If civilization is a necessary course of development from the family to humanity as a whole, then—as a result of the inborn conflict arising from ambivalence, of the eternal struggle between the trends of love and death—there is inextricably bound up with it an increase of the sense of guilt, which will perhaps reach heights that the individual finds hard to tolerate.

(Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents)1

In his recent book on love, Alain Badiou links its articulation to the enunciation of a wished-for “forever” that attempts to channel contingency into certainty: “If ‘I love you’ is always, in most respects, the heralding of ‘I’ll always love you’, it is in effect locking chance into the framework of eternity. . . . To an extent, every love states that it is eternal; it is inscribed within the declaration. . . . The problem then resides in inscribing this eternity within time. Because, basically, that is what love is: a declaration of eternity to be fulfilled or unfurled as best it can within time: eternity descending into time.”2 The last part of Badiou’s statement resonates with The Winter’s Tale.
Tale (ca. 1611), a play much preoccupied by temporality.3 This is, after all, the only Shakespearean play in which Time appears as Chorus, glossing the passage of sixteen years while Perdita grows up in bucolic obscurity and her mother, Hermione, is hidden away by her faithful friend Paulina. While some critics have argued that Paulina, and thus the play, seem profoundly anti-Pauline, this essay considers Shakespeare’s play along with Giorgio Agamben’s book about temporality in Paul’s letter to the Romans, supplemented by Aristotle’s treatments of time.4 Exploring Shakespeare’s Aristotelian and Pauline temporality with particular reference to penitential practice leads me to connect Shakespeare’s Hermione with the composite figure of Mary Magdalene popularized in both legend and iconography in the Middle Ages and still resonant in the early seventeenth century.5 In this reading, Hermione’s wrinkles parallel the Magdalene’s miraculous growth of hair during her exile (a detail borrowed from the legend of Mary of Egypt). Both wrinkles and hair signify time’s passage, yet whereas Hermione’s scored skin signifies her mortality, Mary Magdalene’s luxuriant pelt works somewhat differently, highlighting not the inevitability of decay but rather a hermeneutic fusion of eros, faith, and transcendence that might be read back to the play’s treatment of time.

My aim in this essay is both literary and philosophical: first, to analyze how the play acquires new resonances when read alongside a series of texts and images, primarily Aristotle’s Physics, Paul’s Epistles, and Titian’s Noli me tangere (1514). Second, I show how reading these interleaved texts alongside Shakespeare allows us, in turn, to question or supplement Agamben’s interpretation of Paul. In the past few years, a number of critics have treated the theoretical return to Paul in conjunction with The Winter’s Tale. Most recently, James Kuzner frames the question of just rule in the play by taking together Agamben’s and Badiou’s books on Paul, arguing that despite their different ideas about the formulation of the faithful


subject, both theorists end up promulgating a distinctly nonconfessional “faith without belief” that Kuzner claims Shakespeare anticipates. For Kuzner, the play’s uneasy politics eventually come close to advocating a skeptical Republicanism. Ken Jackson’s reading of messianic time in the play also informs my own argument. Focusing on Paul’s arguments concerning marriage in 1 Corinthians, Jackson claims that Leontes’s jealousy and misprision result, in effect, from an experience of messianic time whose implications he cannot grasp. I agree with Jackson that returning to Paul can help us construe the play, and my own argument begins by reestablishing the more covertly Aristotelian components of Agamben’s conception of messianic time. In so doing, I reintegrate the primarily Jewish Paul highlighted by Badiou and Agamben with an Aristotelian Paul. Agamben himself begins this side-by-side reading of Aristotle and the Epistles, and pushing his juxtaposition further allows for a more nuanced understanding of the play’s intertwined dynamics of love and time.

I develop this joint literary and philosophical inquiry in dialogue with a historical attentiveness to the shifting status of penitence during the Reformation, as demonstrated by hagiographic, dramatic, and iconographic depictions of Mary Magdalene and alluded to in Shakespeare’s play. Four aspects or moments of the conflated Magdalene ground my analysis: one, the emphasis on penitence, visibility, and aesthetic ambivalence; two, the Magdalene’s association with resurrection—of her brother Lazarus, of Christ, and of the queen of Marseilles, who dies in childbirth; three, the iconic emphasis on her hair, first read as a sign of sensuality, then as one of faithfulness, penitence, and exile; and four, her status as “apostle to the apostles,” the first to encounter the risen Christ, initiated by his strange command concerning touch. The statue scene in The Winter’s Tale forms my focus here: as a slantwise recasting of the noli me tangere episode (John 20:11–18) that revolves around the aesthetic, the scene reorients

6. See Kuzner, Shakespeare as a Way of Life, 98.
our understanding of the play’s treatment of penitence, love, faith, and time.9 Leontes’s penitent progression moves from melancholia to mourning—yet a mourning that Hermione’s return immediately forecloses, somewhat as Mary Magdalene’s mourning for Christ is interrupted by his resurrection.10 Such a reading, though primarily redemptive, remains attentive to the ambivalence of redemption as well as to the various shadows the play seeks to overcome in the final scene—Mamilius’s and Antigonus’s deaths, Leontes’s incestuous desire, and Hermione’s trial and exile.11 And it turns around the Pauline relationship between two terms, love and faith—a faith that explicitly moves beyond law and in so doing becomes, like Badiou’s conception of love, “a declaration of eternity to be fulfilled or unfurled as best as it can be within time: eternity descending into time.”12

I. DOING TIME: THE TEMPORALITY OF PENITENCE

Penitence and temporality must always be considered together, for penitence entails some sort of duration, or at the very least a privation that may seem as though it extends the time of atonement. I begin, though, not


9. In part, this interpretation rests on a return to Freud’s distinctions between mourning and melancholia in conjunction with his arguments about the processes of guilt, though this essay will not treat Freud extensively. Briefly, though: these elements of Freud’s thought depend on a certain internalization of the lost, beloved object—that is, on rendering the object part of the subject. Thus the progression of guilt, which Freud discusses, among other places, at the end of Civilization and Its Discontents, also bears a perverse resemblance to his opening remarks about the lover’s sense of unity with the beloved. See Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents, 12–13.


with the distended time of penance but with its seeming opposite: the notion of “now,” which is central to Agamben’s reading of Paul. In book 4 of the *Physics*, Aristotle considers time (*khronos*), coming to the conclusion that it is neither a thing nor a motion, but a way of measuring change: “time cannot be disconnected from change. . . . Time, then, is not movement, but that by which movement can be numerically estimated.” The term Aristotle’s argument depends on is *nun*, “now,” which he defines both *as* and *not* as a unit or parcel of time: “now time is divisible into parts, and some of these were in the past and some will be in the future, but none of them exists. The present ‘now’ is not part of time at all, for a part measures the whole, and the whole must be made up of the parts, but we cannot say that time is made up of ‘nows.’” Aristotle’s assertions about the nature of time occasionally seem to underlie Agamben’s reading of *khronos* and *kairos* in Paul, particularly when it comes to the notion of the doubled faces of now as “the time that remains” between the first and second comings of the messiah. In Agamben’s reading, Paul’s contracted *ho nun kairos*, “the time of the now,” thus refers both to the moment of its passage and its inevitable propulsion toward the *parousia* that will bring about the end of time.

Aristotle’s now offers a complement to Agamben’s conception of Paul’s “time of the now” as both present and looking beyond its presence. While Paul’s *ho nun kairos* contains a certain doubleness, Aristotle presents an even more fundamental ambivalence, as exemplified in these lines: “all change is in its nature a ‘passing away.’ And it is ‘in time’ that everything begins and ceases to be. . . . Indeed, it is evident that the mere passage of time itself is destructive rather than generative, as we said earlier, because change is primarily a ‘passing away.’ So it is only incidentally that time is the cause of things coming into being and existing.” The ambivalence arises with Aristotle’s term, *ekstatikon* (*ek* + *stasis*), here translated as “passing away”—this is a now rent by the melancholy tug of “departure” that is yet also the transcendent pull that means it forever “stands outside it-

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14. “Tou de khronou ta men gegone ta de melie, esti d’ouden, ontos meristou, to de nun ou meros; metrei te gar to meros, kai sugkeisthai dei to holon ek tòn meron; ho de khronis ou dokei suzkeisthai ek tòn nun” (ibid., 4.10.218a6–8).


self.” In The Nicomachean Ethics, ekstatikos is usually translated as “unrestrained,” the adjectival counterpart of akrasia (moral or physical lack of self-control). It is the negative corollary of ekstrateia (self-restraint), linked with kakias (vice) and thêriotês (usually translated as “bestiality”). Given this intertextual gloss, we could say that time contains a grain of something that works against its own passage, which resides in the now yet is not “restrained” or confined by the now. “Now,” according to Aristotle, supplies two faces of a limit, for “it is at once the beginning of time to come and the end of time past,” and in this doubleness it offers a sort of potentiality (dunamis). It is this sense of dunamis in the inability to fix “now” at any particular point that concludes Aristotle’s discussion of movement (kinesis). Yet, in a reflection of the subject he treats, Aristotle’s consideration slips past the discursive limitations he has himself imposed: the dunamis of Aristotle’s now never rests in the present. Paul’s horizon for “the time of the now” is the parousia; his now is bounded, even though the boundary remains ineffable, to come. Aristotle, too, reminds us of both the momentum and the inevitable stoppages of now, but Aristotle’s conception of now as both instant and boundary to its own instant paradoxically renders a now less circumscribed than Paul’s, unrestrained and imaginatively inaccessible.


18. See bk. 7 of the Loeb parallel-text edition of Aristotle, The Nicomachean Ethics, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926). The discussion of akrasia begins at 1145b. Later in The Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle returns to his conception of time in conjunction with pleasure (hêdonê), arguing that pleasure is not a motion: “This may also be inferred from the fact that a movement necessarily occupies a space of time, whereas a feeling of pleasure does not, for every moment of pleasurable consciousness is a perfect whole” (10.4.1274b5–10). I am grateful to Alex Gottesman for pointing me to this passage and for more general discussion of Aristotle’s usage of ekstatikon.

19. For the potentiality of now, see Aristotle, Physics 222a. Richard Sorabji’s formulation is helpful: “In the word ‘now,’ Aristotle often combines two ideas, though sometimes one idea occurs without the other. The first idea is that now is present, the second idea is that it is an instant. An instant is not a very short period, but rather the beginning or end (the boundary) of a period” (Time, Creation, and the Continuum: Theories in Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages [London: Duckworth, 1983], 8). Agamben discusses Aristotle and potentiality via Origen but does not address the Physics, citing instead the Metaphysics and De anima. See Giorgio Agamben, “On Potentiality,” in Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy, ed. and trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford University Press, 1999), 177–84.

20. This point is argued by Jacques Derrida, who claims that “Aristotle furnishes the premises of a thought of time no longer dominated simply by the present” (“Ousia and Grammê: Note on a Note from Being and Time,” in Margins of Philosophy, trans. Alan Bass [University of Chicago Press, 1982], 49).
Leontes most exemplifies the sense of bestial unrestraint covertly invoked in Aristotle’s discussion of time. In Shakespeare’s play, unlike in the conflated Magdalene legends, penitence initially takes masculine form—it is Leontes who, finally, repents, finds grace, and is forgiven, while Paulina becomes instrument of both punishment and pardon. Conveying the news of Hermione’s death, Paulina commands the king not to repent:

O thou tyrant,  
Do not repent these things, for they are heavier  
Than all thy woes can stir; therefore betake thee  
To nothing but despair. A thousand knees,  
Ten thousand years together, naked, fasting,  
Upon a barren mountain, and still winter  
In storm perpetual could not move the gods  
To look that way thou wert.  

Though Paulina enjoins not penitence but “despair” and, softening a little, “patience” (3.2.228)—more on this below—Leontes vows a public atonement that will vindicate his wife in death, taking Paulina’s hyperbolically dilated “a thousand knees / Ten thousand years together, naked, fasting” in a different direction. Rather than ascetic removal to “a barren mountain,” Leontes plans to stage his repentance more locally:

Prithee bring me  
To the dead bodies of my Queen and son.  
One grave shall be for both. Upon them shall  
The causes of their death appear, unto  
Our shame perpetual. Once a day I’ll visit  
The chapel where they lie, and tears shed there  
Shall be my recreation. So long as nature  
Will bear up with this exercise, so long  
I daily vow to use it. Come, and lead me  
To these sorrows.  

(3.2.232–41)

This spectacular aspect of Leontes’s penitence becomes linked, in the latter half of the play, to temporality—if only structurally, since Time, as the hinge between acts 3 and 4, allegorically bridges Leontes the Tyrant with Leontes the Penitent:

I that please some, try all; both joy and terror  
Of good and bad, that makes and unfolds error,  
Now take upon me, in the name of Time,

To use my wings. Impute it not a crime
To me or my swift passage that I slide
O’er sixteen years, and leave the growth untried
Of that wide gap, since it is in my power
To o’erthrow law, and in one self-born hour
To plant and o’erwhelm custom. Let me pass
The same I am ere ancient’s order was,
Or what is now received. I witness to
The times that brought them in; so shall I do
To th’freshest things now reigning, and make stale
The glistening of this present, as my tale
Now seems to it. Your patience thus allowing,
I turn my glass, and give my scene such growing
As you had slept between; Leontes leaving
Th’effects of his fond jealousies so grieving
That he shuts up himself.

(4.1.1–19)

Time’s speech returns to the legal and political language of the trial scene, beginning by evoking the “not guilty” plea Hermione refused to voice (3.2.25) and rendering it a metatheatrical quip. In these opening lines, Time rhetorically assumes the roles of judge (“I that please some, try all”—“I / try all” doubling down with a homophonic pun on “trial”); defendant or petitioner (“Impute it not a crime / To me or my swift passage”); and self-defending witness (“I witness to the times that brought them in”). Finally, though, Time circles back to the role of judge, but this time judge as super-sovereign: “ancient’s order” and “th’freshest things now reigning,” Time instructs the audience, may govern in a limited way, but both monarch (here relegated to the status of mere “thing”) and law must bend before Time’s inexorable progress. In effect, Time reminds us of legalism’s ultimate finitude in the face of mortality, which supercedes all law. Time rhetoricly reinforces this supercession with the repeated “o’er” verbs of lines 5–6 (“o’erthrow,” “o’erwhelm”), which point back to the “wide gap” (“o’er sixteen years”) that open the speech. This reiteration of Time’s supermortal authority seems almost to echo Paul’s strictures on the ends of Mosaic law (in Rom. 1–8, for example).22 Whereas Paul speaks of divine grace as the law beyond law (as in Rom. 7:1), Time presents its own progress as superlegal. And while Paul’s horizon, again, is divine grace, Time effectively relinquishes its hold on law, abdicating in favor of popular decision—a decision predicated on the “patience” the audience “allows.” That is to say, while sliding from the legal

22. Though James Kuzner does not address Time’s speech, once again his argument is instructive; see esp. his discussion of Paul’s treatment of the law and its implications for the play in Shakespeare as a Way of Life, 83–86, 99–104.
and political language of lines 1–15 to the metatheatrical metaphor that gathers momentum in line 16, Time institutes the illusion of popular sovereignty, of “allowing” the audience’s judgment to “o’erthrow” it even as it overthrows mortal law. However, Time marks such an “allowance” as illusory even in the act of proffering it: we remain caught in the web of Time’s tale, which is only the audience’s dream, or potential dream—for even that remains an open question, Time’s subjunctive “as” not fully offering a choice whether to suspend belief. Time seems to rescind authority and recede before what we might call the profane grace of “your patience,” but Time retains control of the narrative, implacably returning to the scene of Leontes’s penance even in the act of insisting we have now passed “o’er” or beyond this spectacle.

Leontes the Penitent makes his first appearance indirectly via the dialogue between Camillo and Polixenes that opens act 4:

CAMILLO. It is fifteen years since I saw my country; though I have for the most part been aired abroad, I desire to lay my bones there. Besides, the penitent King, my master, hath sent for me, to whose feeling sorrows I might be some allay, or I o’erween to think so, which is another spur to my departure.

POLIXENES. Of that fatal country Sicilia prithee speak no more, whose very naming punishes me with the remembrance of that penitent, as thou call’st him, and reconciled King my brother, whose loss of his most precious Queen and children are even now to be fresh lamented.

(4.2.3–8, 20–25)

In this exchange, Camillo’s “it is fifteen years since I saw my country” reglosses what Time has already explained—that is, time’s passage and the inevitable changes that occur in its wake. Polixenes, on the other hand, perceives time as frozen at the moment of Leontes’s loss, “even now to be fresh lamented.” Polixenes’s skepticism about Leontes’s penitence lends his “even now” a poignantly polyvalent edge—is it Leontes or Polixenes who might mourn “even now”? This question, in turn, heralds a larger query concerning what “penitence” might mean for the king.

For Leontes, penance involves both spectacle and repetition, a pairing the play continually tests. Given the more general testing of doctrinal divisions that characterize the Reformation, some historical background for penitential practice 1610–11 becomes relevant here. The sacramental status of penance had shifted rapidly under Archbishop Cranmer in the preceding century. Under Henry VIII, Cranmer’s early drafts of the Articles of Faith still consider penance a sacrament (as we see in the speculative Ten Articles of 1536 and the Thirteen Articles of 1538), yet in the final
Thirty-Nine Articles (1553), only baptism and communion retained this status. Cranmer’s logic for repudiating the other five sacraments runs as follows: “those five, commonly called sacraments . . . have not like nature of sacraments with baptism and the Lord’s supper, for that they have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God. The sacraments were not ordained of Christ to be gazed upon or to be carried about: but that we should duly use them. And in such only as worthily receive the same, they have a wholesome effect or operation: but they that receive them unworthily, purchase to themselves damnation, as St Paul saith.”23 According to this formulation, the vexed status of the visible distinguishes true sacraments from false. On the one hand, confirmation, penance, orders, matrimony, and extreme unction “have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God”; on the other hand, “the sacraments were not ordained of Christ to be gazed upon or to be carried about.” These two statements create a paradox: the sacraments require “visible sign or ceremony” but are not “to be gazed upon”—the deciding factor is whether the ceremonies have been divinely enjoined or seem derived from a second order (the lives of the Apostles).

This vexed visibility is something to which I will return, but I want to pause for a moment on earlier Reformation articulations of the status of penance. The third Article of 1536 contains the most extensive discussion of penitence, breaking it into three stages: contrition, confession, and “the amendment of the former life, and a new obedient reconciliation unto the laws and will of God, that is to say, exterior acts in works of charity according as they be commanded of God, which be called in Scripture fructus digni paenitentia, the worthy fruits of penance.”24 This tripartite structure does not differ substantially from Catholic doctrine.25 That is, penitence involves a widening progression, moving from the individual


(contrition), to the individual and the priest (confession), and finally to a larger community (works of charity). I call attention here to the Article’s lengthy exegesis on this third stage, particularly to the references to Paul in the final section:

This is the express precept and commandment of God, *Agit fructus dignos paenitentia*; that is to say, Do you the worthy fruits of penance; and St. Paul saith, *Quemadmodum praebuistis membra vestra serva immunditiae et iniquitati ad aliam atque aliam iniquitatem; sic et nunc praebete membra vestra serva iustitiae and sanctificationem*, etc.; that is to say, Like as in times past you have given and applied yourself and all the members of your body to all filthy living and wickedness, continually increasing the same, in like manner now you must give and apply yourself wholly to justice, increasing continually in purity and cleanliness of life; and in another place he saith, *Castigo corpus meum, et in servitutem redigo*, that is to say, I chastise and subdue my carnal body and the affections of the same, and make them obedient unto the spirit.26

Leontes’s penance seems archaic—not Catholic, since he’s focused on self-mortification rather than on turning outward to charitable works—but, perhaps, Henrician (in flavor if not in form). In its spectacular self-referentiality, Leontes’s practice exemplifies melancholia, rather than mourning; he immures himself in a cycle of contrition and confession, rather than progressing to amendment and *fructus digni paenitentia*.27 Inasmuch as Leontes’s penitence remains melancholic, it also transfixes time, exemplifying not the dynamic ambivalence of Aristotle’s multifaceted now but its destructive withering away.

The passage from Article 3 quoted above again demonstrates how Aristotle’s conception of time usefully supplements Agamben’s account of Pauline temporality. The Article’s first reference to Paul is to Romans 6:19.28 Romans 6 forms part of Paul’s exhortation to embrace the new law of grace by casting off sinfulness. In verses 15–18, he turns the metaphor of slavery he has invoked from the beginning (in the initial autointerpellation “Paul, slave to Christ”) back on itself, arguing that to persist under the old law is to become “slaves to sin” and death (douloi étoi hamartis eis thanaton) rather than “slaves to justice” (edoulôthête tê dikaiosunê), or, in his own opening formulation, slaves to Christ. In chapter 5, Paul dwells on Christ’s crucifixion, the sacrifice that purchased grace for all: “while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly” (ei ge Khristos ontôn

26. Article of Faith 3 (1536), 168.
28. Unless otherwise noted, references to Paul use Wayne Meek’s translation in *The Writings of Paul* (New York: Norton, 1972); Greek text taken from http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/. 
hémôn asthenôn eti kata kairon huper asebôn apethanen) (Rom. 5:6). Here Paul’s rhetorical reliance on time is not the polytemporal “now” that he returns to elsewhere in the epistle but kata kairon, “the right time,” yet this formulation, too, is double. On the one hand, the phrase represents the singular instant of Christ’s sacrifice. Concurrently, though, it opens up an indeterminate space that indexes a different type of potentiality than that generated by “the time of now”: whereas “now” (as Aristotle reminds us) is both defined by and limited in its capacity to measure time, kata kairon, the proper time, is limitless. Thus Paul rhetorically emphasizes not just that his audience has already been saved but that they are still being saved. It is always “the right time” to accept grace, much like Polixenes’s “even now” indicates that it is always the proper time to mourn. Paul’s eti (“yet” or “still,” when referring to time) cuts between the feeble, law-burdened “we” and the scene of Christ’s sacrifice. Though it grammatically refers to the unsaved sinners, its position here (visually if not grammatically, we could almost call it a squinting modifier) also points ahead to kata kairon—again, the proper time for grace is always “yet” to come.29

II. PATIENCE AND THE “WIDE GAP OF TIME”

It is perhaps difficult to think of the play as centered on Leontes’s penitence, since that penance is predicated on the needless suffering he in-

29. While Agamben’s arguments about messianic time owe something to a characteristically nuanced reading of Aristotle, Agamben occasionally treats both Aristotelian and Pauline temporality too quickly, as when he draws a distinction between Paul’s use of khrōnos and kairōs, which Paul himself does not maintain consistently. Agamben argues that Paul’s use of khrōnos usually corresponds with “secular time,” that “which spans from creation to the messianic event (for Paul, this is not the birth of Jesus but the resurrection)” (Time That Remains, 63). Yet in Galatians 4:4, Paul speaks of Christ’s birth in terms of khrōnos: “But in the coming of the fullness of time (hote de êlthen to plêrōma tou khrōnou), God sent forth his son, to be born of a woman, to be born under the law, so that he might ransom those under the law, so that we might be adopted as sons” (Gal. 4:4–5, translation slightly modified). Here, then, the messianic event is the birth of Jesus and not the resurrection, and this sense of the “fullness” or “fulfillment of” is consistent with Paul’s claims concerning love (agapē) as the fulfillment of the law in Romans 13:10 and Christ’s death as the moment of transition from law to grace in Romans 5:6. That is, the plērōma tou khrōnou in Galatians 4, when Paul speaks of Christ’s birth, is in fact synonymous with the kata kairon in Romans 5:6, the moment of Christ’s death that creates the ongoing movement of grace: Christ’s birth and Christ’s death simultaneously inhabit an instant of time and the fulfillment of time. Divine love both engenders and inhabits the crossing between the “fulfillment of time” (Christ’s birth) and the “fulfillment of the law” (Christ’s sacrifice) in these two epistles, yet there is no term for this. Agamben parenthetically notes the use of khrōnos in Galatians 4:4 in contrast to Ephesians 1:10, which contains the same formula but speaks instead of kairōs (Time That Remains, 75). My own argument here would be that we should take the formula in Galatians more seriously, as the shift in terms may simply mark a rhetorical difference between the “Paul” of Galatians and the “Pauline school” of Ephesians.
flicts upon Hermione. Recall that “patience” is the penitence Paulina first enjoins (“Take your patience to you” [3.2.229]), though it is not the first occurrence of the term in the play. In her opening statement at the trial, Hermione juxtaposes “patience” with “tyranny”: “If powers divine / Behold our human actions, as they do, / I doubt not then but innocence shall make / False accusation blush and tyranny / Tremble at patience” (3.2.27–31). Hermione’s trial stages law out of joint, or what she herself refers to as “rigour and not law” (3.2.112). As Christopher Pye has argued, the scene showcases how sovereign decisionism thwarts the very notion of justice and, in so doing, reorients the play’s treatment of aesthetics. I would agree with Pye’s reading, and I am also interested in how the scene treats time in relation to these problems. In this scene, patience comes to the foreground as the play’s sovereign virtue, embodied by Hermione in the face of law’s malfeasance.

Patience, from the Latin patior, to suffer or endure, implies an extended temporality—like penitence, it entails not an instant but some duration. The timing of the trial raises a question, one linked with the time of Hermione’s pregnancy: Perdita is born “something before her time,” and the trial occurs before Hermione “has got strength of limit” after giving birth, yet after Cleomenes and Dion have had time to journey from Sicily to Delphi and back with the oracle (2.2.23; 3.2.105). If the trial

30. This echo of Chaucer’s Patient Griselda also provides the first obscure hint of Leontes’s quickly elided incestuous desire for Perdita, as the marquis in the Griselda story tests his wife’s fidelity by stealing her two children and eventually bringing his own daughter back as his intended bride. See the Clerk’s Tale in The Riverside Chaucer, ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), 138–53. Anna Baldwin traces the Patient Griselda tale from Chaucer through a series of sixteenth-century texts, arguing convincingly that Greene drew on Chaucer in Pandosto and that “Shakespeare’s (frequently discussed) changes help to restore the original theme of the Grissel story” as the triumph of “patience, and not time and fortune” (Anna Baldwin, “From the Clerk’s Tale to The Winter’s Tale,” in Chaucer Traditions: Studies in Honour of Derek Brewer, ed. Ruth Morse and Barry Windeatt [Cambridge University Press, 1990], 206). In this she counters Frye’s reading of the play as an example of “the triumph of time” (Frye, Natural Perspective, 112–17).


32. In the play, the word sovereign occurs solely as an adjective referring to Hermione’s virtue, not as a noun signifying the monarch.

33. Playing on the etymological link (pator/passus sum), Baldwin argues that Shakespeare’s language suggests that [Hermione’s] suffering is a kind of Passion (“From the Clerk’s Tale to The Winter’s Tale,” 207). On this subject, see also John Taylor’s “The Patience of The Winter’s Tale,” Essays on Criticism 23 (1973): 533–56; as well as Shuger, “Reformation of Penance.” Shuger notes that “the standard etymology of poenitentia from the twelfth century on [was] ‘poenam tenere’—to suffer punishment” (559 n. 7).

34. On the speeding up and slowing down of time in the play, see Stina-Ewbank, “Triumph of Time,” 88–89; and Knapp, “Visual and Ethical Truth,” 200–61. Lowell Gallagher argues that Hermione’s pregnant body “genders temporality itself,” becoming an unread-
showcases the limitations of the sovereign’s will as law, Hermione’s statement about her own “strength of limit” can be extended to the situation of the trial itself. It is bookended by the birth of Perdita and the death of Pamflius (and, of course, the seeming death of Hermione). Legalism in the play therefore ends up curiously tied with Hermione’s status, not just as queen but as mother, not only because of Leontes’s jealous charge that Hermione has borne Polixenes’s child and thus committed treason but because of the play’s temporal inconsistencies. When Hermione’s jailer balks at letting Paulina pass to show the infant Perdita’s likeness to her father, Paulina responds tartly:

**Jailer.**

Madam, if’t please the Queen to send the babe, I know now what I shall incur to pass it, Having no warrant.

**Paulina.**

You need not fear it, sir; This child was prisoner to the womb, and is By law and process of great nature thence Freed and enfranchised, not a party to The anger of the King, nor guilty of— If any be—the trespass of the Queen.

(2.3.55–62)

Leontes’s charge is taken up and returned by Paulina’s argument that birth, enacting “the law and process of great nature,” serves as a reminder of mortal law’s limitations. Paulina figures natural law as temporality, and temporality as “process.” Ironically, the unscripted procedures of parturition assume a legibility the king’s arbitrary legalism lacks, and Paulina’s speech overturns the age-old gendered binaries of masculine/rational/cerebral and feminine/irrational/corporeal. Perdita’s untimely birth pro-


35. “Strength of limit” refers to Hermione’s previous lines, “the childbed privilege denied, which long / To all women of all fashion” (3.2.101–2). Orgel notes that “the modern consensus interprets [‘strength of limit’] to mean ‘the strength which returns to a woman in a given period after childbirth’” [J. H. P. Pafford, editor of the second Arden edition of the play (London: Methuen, 1963)], yet goes on to conclude that “this is one of many places where the text seems to court a deliberate obscurity” (3.2.104n). I would follow Pafford and others but also highlight the curious “obscurity” Orgel remarks, which attaches itself not to strength but to “limit” in the phrase and suggests the vexed limits of the law as much or more than postpartum endurance.
vides the anodyne version of Aristotle’s ethical ekstatikon, where “freed and enfranchised” indexes the positive senses of “unrestrained.”

Patience might be read as the temporal opposite of Aristotle’s dynamic now, fixity contrasted with motion—and yet patience acquires its own dynamism in the course of the play. In Time’s speech, patience opens out into a metaphor for Perdita’s birth and nurturance. After the legalism of the first thirteen lines, Time positions himself as an artist or, perhaps, play director: “Your patience this allowing, / I turn my glass, and give my scene such growing / As you had slept between” (4.1.14–16). With “growing,” Time’s metaphor of artistic or dramatic creation already begins to suggest an image of birth, and the analogy shifts to one of expectant motherhood: “What of her ensues / I list not prophesy, but let Time’s news / Be known when ’tis brought forth” (4.1.25–27). Once again, the image presents Perdita as “free and enfranchised,” child of “the law and process of great nature.”

The play’s final transformation galvanizes patience, redefining it as active rather than passive virtue by linking it to the aestheticized moment of Hermione’s regeneration. In the statue scene Paulina establishes a dialectic of patience: “O patience—/ The statue is but newly fixed, the colour’s / not dry” (5.3.46–48). Her call for “patience” both insists on a process or procedure, a certain order of operations, and requests a procedural interval—a moment of stasis or temporal fixity, the arresting of process. Is this an instance of the aesthetic interrupting the temporal, or the temporal interrupting the aesthetic? I would argue that it is both, and that this dialectical patience returns us to the question of “the wide gap of time” that constitutes the pastoral scene in act 4. The pastoral interval covers Perdita’s growth, but by the end of the play we remember that the scenes in Bohemia cover over the unstaged scenes of Hermione’s true trial of patience: the many years during which Paulina “preserved” her “to see the issue” of the oracle’s pronouncement (5.3.125–28).

Hermione’s “preservation” during the sixteen-year interval aligns her with the exiled Magdalene, the desert wanderer mysteriously sustained. In so doing, it also aligns her with certain elements of Pauline thought. In 1 Corinthians, Paul urges a recognition of the equivalence of love (not eros but agapê) and patience (makrothumei), and the pastoral play


37. “Hê agapê makrothumei, khrešteucetai, hê agapê ou zêloi, ou perpereuetai, ou plusioutai, ou askhemonei, ou zêtei ta heautês, ou paroxenetai, ou logizetai to kakon, ou khairei epi tê adikia, sunkhaeirei de tê alêtheia, panta stegei, panta pistuei, panta
in *The Winter's Tale* that interrupts the narrative of the changing limits of the law might be read as a dramatic gloss on this dictum, in two ways. First, the amorous delay provides Florizel his own education in patience; second, Perdita’s patience analogically mirrors her mother’s, when Hermione is eventually restored. It is during this magical interlude, too, that Perdita grows from a little print of her father to the object of his desire:

**FLORIZEL.**

At your request
My father will grant precious things as trifles.

**LEONTES.**

Would he so do, I’d beg your precious mistress,
Which he counts but a trifle.

**PAULINA.**

Sir, my liege,
Your eye hath too much youth in’t. Not a month
Fore your queen died, she was more worth such gazes
Than what you look on now.

(5.1.220–26)

Perdita, like her mother in the play’s final scene, is both image and object here, a “trifle,” a thing (not) to be gazed on and, implicitly, not to be touched. Paulina’s caution here proleptically shadows her injunction against touching the statue, and her quick response to Leontes’s incestuous impulse begins the work of the end of the play, in which the threat of unruly *eros* is partially assimilated to something more like *agapé*.

**III. REACH OUT, TOUCH FAITH: NOLI ME TANGERE**

I argued above that Leontes’s practice is Henrician partly because of its spectacular nature, an element that Article 26 will so dramatically eschew. What, then, does Leontes’s brand of penitence have to do with Hermione, or with Mary Magdalene? In part, the answer lies in the overdetermined aesthetics of act 5, scene 3, in which the regenerative phenomenon of the statue coming to life sublates the debased spectacle of Leontes’s fruitless repentence.³⁸ The answer also lies in the concomitant Pauline translation:

> *elpizei, panta hupomenei* (1 Cor. 13:4–7). The passage both begins and ends with the idea of love as patience; it is *makrothumei* (long-suffering), and *hupomenei* (it endures). Meeks’s translation: “Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” Though I prefer the translation “contains” for *stego* (see *Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. *stego*, def. II) to Meeks’s “bears” (sense A.2), Meeks’s rendering is the most common (perhaps because it is closest to the Vulgate’s “omnia suffert”), and it also sustains the sense of patience throughout the three verses.

³⁸ Pye refers to this as the play’s “aesthetic turn” (“Aesthetics and Absolutism,” 133); many have treated the aesthetic and ekphrastic elements of the statue scene.
tion of law to grace and the reconciliation of the sensible (that which can be seen or touched) and the spiritual.

Considering the relationship between penitential practices and patience requires a return to the vexed status of the visible in Article 26. Recall the Article’s paradox: on the one hand, penitence and the other former sacraments “have not like nature... with baptism and the Lord’s supper, for that they have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God”; on the other hand, “the sacraments were not ordained of Christ to be gazed upon or to be carried about.” They have “not any visible sign or ceremony,” yet they “are not to be gazed on or carried about”: again, the distinction between sacramental and nonsacramental visibility rests on whether the ceremonies have been deemed “ordained by God” or derived from lives of the Apostles. I want to bear all of this in mind when turning back to the play, and to Mary Magdalene—particularly to the episode in John 20:14–18, when Mary Magdalene sees but is forbidden to touch the risen Christ, who commands her to bring word of his resurrection to the other disciples:

She turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. 15 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. 16 Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni, which is to say, Master. 17 Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and to my God, and your God. 18 Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.39

Mary’s two turns (verses 14 and 16) express the passage between experience and faith, seeing and believing—a neatly literal conversion. But here I am more concerned with the dialogic lacuna, which becomes the over-determined site of representation (verses 16 and 17). First we have the dual interpellation, rhetorically echoing the action of the two turns: “Mary”/“Rabboni”—the latter a moment of recognition in the etymological sense of knowing again. Jesus hails Mary by her name, reinstating a personal bond he is just about to rescind; Mary’s recognition simultaneously articulates the human relationship now lost and already begins to concede the ascension Christ is about to announce. Then we have the interdiction, the infamous “touch me not”—mê mou haptou, in Greek, though as Jean-

39. All non-Pauline biblical quotations are taken from Robert Carroll and Stephen Pickett’s Oxford edition of the King James Version (1997).
Luc Nancy notes, the more well-known Vulgate Latin adds yet another layer of interdiction: “Noli me tangere does not simply say ‘Do not touch me’; more literally, it says ‘Do not wish to touch me.’ The verb nolo is the negative of volo; it means ‘do not want.’ In that, too, the Latin translation displaces the Greek mê mou haptou (the literal transposition of which would be non me tange). Noli: do not wish it; do not even think it.”

Artistic renderings imagine the moment between these utterances, interpellation and interdiction, projecting a scene of touching and withdrawal that the text itself withholds, much as Christ seemingly forestalls touch. In Aristotle’s terms, they render an imagined now that is, again, ecstatic, momentarily standing out from the narrative itself but passing instantly into further unknowability. That is, they render the invisible, the possible—which is of course the work of the aesthetic, but also where room for trouble or doubt might intrude (as it does in the very next episode of John’s gospel, that of the apostle Thomas).

In the iconographic tradition the Penitent Magdalene usually retains a trace of the unrestrained sensualist that marks a certain sublimation of eros (in the potentiality of touch) into pístis (faith). As the wealthy woman of Magdala (one face of the composite medieval Magdalene), Mary is associated with beauty and what Patricia Badir calls “iconic display.” Jacobus de Voragine frames Mary’s story as one of penitence and redemption, predicates the transition on her visibility. This emphasis begins with his opening treatment of her name, the usual spurious etymology: “The name Mary, or Maria, is interpreted as amarum mare, bitter sea, or as illuminator or illuminated. These three meanings are accepted as standing for three shares or parts, of which Mary made the best choices, namely, the part of penance, the part of inward contemplation, and the part of heavenly glory.” Voragine’s “illuminator or illuminated” may be linked with Article 26 in terms of its double-faced emphasis on the visual: Mary Magdalene may be read as either, or simultaneously, subject and object, seer and

42. Nancy, again: “The difficult and uncertain recognition bears the stakes of faith. It does not exist in recognizing the known but in entrusting oneself to the unknown (certainly not in taking it as a substitute for the known, for that would be belief and not faith. In this regard, the sequence of episodes in John is instructive)” (Noli Me Tangere, 28).
43. See Patricia Badir, The Maudlin Impression: English Literary Images of Mary Magdalene, 1550–1700 (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), 16; and Voragine, Golden Legend, 375.
44. Voragine, Golden Legend, 374.
seen—and, by extension, she who touches and she who is touched, as Nancy so eloquently argues.45

We might in turn connect this duality to Aristotle’s indivisible now, which must always be construed as both arriving and passing away, yet which nevertheless suggests an “unrestrained” trace or excess even in its passage. In order to figure the blessed penitent, Mary Magdalene must first represent the fallen, “the sinner” identified primarily in terms of her sensuality—hence the conflation with the prostitute, Mary of Egypt—even when that haptic sensuality is reincorporated into an act of faith (using her beautiful hair to dry Christ’s feet).46 This translation of eros to faith is perhaps most clear in Titian’s Noli me tangere (fig. 1), of which Nancy remarks, “in his version, the woman’s hand could be seen either as passing in front of the cloth or as brushing against it, especially since Jesus is gathering the cloth to him as if to protect his body (indeed to protect his sex, which the classical epizónion of the crucified already recovers and even emphasizes—an exceptional enough occurrence in the Noli series.”47 In Titian’s painting, the Magdalene is doubly barred from touch, by Christ’s gathering his garment away in his right hand and, pictorially, by the hoe he holds in his left hand, which cuts between them, forming a cross with the trunk of the tree behind the two figures.48 Indeed, the painting comprises a series of crosses, yet these chiasmic lines form a constellation of missed connections rather than intersections, all centered in the disarticulated lines formed by the two figures’ arms, the tree, and the hoe. Mary Magdalene’s raised right arm nearly parallels Christ’s left arm, an inverted mirroring in which she reaches toward him while he leans away with the same gesture. Christ’s right arm, gathering the folds of his garment, moves outside and thus stands apart from this series of almost-intersections—as is appropriate, for the gesture that gives the painting its name. At the same time, however, a certain poignancy of foreclosed potential haunts the gap between their two hands, hers open and reaching, his gathering aside—a foreclosure symbolized, perhaps, in the furled and knotted clothes.49

45. Voragine’s “illuminator or illuminated” anticipates the iconographic tradition depicting Mary Magdalene reading (an allegory for deciphering Christ as the Word), as in Rogier van der Weyden’s mid-to-late 1530s rendering. Van der Weyden’s painting can be viewed at https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/rogier-van-der-weyden-the-magdalene-reading.
47. Nancy, Noli Me Tangere, 34–35.
48. As we saw in John 20:15, Mary initially takes the risen Christ for a gardener who has removed Christ’s body (a typological reference to Adam); Rembrandt and Dürer are among those who depict Christ garbed entirely in some sort of gardening habiliment.
49. See, again, Nancy, Noli Me Tangere, esp. 31–32, on hands.
In contrast to the relatively straight lines of the painting’s complicated crossings, Christ’s retreating arm and the Magdalene’s extended arm form an interrupted curve, the asymptotic space between them filled by the gathered cloth, which creates an arc bisecting the arc of their disjoined gestures. Without being too Lucretian, we might say that these interrupted curves also become a swerve, a tilt both decisive in its rupture (the gathered cloth, the apotropaic hand) and curiously evocative of
something more, some excess motion that rests only momentarily in the dangling swath of cloth not gathered aside and away. The excess of Christ’s cloak (or winding sheet now fashioned into a cloak?) joins him to Mary Magdalene, whose garments spread and almost puddle on the ground. While Christ’s upright form stands, with the tree and the hoe, as the painting’s strongest verticals, here the dangling cloth pictorially links him with Mary Magdalene even as his gesture resists this conjunction. The spill of Mary Magdalene’s robes at the bottom right of the painting visually echoes and balances the spreading tree at the top left, whose growth is oddly lopsided. Graphically linked to the tree’s most abundant growth, the Magdalene’s image suggests a form of completion, fertility, and renewal that Christ’s gesture (despite his gardening implement) denies.

Titian’s painting, then, stages a scene that is all about *dunamis*, a series of coiled possibilities waiting to unfurl. The viewer knows how this story ends, but the painting depicts an arrested moment during which the passing instant—the now—might spill into an unpredicted, illimitable future: one in which Christ responds differently, or not at all, or Mary Magdalene refuses to hear him or bear his message if she does. In my reading, the poignancy of that foreclosed contact—what touches us about the denial of touch—also suggests Hermione and Leontes, in a variety of ways: Hermione/Magdalene forced to act as petitioner (though, notably, not as penitent); chided for her initial impatience yet also bound to an extended patience, an interrupted mourning, and an extended petitioning (Hermione, to be immured for sixteen years until the oracle’s truth can be proved and “that which has been lost is found” [see 3.2.130–34]; the Magdalene, to become “apostle to the apostles”). Read conversely, though, Christ also becomes the petitioner in this scene: *noli me tangere* as much wish as command, enjoined by necessity, inasmuch as his withdrawal or absence is also divinely enjoined. I would not go so far as to suggest Leontes becomes any sort of Christ figure—far from it—yet I would argue that the way Shakespearean romance operates depends upon creating sympathy for Leontes’s suffering humanity even as it also casts him as jealous, “unrestrained” or bestial monster, in Aristotle’s sense. That is, the penitent Leontes solicits an *ecce homo* recognition, which in turn depends upon recognizing his penitence (like his jealousy) as a primarily self-inflicted wound that only Time, and Hermione’s touch, will heal. In this reading, Leontes’s redemption represents one of the infinitely potential nows that neither John 20:17 nor Titian and others imagining the moment between interpellation and interdiction allow.

While Titian, like Aristotle, presents the melancholic now, Hermione’s touch finally gives us the fullness (or even, we might say, the *pleroma*) of now. Paulina’s crafty staging of Hermione’s reappearance, with its Pauline
undertones, is reminiscent of the *noli me tangere* episode, yet it also recalls the figure of the wilderness wanderer, the penitent Magdalene.\(^50\) In this scene aesthetic pleasure precedes a more profound fulfillment; however, such completion remains firmly grounded in the visual, the surface similarities between the penance Paulina had enjoined and its phenomenization in the seeming statue. In the context of the play, Paulina’s “chapel” (5.3.86) recollects the chapel in which Leontes initially ordered the bodies of Hermione and Mamilius displayed: “Once a day I’ll visit / The chapel where they lie, and tears shed there / Shall be my recreation” (3.2.236–38). “Recreation” here suggests both an activity (specifically, a performance) and an autogenerative fantasy, in which the penitent Leontes continually rebirths himself in the specular prism of his tears even as the bodies of his wife and son decay. Paulina’s chapel appears to create a space that will allow him to resume this interminable process, yet it is also a space designated for aesthetic rather than religious contemplation,\(^51\) in which Leontes must finally confront his own inability to progress from melancholia to mourning.

The statue scene revisits Paulina’s vow to Leontes after the trial scene, when she tells him “if you can bring / Tincture or lustre in [Hermione’s] lip, her eye, / Heat outwardly or breath within, I’ll serve you / As I would do the gods” (3.2.202–5). Liveliness resides first in “her lip, her eye,” second, in “her breath,” and act 5, scene 3 fulfills each of these conditions:

LEONTES. Would you not deem it breathed, and that those veins
Did verily bear blood?

POLIXENES. Masterly done!
The very life seems warm upon her lip.

LEONTES. The fixture of her eye has motion in’t,
As we are mocked with art.

LEONTES. Still methinks
There is an air comes from her. What fine chisel
Could ever yet cut breath? Let no man mock me,
For I will kiss her.

50. The scene has been read as Mariolatrous and thus crypto-Catholic, and while respectful of such interpretations, I do not want to argue for any particular confessional affiliation while sketching these Magdalenian parallels. Rather, I would call this an aesthetic and analogical hermeneutic, unrooted in any authorial intent.

51. Not that the two can be separated. On connections between the theological, legal, narrative, and aesthetic implications of act 5, scene 3, see Pye, “Aesthetics and Absolutism,” 138.
PAULINA. Good my lord, forbear.
The ruddiness upon her lip is wet;
You’ll mar it if you kiss it, stain your own
With oily painting. Shall I draw the curtain?

LEONTES. No, not these twenty years.

PERDITA. So long could I
Stand by, a looker-on.

In the statue scene Paulina and Leontes recast the *noli me tangere* episode as polyvocal ventriloquism and palimpsestic spectacle. Paulina, speaking for Hermione, comes close to ventriloquizing Christ, forbidding touch, while Leontes again recalls aspects of the penitent Magdalene—yet the scene doubles and even triples the Magdalene resonances. In his first vision of the statue, Leontes marks the vestiges of passing time: “But yet, Paulina, / Hermione was not so much wrinkled, nothing / So aged as this seems” (5.3.27–29). Hermione’s frozen form also suggests the Magdalene—here she seems somewhere between the supple, suppliant Magdalene Titian imagines and the haggard, seemingly aged figure sculpted by Donatello, whose glorious hair mingles with and even becomes the garb of her penitential exile.52 However, it is Paulina who performs the “resurrection” and thus aligns herself with yet another aspect of the conflated Magdalene, in legend associated not only with the resurrection of Christ but also with her brother Lazarus (the conflation, this time, is with Mary of Bethany) and, when she begins her apostolic wanderings some years after Christ’s death, with that of the queen of Marseilles and her child.53

Like Mary Magdalene’s, Leontes’ mourning is interrupted by a miracle. And like the touch Mary Magdalene is denied (or granted only in painterly or readerly imagination), Hermione’s apparent resurrection elicits questions linking aesthetics, epistemology, and faith: who touches whom, and what do we make of it? Paulina, who had forbidden Leontes to touch, later seems to reverse the prohibition and, in so doing, suggests that Hermione first reaches out: “Nay, present your hand. / When she was young you woo’d her; now in age / is she become the suitor?” (5.3.107–9). And it is Paulina who returns us, appropriately enough, to Paul, first by re-

52. Donatello’s statue may be viewed at https://operaduomo.firenze.it/blog/posts/la-maddalena-penitente-di-donatello.
53. Leontes’ words about the statue nearly echo those of the king of Marcylles (Marseilles) in the Digby play of Mary Magdalene, when his child is discovered alive and his wife resurrected through Mary Magdalene’s intercession. For this episode see Voragine, *Golden Legend*, 376–79; and Furnivall, *Digby Plays*, 125–27. Both the Digby play and Shakespeare’s foreground a correspondence between aesthetics and resurrection, when light and color signify corporeal regeneration (whether real or feigned).
quiring her audience to “awake [their] faith” but even more so with her words to Hermione: “‘Tis time; descend; be stone no more; approach; / Strike all that look upon with marvel—come, / I’ll fill your grave up” (5.3.94–95; 99–101). Paulina’s “‘Tis time,” like Paul’s kata kairon, melds a punctuated instant with its elongated potentiality, the moment already reaching beyond itself to its eventual fulfillment. That completion might be found elsewhere in Paul, in the passage from the letter to the Romans in which he claims that “love (agapê) is the fulfillment (plêrôma) of the law.”53 Paulina’s words to Hermione even more nearly echo Paul’s “the hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber” in Romans 13:11.55 Yet this is where I diverge slightly from a straight Pauline reading of the final scene, for what Paulina sets in motion is not only agapê but also the possibility for a new eros: a love tested, tempered, and now rejuvenated. And the final reconciliation perhaps stages a scene not of faith (pistis) in the Pauline sense, but of devotion.56 Whereas Paul’s messianic pistis describes a hierarchical bond, a striving toward the eternal, I would say that the play’s final movements inscribe instead more homely, horizontal bonds—between husband and wife, parents and children, friends and neighbors.

This devotion both recollects the iconography of the noli me tangere scene and pushes it forward—the play stages one of the potentialities Titian (and others) suggest but ultimately foreclose. Mary’s two turns in John 20:14–18 may be reread in terms of the three key movements at the end of the play that speak its swiftly changing relations and seal its reconciliations: kissing, kneeling, and taking by the hand. Like the Magdalene reaching out to touch the not-yet-risen Christ, both kissing and kneeling suggest too much devotion, at least initially, and Paulina’s delay both draws out the scene’s aesthetic implications and insists on the untrustworthiness of such parallels.57 “As we are mocked with art,” Leontes’s commentary on the statue’s liveliness, becomes both temporal

54. See Agamben on messianic plêrôma and Paul’s claim that “love is . . . the plêrôma of the law” (Time That Remains, 76–77).
55. “Love does not work evil against a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. 11 Know it is time, that the hour has come for you to awaken from your sleep, for now salvation is nearer than the time when we first believed” (hê agapê tô plêsion kakon ouk ergazetai; plêrôma oun nomou hê agapê. 11 Kai touto eidotes ton kairon, hoî hêra êdê humas ex hupnou egerthênai, nun gar eγγυτερον ἡμῶν ἡ sôtêria ê hote episteusamen) (Rom. 13:10–11; my translation). I have chosen to render the participial eidotes (knowing) as hortatory—preserving, I hope, the spirit if not the letter of Paul’s injunction.
56. Ken Jackson argues that Paulina’s call works metatheatrically, reminding the audience as well as Leontes of parallels between Pauline messianism and the playwright’s injunction to the audience to “awake your faith” (“’Grace to Boot,’” 205).
index and metatheatrical reminder: after all, Leontes’s credulity, finally, does him credit, and the “mocking” or mimetic impression of which he’s so enamoured turns out to be the truth. Timing, again, is everything: Paulina’s “tis time,” in the best tradition of fairy tales, transports the ending out of any verisimilar temporality. “That she is living, / Were it but told you, should be hooted at / Like an old tale; but it appears she lives, / Though yet she speak not” (5.3.115–18): once again, Paulina conjures a seemingly magical interval, a dialectical attention to the moment (under the aegis of that subjunctive “were”) that “yet” looks beyond its moment, toward when Hermione may tell her own tale—_kata kairon_, the “right time” that is always already “right.”

Having neatly arranged the marriage of Paulina and Camillo, Leontes closes the play:

> Good Paulina,  
> Lead us from hence, where we may leisurely  
> Each one demand and answer to his part  
> Performed in this wide gap of time since first  
> We were dissevered. Hastily lead away.  
> (5.3.151–55)

Leontes’s command both reestablishes and reorders precedent: he’s the one commanding, still, yet Paulina is to lead “from hence,” and “each one demand and answer to his part / performed in this wide gap of time” serves as both (again) a metatheatrical dissolution of this “winter’s tale” and an open call for more of the same. I want to pause, though, on Leontes’s curious characterization of time as split, “dissevered,” as have been the figures moving through Sicilia and Bohemia. “Dissevered” is both rhetorically redundant and performative: it means just “severed” or cut apart, yet the prefix “dis” both amplifies and models that severance, sounding an ending echo of the play’s dissonant remainders. But the discordant “dis” might also recollect the Greek for doubling, or two, and thus allow us to circle back to the passage from Alain Badiou that opens this essay.

Far from predicting an idyllic “two scene” resulting from the “unfurling of love in time,” Badiou argues that whereas previously “the only temporal dimension possible for eternity was the moment,” his conception works against this assumption: “Naturally, the moment of the miraculous encounter promises the eternity of love, though what I want to suggest is a concept of love that is less miraculous and more hard work, namely a construction of eternity within time, of the experience of the Two, point by point. . . . There is a work of love: it is not simply a miracle.”58 What Badiou hints, but does not quite say, is that a miracle, like the tales Mamilius con-

58. Badiou, _In Praise of Love_, 80.
siders “best for winter” (2.1.25), can also be sad. In some ways Titian’s Noli me tangere exemplifies this sadness, representing the overlap of miracle and mourning. In Shakespeare’s play, the “hard work” of love becomes the miracle, but a miracle not untouched by sadness.

Agamben and Badiou are both engaged in a political-theological tradition in which “miracle” usually denotes an instant, a flashpoint or divine “eruption” (Carl Schmitt), a singular event (Badiou himself, in other works; Slavoj Žižek) that reorders time after its recession: a touch that heals instantaneously, a light that blinds before illuminating. This focus on the miracle as ecstatically experienced now does not always consider that a miracle might also happen slowly, “unfurled as best it can within time”: the steady, infinitesimal growth of hair that protects a body from the extremes of desert heat and cold; the sculpting of flesh into wrinkles that attest rather than conceal Time’s passage; the preservation of an abandoned woman and her child in a rocky island waste; the gradual unfurling of affection that grows into passion, or passion that deepens into love.

After all, a miracle is typically worked or performed—it is laborious, procedural, even if it may appear instantaneous. We might think of this type of miracle in relation to the telling of a story, not as an uninterrupted narrative progression but stutteringly, in fits and starts, doublings and crossings. Or we might think of yet another narrative form. Christ taught in parables, a mode both Hebrew and Greek, rendering abstractions everyday and concrete, pithily allegorical yet easily comprehended by an audience seeking the moral. The Winter’s Tale is not a parable, unless we make it one. One difference between a parable and a tale—or a romance—might be the indeterminate morality of the latter. What, after all, is romantic (in either a generic or an amatory sense) about a patient miracle, a sad, slow miracle; an ambivalent miracle that solicits but denies, touches, and then withdraws? Perhaps the answer lies in remembering the positive face of Aristotle’s conception of time: the cause of things passing


60. See Pye’s claim that “with Hermione’s return, the play’s representational logic exceeds its narrative logic. And, like law, art inscribes—subject and object alike are constituted and sustained within the ratio and distance the aesthetic maintains” (“Aesthetics and Absolutism,” 138).

61. In this admittedly simplified understanding of how parables work I differ somewhat from Nancy, who argues in his prologue that Christ’s parables shut down interpretation, becoming “a double excess of visibility and invisibility” (Noli Me Tangere, 7).
away but also, even if “only incidentally . . . the cause of things coming into being and existing.”\textsuperscript{62} In this translation, the “incident” in Aristotle’s “incidentally” suggests that time passing away resembles the miracle that occurs in a singular, brief flash (where “incident” seems a slightly more sinister rendering of “Event”). But the Greek term thus translated, \textit{sumbêbekos}, carries a less definitive temporal sense in order to register the essential ambivalence of the ever-passing, ever-renewed now. It means something that happens or comes to pass, “a chance event, a contingency”—for example, the seemingly random or outrageous occurrences that characterize romance. Peeling back to its verbal roots, though, reveals something that introduces a final ambivalence to Aristotle’s most ambivalent now. While \textit{ekstatikon} presented the bestial or unrestrained face of now, \textit{sumbêbekos} (from \textit{sumbainô}, etymologically “to walk with or together”) carries with it the resonances of “com[ing] together, com[ing] to an agreement, com[ing] to terms.”\textsuperscript{63} “Incidentally,” then, the participle lends Aristotle’s begrudging acknowledgment of “things coming into being or existing” as only a secondary effect of time’s passage a register of community and continuity. A slow, patiently awaited miracle remains a miracle: something to be wondered at, something on which to build.

\textsuperscript{62} “Geneseôs de kai tou einai kata sumbebêkos” (Aristotle, \textit{Physics} 4.13.222b22).
\textsuperscript{63} \textit{Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon}, s.v. \textit{sumbainô}, esp. defs. II and III.