity and the temporality of modernity” (178). Ulrich Beck, on the other hand, remarks that “[T]he type of the risk society marks ... a social epoch in which *solidarity from anxiety* arises and becomes a political force” (49, emphasis original). Perhaps Hermione’s last stance that suggests mourning and hospitality rather than forgiveness and judgement will entertain a way beyond this “community of anxiety”, an “issue” or proof of solidarity that is only possible in the theatrical time-space.

*The Winter’s Tale* depicts the risk involved in human lives through the power and limit of language, and in that sense, the unique “Two Actors in One Role” method that integrates as well as divides speech and movement is very apt, as it dramatically highlights human destinies that we are separated from nature due to the language we supposedly possess. The SPAC’s performance omits Leontes’ last words of the play “hastily lead away” (V, iii, 155), as if to suggest there is no place for anyone including the audience to go to. Instead, we witness an unforgettable tableau in which Hermione’s stillness transcends our own tragic limits caused by the human linguistic abilities. Language may lead us to the loss of faith in others, but theater could still realize a network of trust in such a blissful moment.

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