

**“There is no tongue that moves”
—Female Healers and the Therapeutic
Female Tongue in *The Winter’s Tale***

Ying-chiao Lin

Division of Preparatory Programs for Overseas Chinese Students
National Taiwan Normal University
No 2, Sec. 1, Renai Rd., LinKou Dist., New Taipei City 24449, Taiwan
E-mail: yclin@ntnu.edu.tw

Abstract

This reading of Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale* focuses on the theme of female healers or medical practitioners, both as we see them in the play itself and as their history contributes to the cultural background of the play. While the female healer, Pauline, may be said to stand squarely within this tradition, Queen Hermione is less directly representative of it. More precisely, the reading focuses on the central role played by the voices, tongues, and forceful speeches of these two women. Empowered by their words and wits, these two wise women, in particular Paulina, the play’s central female figure and my main focus, transform their traditional gender roles, acting as female healers whose wits and tongues remove blockages within the

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public order and the minds of the men who control it, restoring circulation in both to a state of health.

On the one hand, Paulina's words, which operate both magically and therapeutically, turn King Leontes's diseased speech into what sounds like repentance. On the other hand, the marble-like statue of his queen, Hermione, who has supposedly been dead ever since the trial at which her husband accused her of adultery, is "reanimated" by Paulina's magical utterance. Here we have the traditional midwife enabling a symbolic rebirth in the final scene of the play, which again suggests the restoration of a healthy public order, or in alchemical and Paracelsian terms, the refinement or transmutation of lead/death into gold/life.

Key Words: *The Winter's Tale*, woman healers, midwifery, Paracelsus, sixteenth-century England

“The method of the science of medicine is, I suppose, the same as that of the science of rhetoric.” (Plato, *Phaedrus*, as cited in Entralgo, 1970: 123)

“Women . . . were central to health and healing before 1800.” (Fissell, 2008: 1)

The first half of Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale*¹ tells a tragic tale, one which begins with a predicament involving two kings who are old friends: the first, King Leontes of Sicily, fails to persuade his friend to alter his intention to depart, while the latter, King Polixenes of Bohemia, gains support from the words of King Leontes’s wife, Hermione. During their argument, Polixenes exclaims to his friend and host, King Leontes: “There is no tongue that *moves*, none, none I’ th’ world / So soon as yours could win me” (1.2.20-21, *my emphasis*), yet in the end of their conversation, ironically, it is the queen, Hermione, whose tongue wins over and thus, *moves* Polixenes eventually. Here, Hermione’s rhetoric success, rather than being celebrated, is stigmatized, for her husband later falsely accuses her of having committed adultery with Polixenes. Similarly, in the world of early modern European medicine, the positive influence of female healers is for the most part unrecognized, even if it is powerfully present in Hermione’s act of “healing.”

These mute, early modern female medical practitioners, as we see in the case of Hermione, can be not only silenced, but jailed, for their magical and benevolent medicine. Attacked by Leontes’s violent and tyrannical speech, a privileged discourse given the gender and authoritative status of the speaker, Hermione responds: “Sir, / You speak a language that

¹ All textual citations taken from *The Winter’s Tale* are based on the Bedford Shakespeare series, ed. Mario Digangi (Shakespeare, 2008).

I understand not" (3.2.76). His words seem absurd, irrational, and incomprehensible to her. In fact she is at a linguistic as well as moral impassé, as Leontes has wrongly accused her of being morally impure and unchaste, and of having an unclean body due to the effect of her words. The insulting words he speaks to the "innocent"² Hermione certainly intensifies the absurdity of his jealousy. In this scene, we may interpret Leontes's unjustified, even mad jealousy as being primarily grounded in the war between the sexes, although he rationalizes it as being based on the more tangible, traditional, moral and "legal" issue of a wife's chastity. More specifically, what really vexes Leontes is his male anxiety about the mysterious and persuasive power of women's speech that seems to transgress the boundary of his sovereignty.

Though a number of scholarly criticisms on *The Winter's Tale* center on female language, and though Shakespeare explicitly tells us that Paulina delivers "words as medicinal as true" (2.3.36), the investigation of woman's voice in terms of its therapeutic importance in the play has somehow been neglected. Lynn Enterline, in her article, "'You speak a language that I understand not': the rhetoric of animation in *The Winter's Tale*," focuses on the analysis of the female (embodied) voice and subjectivity within the Ovidian-Petrarchan

² However, regarding Hermione's innocence of adultery, Howard Felperin asks "on what authority do we assume . . . that Hermione is in fact innocent of Leontes's suspicions in the opening act? Why do we take for granted, . . . what can never be proved but only denied. . . ?" This gives us a contrasting viewpoint and has led to speculation about the legal basis for determining that a particular act is a crime. For Felperin, Hermione's case is grounded in Pauline Christianity: "We have proceeded on the 'conventionalist' grounds delimited on the one side by Anglo-Saxon law (which presumes formal innocence until guilt is proved) and on the other by Pauline Christianity (which is based precisely on the evidence of things not seen)" (1990: 190).

tradition.³ However, although the present study is also concerned with female voice, *language* and *rhetoric*, it focuses on the ways in which woman’s rhetoric can be beneficial, even curative (i.e. for human relationships), and thus can be seen as a sort of magical medicine—just as Shakespeare associates Paulina’s power of words with her power of healing.⁴

This mysterious feminine power of speech is clearly linked to other ancient, mythical male perceptions of women’s power, most obviously the magic power of fearful, witch-like figures like Medusa or the Theban Sphinx,⁵ a power which threatens men as individuals and also threatens the whole “male order” of society. Leontes’s judgment here is as incomprehensible to his wife, the faithful listener, as his language, and yet this court scene, featuring the accusation of a female subordinate by a male authority, is all too familiar in

³ My approach differs in several respects, though we both focus on the use of “female speech” in Hermione’s trial scene and Paulina’s final resurrection of the queen. However, while Enterline interprets Pauline’s “lie” in terms of “the *effects* of language—particularly female and theatrical language—in relation to the fugitive truth of the female body and the ‘old tale’ it tells” (2000: 215)—I view it as a necessary strategy for a woman disturbed by the force of male dominance and wishing to ensure the completion of a healing process. Other essays discussing female rhetoric and the effects of language include: Huston Diehl’s “‘Does not the stone rebuke me?’: The Pauline Rebuke and Paulina’s Lawful Magic in *The Winter’s Tale*” (2008), which looks at the theme of “mingling” by associating Paulina with the Biblical Paul and the power of speech/rebuke; and Michael Taylor’s “Shakespeare’s ‘The Winter’s Tale’: Speaking in the Freedom of Knowledge” (1972) which shows how mature speakers like Hermione, Paulina, and Perdita can freely express their knowledge, unlike the early Leontes and Polixenes, for whom remaining “in perverse innocence” “is a sin” (1972: 51) that infects language.

⁴ Though Patricia S. Gourelay’s “‘O my most sacred lady’: Female Metaphor in *The Winter’s Tale*” (1975) also emphasizes the healing magic of the females in the play, my analysis centers more on Paulina as a female Paracelsian medical practitioner.

⁵ The latter, whose riddle Oedipus solved, is a hybrid creature: serpent-and-bird with a woman’s face.

the legal history of the period. David Underdown, after examining local English court records from the period between 1560 and 1640, found that there was “an intense preoccupation with women who are a visible threat to the patriarchal system,” (1985: 119) including those considered as scolds, witches, or whores.

Therefore we note that the trial scene, wherein Hermione is accused of adultery by her husband, reminds us of other courtroom scenes of this period which are equally important in the early modern European history of medicine. In these scenes, we see that the stigmatized *female healers* are needed by the society for their proven curative skills and yet they are also confined and condemned by the patriarchal authorities. This paper, in order to explore the marginalized identity of female healers in sixteenth-century England, will primarily focus on Paulina in *The Winter's Tale*, for her explicit role is that of a female healer. Although initially defined and stigmatized as a witch, Paulina became a celebrated female physician, thereby crossing traditional gender-socio-political boundaries. Later in the play, Paulina's *words* work both magically and therapeutically to transform King Leontes's diseased speech into what sounds like repentance, and to animate or “resurrect” the marble statue of Hermione—whom we thought had died much earlier, though in fact Paulina had protected her from her deranged husband by preserving her life and deceiving him.

Keeping in mind the early modern European history of medicine, in the case of Hermione's revivification we may speak of the Paracelsian iatrochemical transmutation of lead/death into gold/life. Paulina's “curing” words are like an alchemical cauldron that restores the spiritual-and-physical well-being of the *polis*, the *public body*, as well as of individual male and female “rhetoric-infected” bodies. Scholars have not really focused on the role of female healers (in particular

Paulina) in Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale* in the way I will do so here, by placing them in the context of historical female practitioners via the theories of Paracelsus. Here then I will be looking at these women’s ability to overcome their traditionally limited gender (sexual), social and political roles and become therapeutic instruments or forces for the “healing” or “curing” of infected (though still powerful) male subjects and of their malevolent language.

I. The Early Modern Women Healers in England

Women healers in England in the early modern period were commonly barred from entering the orthodox medical society, as they were mostly unlicensed and unrecognized, yet their importance has been shown in relatively recent research. For example, Margaret Pelling and Charles Webster,⁶ two pioneers in the study of early modern medical practices in England, claim that “[w]omen play a substantial part in medicine in sixteenth-century London” (1979: 186). According to them, there were three main medical groups in London at this time: the College of Physicians, the Barber-Surgeons’ Company, and the apothecaries; however, “[a]t the fringe of official medicine were the midwives” (1979: 179). Moreover, “[t]he College of Physicians had general authority over physicians, surgeons and apothecaries” (Pelling & Webster, 1979: 179), as well as over the midwives or

⁶ For all the studies of early modern English medical practitioners, the most influential scholars are Margaret Pelling and Charles Webster, as demonstrated in their monumental article, “Medical Practitioners.” See *Health, Medicine and Mortality in the Sixteenth Century* (1979). Their major contribution to the history of medicine remains in both scholars’ initial research on the abundance of the College of Physicians weighty manuscript *Annals*.

women practitioners.⁷

Like the “tongue-tied” (1.2.28) queen Hermione, women healers during this period generally had no voice, and could hardly change the common (patriarchal) view that they were ignorant, of a lower social class, and even evil. They were, of course, largely absent from the official medical documents produced by male practitioners: “the records of proceedings at the College of Physicians, the reports of the Barber-Surgeons’ Company, and various printed works” (Harkness, 2008: 53). As it was mainly male authors of medical works who made the often-cited insulting comments about female healers in the early modern period, women practitioners “were seldom identified by occupational titles in surviving records, and therefore the breadth of their activities is only now being teased out” (Fissell, 2008: 6). Indeed, women healers are largely absent from medical records as far back as the Middle Ages, having been not only deprived of a medical education at universities and “excluded from guild-based work” but more generally “seen as [being] outside the central tripartite structure of early modern medicine” (Fissell, 2008: 6).

While historians have tended to base their views on the documents of the College of Physicians, the Barber-Surgeons’ Company, and the prestigious male physicians,⁸ documents which rigorously object to the notion of female practitioners, Deborah E. Harkness has looked at records coming from the streets, in particular parishes, and from the hospitals staffed by women healers. Harkness concludes that these Elizabethan women healers “were at the very heart of London’s medical world. They were not marginal, they were not laughable, and

⁷ According to Pelling and Webster, “women practitioners must often have been described as midwives, or keepers of women in childbed” (1979: 183-184).

⁸ Those eminent physicians of the period, according to Harkness, include John Securis, John Hall, and William Clowes. See Harkness (2008: 53-68).

they were not expendable. Perhaps that is why so many male practitioners found them so very threatening” (2008: 84). It is plausible that these women played a central role in the “delivery of nursing, medical, pharmaceutical, and surgical services throughout the city” (Harkness, 2008: 56), and were therefore crucial to the health of most early modern Londoners. Pelling and Wester’s observation that from 1581 to 1600 “the College of Physicians prosecuted 21 women practitioners, leaving 39 to be accounted for” (1979: 183) reveals the political dominance of the patriarchal College of Physicians in the field of medicine, and the high risk of indictment faced by female practitioners. Elsewhere, Pelling has pointed out that the members of the College of Physicians endeavored to clearly distinguish themselves from other practitioners,⁹ in particular targeting those literate women healers “who competed for the same urban clientele as that of the university-trained doctors” (Ehrenreich, 1973: 54).¹⁰

These women healers were caricatured,¹¹ reprimanded, and demonized as practicing witchcraft when they seemed to be using magic in their therapies. Needless to say, the accusation that women healers were witches led to the most extreme forms of suppression and their exclusion from medical history and the medical professions. “Women healers in particular were vulnerable to accusations of witchcraft”

⁹ See Margaret Pelling, 2003. For Pelling, the College of the Physicians was seen by the Londoners as a ‘potential resource in the management of their own affairs’ (2003: 84).

¹⁰ Here we may think of Hermione’s success in persuading Polixenes to stay longer, and Leontes’s concealed and displaced envy of her communicative skills, as if he and she had been in competition.

¹¹ Thomas Gale ridiculed, to quote from Pelling and Webster, “three score women, that occupieth the arte of phisick and chirurgerye. These women, some of them be called wise women, or holy and good women, some of them be called witches, and useth to call upon certaine spirits, and some of them useth plain Bawderie, and telleth gentlewomen that cannot bear children how they may have children” (1979: 187).

(Pelling & Webster, 1979: 234), as their 'magical' remedies were deemed unorthodox by the authorities of the College of the Physicians, and perceived as satanic by the ecclesiastical authorities. The former thought that the supernatural effectiveness of women healers' remedies derived from their experience rather than from proven doctrines; the latter believed these magical cures interfered with God's will and only succeeded due to the aid of the devil. Unlicensed practitioners of magical, astrological, and alchemical medicine all risked being persecuted, as "[e]stablished mechanisms of care came under pressure in the later sixteenth century in cases where ecclesiastical authorities were inclined to exercise their licensing function severely, or to impose sanctions against magical practices" (234). However, while "[m]agical medicine and witchcraft were stigmatized as related evils" (234), these female medical practitioners (or witches) would still have been admirable in the eyes of Paracelsus, the father of modern medicine. For in 1527, Paracelsus burned his medical texts and admitted that he knew nothing except what he had learned from witches.¹²

In terms of their medical efficacy, these witch-healers' medical practices, unlike those of licensed physicians which were based on doctrines and texts, were grounded in their own perceptions and experiences, and thus more empirical. Indeed their techniques were much closer to those of the contemporary empirical healer Paracelsus, who also was associated by the authorities with Satan as a result of his opposition to the witch-hunts. Paradoxically, even though the Paracelsian practice of alchemical/magical medicine was strongly condemned by the medical authorities, "any success

¹² We read in Jules Michelet's *La Sorcière*: "*Quand Paracelse, à Bâle, en 1527, brûla toute la médecine, il déclara ne savoir rien que ce qu'il apprit des sorcières*" (1863: x).

achieved by the licensing mechanisms of the College of Physicians or the church was more than compensated for by the growth in the general popularity of magic, astrology and alchemy” (Pelling & Webster, 1979: 235).

Among women healers, the midwives were most often attacked as being allied with witchcraft, yet ironically these witch-healers were often the only medical practitioners helping the peasants, who, while afflicted with poverty and disease, were inaccessible to physicians. However, midwives’ practices also appeared as evil and unpardonable in the eyes of the witch hunters, among whom we find the Catholic Friars Krämer and Sprenger (the “beloved sons” of Pope Innocent VIII), authors of *The Malleus Maleficarum*, or *The Hammer of Witches*, first published in 1486.¹³ Krämer and Sprenger said, “No one does more harm to the Catholic Faith than midwives” (1928: 66). According to Catholic doctrine, midwives were believed to be sacrificing unbaptized infants to “those midwives and wise women who are witches are in the habit of offering to Satan the little children which they deliver, and then of killing them, before they have been baptized, by thrusting a large pin into their brains” (Boguet, 1971: 137).

The midwives were considered evil due to their use of magic charms, and thus a direct threat to the Church. It was

¹³ “A long, rambling, and difficult work,” according to Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, “the *Malleus* draws on the writings of many earlier authors as it lays out Krämer’s theories about the nature and danger of witchcraft and provides advice about how to identify and prosecute witches” (2008: 262). Wiesner-Hanks also remarks that, in 1484, Pope Innocent VIII “authorized Krämer and Sprenger to hunt witches in several areas of southern Germany. Krämer oversaw the trial and execution of several groups—all of them women—but local authorities objected to his use of torture and his extreme views on the power of witches and banished him. While in exile, he wrote a justification of his ideas and methods, the *Malleus Maleficarum*; the treatise also cited Sprenger as an author, but recent research has determined that his name was simply added . . . and that Krämer was its sole author” (2008: 262).

above all the latter which feared these magical cures were increasingly being seen by peasants as potent, and thereby had the potential to allow the midwives' to exert control over the male-dominated medical world. Therefore, as part of the official reaction, licensing authorities increasingly linked midwifery to witchcraft and refused to sanction midwives. The government and Church also claimed that midwives were responsible for infants' illnesses and deaths, and for any other mishaps that occurred during the birthing process. Midwives were thought, in other words, to threaten one's life and health, particularly in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Europe when witch trials were at their peak. "Feared as transgressors in the realms of paternity, sexuality, and religion, midwives were magnets for a wide range of anxieties" (Kerwin, 2005: 70). The licensed male medical practitioners in the College of Physicians increasingly feared losing patients to the midwives, and this again accounted for the increasing persecution and execution of witches (at the "witch trials") and for the gradual elimination of female medical practitioners.

The female medical practitioner in *The Winter's Tale*, Paulina, dispelled and cursed by King Leontes as a man-witch ("A mankind witch!" 2.3.68) and driven away by him, nonetheless helps him to heal with her therapeutic language, and "revives" or gives new life to the queen, long presumed dead. Like other early modern wise women, Paulina seems to struggle in her role as a woman practitioner, as she is accused of being a witch and threatened with persecution; however, her words "freed" the king from his prison of jealousy and "enfranchised" him (2.2.61), leading him to repent and to ask the re-animated queen for forgiveness. Paulina is playing the role of a midwife here, giving birth to the "newborn" queen and retelling the sad tale of the dead prince Mamillius—" [a] sad tale's best for winter" (2.1.25)—as a fairy tale, an old wives' tale, with her therapeutic and magic words.

II. The Silenced vs. the Outspoken: The “Tongue-tied” Queen and Tongue-freed “Mankind Witch”

Indeed, Shakespeare presents in *The Winter's Tale* two contrasting historical images of early modern women healers: the “tongue-tied” queen Hermione as a silenced and powerless woman healer, and Paulina, a self-proclaimed “physician,” as a wrathful, witch-like, threatening one (2.3.54). The humiliated Hermione might embody a persecuted historical woman healer, one who must be her family and society’s primary caretaker, as shown in the scenes where she merely obeys her husband’s commands and cares for the young child; however, she is falsely accused due to the success of her powerful rhetoric, even though it should have helped to maintain the friendship between Leontes and Polixenes. On the other hand, the witch-like healer Paulina can represent a historical woman practitioner with her restorative powers, just like a magician-artist figure who can transform base metals into gold.

At the beginning of *The Winter's Tale*, Leontes’s Sicilian court is overwhelmed with the language of illness, with “infection,” “disease,” “sickness” and the madness of the king’s sudden jealousy, his delusion that his wife has been unfaithful to him, and the fatal effects of that madness on both his son, Mamillius, and (apparently) his wife. Leontes’s charges that the innocent queen is an “adulteress,” a “bed-server” and a “traitor” in the same scene (2.3) are fantasies with no basis in fact; his sending her to jail is a purely arbitrary act of the sort we see in numerous cases of innocent, and perhaps also wise, early modern women who were accused of witchcraft and other sorts of “impurity.” In other words, Hermione’s trial is solely the product of, in Paulina’s words, “[t]he anger of the King” which was sparked by “the trespass of the Queen” (2.2.62-63). This was a female *trespass* or “crossing,” an

incursion into a patriarchal territory where women's silence was considered an appropriate form of conduct, even a virtue, which is why Leontes says to Hermione (though ironically he is here prompting her to speak): "Tongue-tied, our queen? Speak you" (1.2.27). A women's silence was considered, in the early modern period, to be a large part of her duty as a woman, for a loose tongue was thought to imply a loose body, that is, a predisposition to commit sexual transgressions. "Silence, the closed mouth," as Peter Stallybrass notes, "is made a sign of chastity. And silence and chastity are, in turn, homologous to women's enclosure within the house" (1986: 123-144). Hermione's silence when she first comes on stage is thus in accordance with the contemporary books on a woman's proper conduct in the presence of her husband and his male friend.

Thus what Leontes finds objectionable in Hermione has more to do with her female wit and eloquent powers of speech than with her chastity, and his sudden jealousy masks his anxiety about his wife's feminine power, one that could potentially overpower and dominate him. This echoes the thinking of the early modern European Church and the courts (governments), where women who seemed too clever or wise, in particular the women healers, were accused of witchcraft for their use of magical herbs or words (spells). In facing his queen's mysterious and enchanting verbal power, Leontes confronts his own inner fear, his insecurity about the validity of his authoritative male subjectivity. That is, his wife's superior ability to talk to, and to persuade, Polixenes shames him, as does the thought that he may lose his power to control her, in particular to control her skill in using her linguistic talents and wit and thereby "winning" (1.2.86) her verbal duels with him—as might an evil enchantress in the early modern society.

The enchantress in the early modern era, by using her tongue to exercise her power, can create medicinal effects:

Polixenes re-confirm her status as the “kind hostess” (1.2.60) and not his jailor. Polixenes’s negativity is finally dissolved when Hermione forces him, once again with her gentle and restorative tongue, to acknowledge that to choose to stay would be to choose to continue the innocence and purity in the old young days between the two kings (“What we changed / Was innocence for innocence; we knew not / The doctrine of ill-doing, nor dreamed / That any did,” 1.2.68-71), where “purity” may be contrasted with that “impurity” of “mingling bloods”¹⁴ which threatens to breed corruption and disease.

While the “enchanting” Hermione’s deft use of wit and words puts an end to the polite disagreement between the two kings, her rhetorical talent also lands her in jail, and forces her to appear in court and be formally accused of being unchaste. Leontes invokes his privilege as man and king—a doubly patriarchal justification—by relying not on any legal evidence but merely on his imagination (“dreams,” 3.2.77), not on any law but only on his own tyranny (“’Tis rigor and not law,” 3.2.111), just like those authorities in the College of Physicians who had silenced the voices of female practitioners in the early modern period, and deprived them of their freedom. Leontes, like those regulating authorities and licensed physicians in the medical world, will stop at nothing to drive Hermione, like an unlicensed woman healer, out of the legal domain and also, insofar as he sees her as an enchantress, out of the medical one as well. As for losing one’s legal right to practice medicine and facing a term in jail, we note that in 1421 legislation was placed before the Parliament in England to confirm “that no Woman use the practyse of Fiysk [medicine] under . . . payne of long imprisonment” (Green, 1989: 449).

¹⁴ Huston Diehl notes that a fear of mingling, “and of the impurity that results from it, pervades Shakespeare’s late romance,” in reference to Leontes’s rage at the beginning of *The Winter’s Tale* where he proclaims: “To mingle friendship far is mingling bloods” (2008: 69).

Hermione is condemned because of the unintentional transgressive charms of her “tongue,” just as the tongues of real women (and witches) in the Tudor and Stuart society were seen as being poisonous, contaminating, evil. More specifically, a women’s mouth was thought to be one of the entrances of hell. The device used for punishing women found guilty of evil speech, that is, for scolding their “unruly member,” was the “scold’s bridle,” an iron collar with a metal bit that pressed down on the victim’s tongue to prevent her from talking.¹⁵ However, in *The Winter’s Tale* Shakespeare, knowing that woman’s tongue had long been seen as something cursed and evil, made it a curative body part, a healing female organ that could retell this winter’s tale of death as an old tale of rebirth, an old tale of women healers’ midwifery.

If Hermione’s docile and triumphant tongue is the cause of Leontes’s sudden jealousy, as it led him to restrict both her body and her speech by imprisoning her, Paulina’s sharp tongue effectively “purges” the king’s infected or perverted powers of perception and understanding. Unlike condemned women healers such as Hermione, Paulina is a bold speaker with a “boundless tongue” (2.3.92) which immediately demonstrates its curative powers.¹⁶ She speaks to the plagued

¹⁵ For scholarship on the scold’s bridle, see Lynda E. Boose, “Scold’s Bridles and Bridling Scolds: Taming the Woman’s Unruly Member,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* vol. 42 (1991: 179-213), and for discussions of early modern woman’s tongue as the representation of evil, see J. L. Simmons, “The Tongue and its Office in *The Revenger’s Tragedy*” in 1977, pp. 56-88; Carla Mazzio’s, “Sins of the Tongue” in 1997, pp. 53-79; and Peter Stallybrass’s, “Reading the Body: *The Revenger’s Tragedy* and the Jacobean Theater of Consumption” in 1991, pp. 210-20.

¹⁶ However, my finding here is not in accord with Mary L. Livingston’s discussion, in “The Natural Art of *The Winter’s Tale*” (1969), of the impact of Paulina’s speech, which emphasizes more the relationship between art and the nature of words, as exemplified by Perdita and the comic Autolycus in the pastoral scene. Though Livingston indicates that language “is a kind of magic which can be used for good or evil ends,” she then describes the

king in an authoritative manner which resembles his own, her tone of voice seemingly that of any prestigious physician. And indeed, she does claim to be his physician:

Paul. Good my liege, I come—
 And, I beseech you hear me, who professes
 Myself your loyal servant, *your physician*,
 Your most obedient counselor, yet that dares
 Less appear so in comforting your evils
 Than such as most seem yours—I say, I come
 From your good queen. (*emphasis added*, 2.3. 52-58)

Paulina is a woman physician whose medicine is both her words and her wit, and one with high moral standards who sees the health of the court as being more important than her own life—ever aware as she is that, as a woman healer, she herself could be accused at any time. Shakespeare has created Paulina as a strong and self-sufficient individual, for those early modern women who became physicians and counselors found “no real models in the social or political context, nor does such a figure appear in the courtesy books,” implying as it does “moral and intellectual superiority” (Asp, 1978: 145). Paulina, then, proves herself as an exceptional woman healer, carefully and wittily deploying various “medical” treatments that are administered according to the degrees of the king’s illness.

Eventually she humbles Leontes, forcing the insane tyrant to repent his sins. Throughout the play Paulina remains, among all those in the court, the only suitable physician-counselor for the king. This is because, unlike the noblemen, she has fully refined the use of her healing woman’s language, her woman’s tongue with its positive medical and

rhetorical failure of Paulina this way: “neither truthful words nor the silent form of innocence can move a mad king” (1969: 344). However, the present study argues that Paulina’s speech not only *moves* the king but also (metaphorically) cures him.

moral powers, sounding it like thunder when necessary and guiding it with reason, honesty and loyalty.

Paul. I'll use that tongue I have. If wit flow from't
As boldness from my bosom, let't not be doubted
I shall do good. (2.2.51-53)

What she utters is never flattery but only the alarming truth, which is like a curative force that expels the infections engendered by the king's venomous speech. Her speech, whose force comes from its truth, is a remedy for the king's lack of sleep, and in turn sleep is the most desirable treatment for his disturbed and distracted soul.

Paul. I come to bring him sleep. . . .
[. . .]
I

Do come with words as medicinal as true,
Honest as either, to purge him of that humor
That presses him from sleep. (2.3.33, 36-39)

Paulina's words, which have the power to restore the natural cycle of human health, are just the opposite of Lady Macbeth's wicked tongue that deprives her listener of sleep. For Macbeth himself, sleep is the “Balm of hurt minds, great Nature's second dish, / Chief nourisher in life's feast” (Shakespeare, 1984: 54), a description which also seems to fit the soothing sleep Paulina's healing words bring to Leontes's “hurt mind.” And yet her words do not so much soothe as *whip* the listener, and indeed the whipping rope was an effective and popular therapy aimed at purging certain infections plaguing the patient.¹⁷

¹⁷ Whipping was a popular treatment in the prison-hospital for syphilis inmates in 18th-century Paris. According to Michel Foucault, the attendants beat and whipped them in order to cure their disease, as it was “a medicine [. . .] which, all at the same time, fought disease at the expense of health

When her words become too extreme for his plagued and swelling ego, Paulina's "boundless tongue" whips Leontes and provokes him into calling her a "mankind witch"—a familiar derogatory term for women who used bold language during this period. However, when the king threatens to burn her like a witch, she replies fearlessly:

Leo. I'll ha'thee burnt.

Paul. I care not.

It is an heretic that makes the fire,
Not she which burns in't. (2.3.113-116)

Defiant, unyielding, confident, Paulina reminds us of the historical woman healer Thomasina Scarlett (1550-1640), Shakespeare's contemporary, in late sixteenth-century England. Scarlett was accused repeatedly yet refused to desist from practicing her medical art and come under the college's control. According to the historical records of the censorial hearings,¹⁸ Scarlett had been summoned to the courtroom seven times, from 1588 to 1610 (she practiced medicine from 1578 to 1610), and was imprisoned as a result of several cases. Scarlett's example testifies to the historical healers who were prosecuted, and more importantly to her defiance.

Thus according to an account of her first trial: "S appeared and confessed to having given purgatives to Duck and Hodskins. She admitted that she often gave emetics and had given medical advice to 100 other people. She was asked to give a bond against future practice. She agreed and went away." A much clearer account of her resistance is found in the entry for February 12, 1595, only several days after she was denied release in spite of the "letters" from outside requesting

and favored survival of the body at the expense of the flesh" (1965: 106).

¹⁸ The documents regarding the censorial hearings, initially from the "Annals of the College of Physicians," see Scarlett (n.d.). The following citations of Scarlett's hearings are all from the above source.

her discharge: “S appeared and confessed that she had given a purge and ointment to Mr Neeme. She admitted that she could not read and had no knowledge of the theory or practice of medicine. But she utterly refused to abstain from practice, or to give any bond.” Thus Scarlett confessed but made no attempt to desist from her medical practice. She was imprisoned again on another charge on August 4, 1598, and the entry reads:

S was accused by Caldwell, an official of the Bridewell, and by Mrs Heyborne, whose husband she had treated for ulcerated knee with an ointment made of mercury. She confessed to having given antimony in white wine. H became paralysed. She also admitted treating a man in Thyckin's house in Redcross Street, and to having frequently given stibium, even to children.

Scarlett would openly oppose the patriarchal college, even though she was jailed for using such well-known chemicals as mercury, stibium, and antimony in her remedies. Thus she persisted and was a successful practitioner, one who sometimes used the same purges and chemical ointments as her accusers. Like Scarlett, then, Paulina remains defiant, and she is forced to confront Leontes directly when she senses his unrelenting anger. Her biting tongue is often in accord, in this first stage of her cure, with the king's sudden bursts of anger—a therapeutic process and practice known as homeopathic medicine¹⁹ or “curing with the like” which was a familiar part of Paracelsian medicine.²⁰

¹⁹ However, Maurice Hunt, though she also agrees with Paulina's “homeopathic reproof” (1990: 88), considers that it “fails to transform Leontes” (1990: 88), contrary to my analysis. However, Hunt does not elaborate on this particular therapy, while sources and details are provided here and in the following note.

²⁰ Paracelsus says in his *Paragranum* (1529-1530) that, while ordinary medicines fight disease by confronting it with ‘opposite’ qualities, arcana

Here, other than their homeopathic practice, there is one other link between Paulina and Paracelsus, the Swiss-German medical empiricist known for his alchemical medicine in the sixteen century Europe, also the father of modern medicine (chemotherapy): their daring and bold pronouncement in challenging their authority for the sake of a better remedy. Paracelsus, according to David F. Hoeniger (1992: 118), “is the first strong voice in European medicine to advocate the sheer value of direct experience, the need to observe closely the progress of disease in individual patients, and the experimentation with new salves and the testing of drugs in careful dosages.” However, even though Paulina’s author, Shakespeare, himself probably “had heard of Paracelsian chemical remedies,” as he “refers to the rival schools ‘both of Galen and Paracelsus’ in *All’s Well* (2.3.11),” “echoes in Shakespeare of anything specifically Paracelsian are debatable, and only a few passages deserve consideration” (Hoeniger, 1992: 124).

Still, Paulina is perhaps a female Paracelsus, one who also relies on the alchemical principle of pharmacy, of Paracelsian *separation*, as discussed below, that can give birth to the quintessence, the desired medicine. Paulina believes, as does Paracelsus, that pharmacy “lies in the knowledge of what is inside and not in composing and patching up pieces to make it” (Pagel, 1982: 144). Thus we see that Paulina’s approach is from the inside, from Leontes’s inner mind, which when it is isolated/separated for a period of time can be healed. This

fight like with like: “Now, the difference between arcana and medicines is this, that arcana operate in their own nature, or essence, but medicine in contrary elements” (Tract II, as cited in Waite, 1926: 38). Paracelsus explicates: “[Arcana] have the power of transmuting, altering, and restoring us” (Waite, 1926: 37). It is this thought that led Paracelsus to propose the homeopathic principle of *similia similibus curentur*: “like cures like.” For Paracelsus, it is “Morbus arsenicalis”: “Arsenic cures Arsenic, Anthrax Anthrax, as poison drives out poison” (Pagel, 1982: 146-147).

healing process mimics that of alchemy: "Alchemy, imitating the natural generation of diverse species, achieves the conversion of base—'diseased'—into perfect—'healthy'—metals and thus resembles medicine, for it replaces disease by health" (Pagel, 1982: 260).

So it is only when Leontes suffers the loss of his son, who may represent his double or alter-ego, as well as (he thinks) his wife, is he freed from the feelings of anger and jealousy that he himself generated, and thus able to recognize and appreciate Paulina's role as his newly-licensed physician, one now granted by him the right to speak freely as she recounts his many foolish acts. Paulina is, for the first time, allowed to speak before Leontes and his court, not as a woman but as the king's healer: a person to be greatly respected and even revered. We know Leontes has come to trust her when he says: "Go on, go on. / Thou canst not speak too much. I have deserved / All tongues to talk their bitt'rest" (3.2.209).

Now more aware of her status as a licensed physician and noting the king's first signs of repentance, Paulina apologizes to her patient—"Alas, I have showed too much / The rashness of a woman!" 3.2.216)—and replaces her radical treatment with a much milder one, which prevents the desperate Leontes from becoming infected with another emotional plague. Now, instead of telling him the truth about the status of his wife, she lies to him: "I say she's dead. I'll swear't. If word nor oath / Prevail not, go and see" 3.2.198-99). Paulina believes that this deception—telling the king that his queen is dead—will allow the three "injured" family members to undergo certain transformations in order to be healed. Her deception creates the space and time that healing requires.

While the mother (Hermione) and daughter (Perdita) are kept alive and free from any interference or infection, the former preserved by Paulina in her secret shrine and the latter on a remote island, the king is also sustained in a state of

“agonized remorse on the implied assumption that sufficiently prolonged pain will transfigure his soul and he will become worthy of the restoration that waits in redeeming time” (Stockholder, 1992: 161). This “redeeming time” is, for Paulina, the time needed for the king’s wound to heal, and also for his abandoned child and persecuted queen to heal: it will include his return to himself as well as their return to him. For Paulina, this healing stage involves a restoration following a period of *separation*, each in a particular, separate, and healthful environment, and time is necessary at this stage to complete the healing process.

Separation, in Paracelsian iatrochemistry, is crucial to the obtaining of the quintessence, that is, to achieving the purest distillation. “Paracelsean pharmacy,”²¹ according to Walter Pagel, an influential scholar in the field of Paracelsian medical theory, “is based on *separation*. By this is meant the isolation of the specific virtue—‘arcanum’—which has a specific action on one or several diseases. . . . What medicine needs is ‘to extract, not to compose’” (1982: 144). For Paracelsus, separation is thus, in the words of Pagel, “the greatest miracle in nature—it is the model and original pattern of all birth” (1982: 91). It is through separation, rather than composition, that new life is possible.

Every particle initially present will come into being and to its proper form. This takes place through separation accompanied by condensation whereby invisible prime matter is converted into a visible substance—matter in the ordinary sense. This process is comparable to the separation and condensation of soot from hardly visible smoke and air. (Pagel, 1982: 91)

²¹ Pagel chooses to use “Paracelsean” while contemporary critics tend to use “Paracelsian,” as does the author of this study.

Paracelsus asserts, then, that it is through a *local* process of separation (“Scheidung”) that all products in nature emerge (Pagel, 1982: 135-36). Here we note that the three Sicilian royal family members are also separated, and thereby preserved, following Paulina's medical treatment, herself a “quasi magus” (Stockholder, 1992: 161). Their separation is required in order to distill the quintessence, the therapeutic substance.

The ultimate quintessence that will help to restore the energy and health of the Sicilian court in *The Winter's Tale* is already perhaps to be seen in Perdita, the daughter of Hermione and Leontes. Named after her fate as the *lost* child—*perdre*, *perdita*, “to lose”—she is the embodiment of a young life living and growing in an exotic garden of flowers and herbs. Found along with gold and jewelry, Perdita explicitly symbolizes gold, the most noble metal and thus the most noble medicine according to Francis Anthony, a follower of Paracelsus, in his influential work *Medicinae Chymicae* (1610).²² Thus, we can see Paulina's therapeutic art of deception—in telling Leontes that his wife and daughter were dead—as being analogous to the crucial separation and distillation that is essential to the healing process. In fact she “heals” the whole family by paradoxically emphasizing its separation in order to bring it (them) together again. Paulina is a true woman-healer, a “midwife” who transcends socio-political and sexual boundaries to bring about the distillation and regeneration of a family.

²² I am indebted to Allen G. Debus for this source, as in his words, in *Medicinae Chymicae*, Francis Anthony “referred repeatedly to Paracelsus, Duchesne, Penotus, and other leading iatrochemists” (1965: 142). Debus continues, Anthony “admitted that gold was a difficult metal to obtain in solution, but he affirmed that by proper calcination it could be done and that *aurum potable* could be prepared” (Debus, 1965: 142). See Anthony (1610: 25-31).

III. Midwives and Magical Medicine

Scholars discussing *The Winter's Tale* have said much about the magical nature of the last scene of the play,²³ but rarely has attention been given to its medicinal meanings or implications, in particular Paulina's symbolic midwifery and the complex image of "birth" itself. Indeed, Carol Thomas Neely claims that "the play's central miracle—birth—is human, personal, physical, and female. . . . Childbirth is the literal and symbolic centre of the play" (1999: 169-70). The birth image is especially emphasized in the play's second half, beginning with the shift to the young Perdita—who is closely associated with the powers of transformation and rebirth—and culminating in Paulina's magical or alchemistic revivifying of Hermione.

For midwives, it is important to know the most favorable time for a baby to be born, that is, the time most in accordance with nature, and the "mankind witch" Paulina knows this well. As Paracelsus notes, to borrow from Jolande Jacobi: "Only when the time has been fulfilled, and not before, does the course of nature and art set in" (1958: 82)—this art, in Paulina's case, is the art of midwifery. The midwife is also a kind of alchemist, one who knows that the birth of a new life is the final stage in the course of nature, the stage at which the fetus has been fully purified, has become a quintessence like the Philosopher's Stone itself, just as the silent stone of Hermione's statue is turned into sound and sense. Like those

²³ The critic D'orsay W. Pearson, for example, argues that Paulina fully exhibits the image of the "urban witch"—"[b]awd, midwife, agent of the forces of evil" (1979: 201)—in English Renaissance drama, one which can also be found in three other plays a decade before Shakespeare composed *The Winter's Tale*: namely, Thomas Heywood's *The Wise Woman of Hogsdon*, Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist*, and Thomas Middleton's *The Witch* (1979: 199).

skillful early modern midwives before her, Paulina predicts the hour of Hermione’s (re)birth and prepares for it with her unique remedy: a play. This performance tests the effects of the purging of Leontes’s infection, that is, of his great remorse, for a complete purification would ensure the life of the newborn infant, in this case a revived Hermione.

Like an observant midwife, Paulina senses Leontes’s desire to see his wife again when he tries to stop her from closing the curtain after he sees her statue: his wanting to see her is a sign that this is a propitious time for Hermione to be (re)born (5.3.59). The lifelike statue of Hermione serves both to remind him of his past guilt (“I am ashamed. / ... My evils conjured to remembrance” 5.3.38,40) and as the sole cure for his deep sense of remorse (“No settled senses of the world can match / The pleasure of that madness” 5.3.72-73). Leontes’s destructive madness has now been transformed into a “pleasure of madness”—a renewed love for his queen—because their separation has lasted just long enough. This is shown in the way he gazes attentively and affectionately at her wrinkles, veins, and eyes, as if each part of her has become integrated after she had been “decomposed” (as well as discomposed) by his angry rhetoric years earlier. At this point, then, Paulina the healer feels Leontes may be allowed to touch his living queen again, just as he has been touching her statue-like body and remarking on its warmth (“Oh, she’s warm” 5.3.109). That is, she knows the penitent Leontes is ready for Hermione to be “reborn” and that this is the right moment for her, as midwife, to perform the ritual that will bring this rebirth about.

Paul. It is required
 You do awake your faith. Then all stand still.
 On; those that think it is *unlawful business*
 I am about, let them depart. (*emphasis added*,
 5.3.94-97)

However, well aware of the traditional (religious, political and patriarchal) prejudices against alchemy and midwifery, Paulina must avoid being seen as practicing a sort of witchcraft in bringing the statue “alive.” On the other hand, in performing this ritual act she clearly will be acknowledging that she is using magic, and so she would seem to be caught in a dilemma. Indeed, this is exactly the situation those early modern women medical practitioners and midwives found themselves in. As Doreen Evenden puts it: “[c]losely allied to the baptismal function, in the opinion of historians, was the concern that the midwife might engage in witchcraft and place in jeopardy the soul of the unbaptized infant” (2000: 27).²⁴

Paulina’s playful reference to this “unlawful business” before magically bringing the “statue” to life in front of Leontes, the representative of patriarchal authority, is more a witty and ironic reference to the traditional attitude toward midwifery and witchcraft than a direct challenge to the king. Even so, her role as midwife does transgress the accepted boundaries of patriarchal medical authority inasmuch as it involves the implicit use of magic power, and yet Shakespeare has the powerful patriarch, Leontes himself, officially declare that this magic of Paulina’s is just as “lawful” as the natural, basic need for life.

²⁴ However, here Evenden continues: “The myth of the midwife as witch, however, has finally been demolished in a recent scholarly study by David Harley, who argues that by accepting the evidence of demonologists instead of examining early modern sources, historians have erroneously perpetuated the ‘myth’ linking midwifery and witchcraft” (2000: 27). Deborah E. Harkness holds a similar view. Considering the inadequacy of the historical medical records which were traditionally based on the stories told by the physicians of the College and elite surgeons, Harkness adopts the views of people in the streets, houses, churches, and hospitals of London city, and concludes that “these Elizabethan women emerge as competent caregivers. . . . These women were at the very heart of London’s medical world. . . . Perhaps that is why so many male practitioners found them so very threatening” (2008: 83-84).

Leo. If this be magic, let it be an art
Lawful as eating. (5.3.110-11)

Here the female practice of magic, of witchcraft, becomes elevated from an “unlawful business” to an *art* that is natural and thus lawful, and so various traditional boundaries—as well as boundaries between the past and present, living and dead—are being crossed.²⁵ That is, this “magical” female medicine is now seen as also being natural and thus lawful and necessary, a proper part of the medicinal order.

Shakespeare’s positive and sympathetic presentation here of female medicinal power, specifically midwifery, clearly shows his approval. Perhaps this can even be one of those “uncritical acceptance accounts” (Evenden, 2000: 1) compiled by Percival Willughby,²⁶ a prominent male midwife in the seventeenth century, who admitted at one point the significant role that female midwives had played in the history of early modern English childbirth. In his complex treatise *Observations of Midwifery* (1672), some ninety thousand words in length, Willughby related many case histories of midwifery and claimed, contrary to the dominant belief at that time, that female midwives were very capable and even preferable to male midwives. As Adrian Wilson puts it:

Just as very few mothers asked him to play the role of
midwife, so too Willughby himself—for all his

²⁵ The idea of *art* presented here does not appear to contradict Perdita’s distaste for art earlier in her conversation with Polixenes, where she refers to art more as a form of artificiality and thus falsehood. Here, however, both to Leontes and Paulina, art denotes the act of creation of new life.

²⁶ Evenden remarks that “[t]he single most influential source in the historiography of English midwifery has been Willoughby’s compilation of some 200 midwifery cases selected from his own forty-year practice” (2000: 1). Republished in 1863, Willughby’s seventeenth-century manuscript has been a significant source for historians dealing with early modern English midwifery.

criticisms of practicing midwives—believed that the female midwife, not a male practitioner such as himself, was the proper person to manage childbirth. This ingrained assumption on Willughby's part reflected the conceptual horizon imposed by the fact that the male practitioner's task was to deliver a dead child, not a living baby. (1997: 167)²⁷

This observation might come from his experiences while working with his daughter, Eleanor Willughby, who became a midwife at the age of fifteen or sixteen, possibly at her father's request. In *Observation*, a case history of a dangerous childbirth, it was presumably the (unidentified) daughter-midwife who successfully completed the delivery under adverse conditions. According to Willughby's account, a pregnant woman designated as "Sir Tennebs Evanks lady"²⁸ was diagnosed by Eleanor, only nineteen or twenty at the time, as having a fetus in the breech position but her father disagreed; later Eleanor's diagnosis proved to be correct, and she delivered the baby safely. Moreover, her father had to creep in and out of the room on his hands and knees so that the mother would not see him: this deception was needed because "[t]he arrival of the male practitioner signaled that the birth was difficult" (Wilson, 1997: 163).

This unusual story informs us, as Wilson says, of "the association of the male practitioner with difficulty and danger, and the fact that Willughby's relations with midwives were

²⁷ Male midwives were usually summoned only when it was expected to be a miscarriage or a case of the baby being stillborn, as these were more difficult cases to handle. Willughby's original manuscript is unavailable, as it was written in 1672.

²⁸ The real identity of her husband is plausibly Sir Gervase Bennet, "an irascible Puritan, who was (as Willughby described him in the London version) 'one of Oliver's creatures', that is, a client of Cromwell's, and who was active both in London (where he had a minor government post) and in Derby (where he served for a time as an alderman)." For this information the critic Adrian Wilson consulted Gerald Aylmer (1997: 161, 175).

fraught with tension” (163). It is also significant that Eleanor’s delivery of the baby in this difficult case did not follow the method of Dr. William Harvey,²⁹ whose theory Willughby had deemed the supreme guide in midwifery. As Willughby put it, “I know none but Dr. Harvey’s directions and method,” in Wilson’s words (153).³⁰ Again we see that male practitioners rely more on texts than on experience, unlike their female counterparts. David Harley also makes this point: “Midwifery had always been regarded as a skill that could only be learned by experience” (1993: 28). Harley continues by presenting John Maubray, the author of the influential work on midwifery, *Female Physician*. In Harley’s words, with his quoting from John Maubray:

a midwife should have served ‘as an assistant to some skillful Woman of good Business’ because only practice could equip a midwife, not ‘all the THEORY, that the most ingenious MAN can make himself Master of.’ (1993: 28).³¹

The view that male midwives are to be avoided as they will tend to endanger the life of the fetus or newborn baby is clearly applicable to the two kings in *The Winter’s Tale*, for Leontes and Polixenes have both, at one point, killed their own sons, almost literally in the case of Mamillius and

²⁹ Evenden argues: “It is highly unlikely that Harvey’s work, *De Generatione Animalium* (London, 1651), which was based on experiments with fertilized hen’s eggs, had any direct bearing on the practice of midwifery, particularly in the seventeenth century” (2000: 2). Similarly, for Wilson, “Harvey’s discussion of birth was chiefly theoretical in intent” (1997: 151).

³⁰ Wilson has noted Willughby’s use of Harvey’s essay “De Partu,” the conclusion of his *De Generatione* which was published in 1651 and translated into English in 1653. Wilson continues: “Willughby wanted to argue that practical experience was the only effective teacher; yet his medium contradicted his message, for he was using the written word” (1997: 151).

³¹ For the reference of John Maubray, see Maubray (1724: 176-177).

metaphorically in the case of Florizel, who escaped from his father's oppressive court. Indeed, although "[t]he earliest historians of English midwifery were physicians whose accounts were inevitably weighted in favour of the male professional" (Evenden, 2000: 2), Shakespeare has clearly given his women healers and midwives a very special status. Thus he has his character Paulina perform the crucial act of magical and alchemical midwifery, the (re)birth of Hermione, an operation supported by Leontes ("Proceed. / No foot shall stir" 5.3.96-97).

Paulina alone is in charge of the process of this symbolic (re)birth, which takes place in the "chamber" of her own house. In the beginning she commands: "Music, awake her; strike! / 'Tis time" (5.3.98-99). As she announces Hermione's (re)birth with the sound of music, the other characters on stage along with the theater audience enter a world of harmony, holiness, and healing. All are invited to witness this holy moment and to acknowledge its political, religious, and moral legitimacy, so as not to have the slightest suspicion that "evil" magic is involved here. Guiding the "delivery" carefully, Paulina marks each step with her commanding yet professional voice. Finally she awakens Hermione from the state in which Leontes had imprisoned her, animating the queen by inviting her to become "Free and enfranchised" (2.2.61) like a newborn baby.

Paul. Descend. Be stone no more. Approach.
Strike all that look upon with marvel. Come,
I'll fill your grave up. Stir, nay, come away,
Bequeath to death your numbness, for from him
Dear life redeems you. (5.3.99-103)

With Hermione's first movements, Paulina hastens to justify her magic spell by saying it is not evil, perverted or against nature, but rather "lawful" and in accordance with it:

Paul. Start not. Her actions shall be holy as
You hear my spell is lawful. (5.3.104-05)

Paulina also invites Leontes to fully accept his newborn wife, for denying her would be like killing her a second time, while such acceptance would connote that the king’s heart has been entirely purified, and harbors no more feelings of envy or jealousy:

Paul. Do not shun her
Until you see her die again, for then
You kill her double. Nay, present your hand.
(5.3.105-107)

The king’s willing hand prompts the queen’s two hands to make a circle to embrace him, a circle symbolizing reunion and reconciliation. Thus the king is fully healed by touching the queen whom had (he thought) been stone, just as in alchemical medicine it is essential to have, in order to completely heal or cure someone, a *tinctura* or Philosopher’s Stone. Paracelsus explains that “*Tinctura*, the last arcanum, is like the *rebis*—the bisexual creature—which transmutes silver and other metals into gold; it “tinges,” i.e., it transforms the body, removing its harmful parts, its crudity, its incompleteness, and transforms everything into a pure, noble, and indestructible being” (1958: 148). Hermione’s (re)birth is not fully completed, however, until her daughter, the lost Perdita, is found, for only then can she fully recover her own voice and language.

The animation of the “stone statue,” which means the beginning of Hermione’s (re)birth, begins with a deception, that of the queen’s death. Indeed all magical acts and plays depend on deception in order to make the impossible possible, in this case to make the king once again completely love and trust his queen and she him. More generally, deception allows the power of women to be recognized and accepted, not as an evil or witch’s power which gives rise to male anxiety, but as a loving, healing power, a holy power. Deception is perhaps the only choice for female healers when their freedom to heal

others—including the men that are closest to them—is threatened. Healing is disguised as a form of deception in *The Winter's Tale*. Deception is never a negative strategy, a way of defeating or taking advantage of others for the healer Paulina, as it can be a form of art that transforms the living into that which appears to be dead, or which “recreates” the appearance of death. This art first covers (conceals), then separates (life from death), and finally presents (new) life—the moment of rebirth.

If Hermione’s (re)birth appears to be holy or divine as well as magical, there perhaps is an apocalyptic revelation in Shakespeare’s final scene here: women’s wit, though as mysterious and uncontrollable as nature, can also heal as powerfully as nature when it crosses the boundary set arbitrarily by jealous male competitors.

IV. Conclusion

Shakespeare ends *The Winter's Tale* with Paulina’s resurrection of the “dead” Hermione, just as the author resurrected the images of wise women³² or women healers in an era when the practice of medicine was controlled and circumscribed by male physicians. In Shakespeare’s view, those “professional” male physicians have failed to provide truly effective remedies because their knowledge was mostly based

³² William Kerwin has pointed out that women’s acts of healing are generally absent from the stage of Shakespearean London. He notes that in *An Index of Characters in English Printed Drama to the Restoration*, there is “only 1 character under the rubric of ‘wise woman’ and 18 listed as ‘midwife,’ compared with 104 under ‘doctor’ and 60 under ‘physician’” (2005: 63). Kerwin assumes that the absence of historical wise women “seems to be another instance of the [Shakespearean] drama eliminating a part of early modern women’s life from the stage” (242). However, in *A Winter's Tale* Shakespeare seems to give his women healers an unusual degree of authority and power.

on texts and theory, and thus was limited and futile. Hence, they are scorned in *Macbeth*: “Throw physic to the dogs!” (Shakespeare, 1984: 148). As Marjorie Garber observes: “[T]here are some Shakespearean characters who do appear onstage and perform acts of restoration and healing seemingly beyond those of professional physicians. Perhaps significantly, all of these powerful figures are women” (1980: 107).

In this late romance, Shakespeare never mentions male medical authorities but only appeals to his female practitioners, who are portrayed as being able to heal, or save, the soul as well as the body. Of the two women healers discussed in the play, Paulina most resembles the remarkable female practitioners of sixteenth-century Bologna. “While it is clear that women healers were excluded from the professional practice of medicine,” Gianna Pomata informs us, “it should be noted that several female figures were prominent among the saints to whom the citizens of Bologna appealed in their pressing need” (1998: 79). Pomata continues: “[i]n addition to the Virgin Mary, whose cult left a long record of healing miracles in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Bologna, other women saints were paramount among the city’s supernatural healers” (79). All these women healers have distinguished themselves through their use of practical knowledge, empirical experience, openness to the spiritual or supernatural world, and human kindness. On Shakespeare’s stage they also wielded the power of compassionate and witty language.

Sustained by its two women healers—Hermione and Paulina—*The Winter’s Tale* shows us both the problematic status of, and the significant role played by, women healers in history. These two female characters possess quick wits and powerful rhetoric, and their own actions seem, like those of historical women medical practitioners, to be unlicensed and unbound. Hermione can represent all the silenced and prosecuted women healers—and Paulina the strong and

successful ones, those experienced midwives who follow the empirical practice of Paracelsian iatrochemistry. Paulina is a memorable embodiment of the early modern “mankind witch” and midwife in the best sense, both in her compassion and genuine desire to heal others and in the positive, life-giving, supernatural power of her alchemy.

By representing and giving us some sense of the great achievements of actual early modern female medical practitioners, these two Shakespearean characters may help to rectify the fact that most of the historical women healers’ achievements are absent from (male) historians’ records and from the works of prestigious (male) writers, for their practice had been largely prohibited by the patriarchal society and medical establishment. If *The Winter’s Tale* presents early modern women healers as having positive mystical powers,³³ it also demystifies the supposed rationality and power of patriarchal males (including kings), just as it demystifies the common association of midwifery and witchcraft with the forces of evil.

³³ On the other hand, Kerwin remarks that “Many early modern authors employ the mythological figure of Medea in ways that complement the widespread process of cultural marginalization of women healers that defines the early modern medical culture” (2005: 64).

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「萬語莫奈何」：
莎翁《冬天的故事》中的女性醫者與
女性療癒語言

林熒嬌

國立臺灣師範大學僑生先修部
24449新北市林口區仁愛路一段2號
E-mail: yclin@ntnu.edu.tw

摘 要

本文援用西方十六世紀醫者派帕拉賽爾塞思之醫學理論，探討莎翁《冬天的故事》中的女性醫者角色，並對比在此時期歷史文化背景下真實女性醫者。本文分析劇中女主角寶琳娜為女性醫者之典範，期以呈現女性的語言為一療癒砭石。寶琳娜透過適當的語言運用，巧妙地化解了存在於國王與皇后間的誤解紛爭，重新恢復皇室健康秩序。寶琳娜如醫藥般的話語，神奇地轉化國王盛怒之語為懺悔柔語。而被認定死去已久的皇后，她如石塊般的雕像身軀，竟能在寶琳娜的話語指導下被喚醒而「重生」。這象徵性的重生，乃鍊金醫學的最高境界：賤金屬／死亡轉化為黃金／生命。

關鍵詞：《冬天的故事》、女性醫者、助產士、帕拉賽爾塞思、十六世紀英國