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## **Between the One and the Nine: Counting and Telling in *Hamlet* and *The Winter's Tale***

Abstract

As is suggested by the ambiguity in certain key terms (tell, tale, count, account, recount, and so on), counting and narrative are intimately associated, especially in Shakespeare. This essay considers this association in the opening of *Hamlet* and in a couple of scenes in *The Winter's Tale*. Gaps in dramatic mimesis are often filled diegetically, an operation that is sometimes numerically inflected. Scholars have suggested that Shakespeare's dramaturgy works by a combination of the mimetic and diegetic that points inferentially towards a wider fictional world (*fabula*). I argue that this operation may be understood numerically, as sometimes additive and sometimes multiplicative. Where telling gives way to showing in *Hamlet* 1.1, it does so as if in an attempt to start counting, initiate a movement forward that is both mimetic and diegetic. *The Winter's Tale*, I propose, shows us linear and logarithmic counting set in contrast to one another, raising the possibility that these may be associated with diegesis and mimesis respectively.

I borrow my title from Patti Rothberg, who uses it, as the title of her debut cd, to tell a story. Rothberg, it is said, was 'discovered' busking in the New York City subway, and her title is supposed to allude to the IRT number 1 and number 9 lines, which both ran under Seventh Avenue, where evidently she had spent most of her time (the 9, which was discontinued in 2005, was a skip-stop line that followed the same route as the 1), and the last track on the cd, which bears the same title as the cd itself, tells the story of this discovery. My title is meant to evoke, as hers seems to do, the idea that numbers tell stories, or, better, that stories tell themselves through numbers, through sequence and consecution. In base ten, one and nine mark the beginning and end of the series of the graphically unique natural numbers, and their juxtaposition can be read as invoking the very idea of a

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bounded sequence, of difference and connectedness.<sup>1</sup> I see the one and nine in Rothberg's title as standing in a relation simultaneously of difference and identity, distance and proximity, which I read as a kind of numeric allegory of her own emergence as a singer/songwriter, so that that particular part of her story is about moving from one to nine, from obscurity to fame (or at least to an appearance on Letterman), which seems like a long way but perhaps equally is not (the two lines follow the same route, though the nine will get you there faster).

My concern here, then, is about how in Shakespeare one gets from one to nine, or from nine to one, or, more generally, from one number to another – how, in the plays, stories get where they are going and, specifically, how they count themselves out across numerically-inflected empty spaces, lacunae or gaps in dramatic mimesis, by means of diegetic passages. I mean this as a contribution to the study of the place of narrative in Shakespeare's dramaturgy: as has often been noticed, Shakespeare has an odd habit of shifting into the narrative mode – “seemingly [as Holger Schott Syme puts it] the least theatrical form of writing” (Syme 2011: 117) – to present some of the most compelling moments in his plays diegetically, rather than staging them before his spectators' eyes, as one might expect.<sup>2</sup> Thus in *The Winter's Tale*, Perdita's reunion with her father occurs offstage, as does Falstaff's death in *Henry V*, Antonio's farewell to Bassanio in *The Merchant of Venice*, Cordelia's response when she hears about her father's misfortunes in *Lear*, the exchange between Edgar and his father that results in the latter's death (also in *Lear*) and so on. In each of these cases the choice of diegesis may be attributable to recognizable dramaturgical considerations, chief among them the management of dramatic pacing and the calibration of dramatic emphasis. But to say so is not to invalidate Syme's description of this practice as a sign of Shakespeare's theatre seemingly working against itself by inviting its audience to imagine precisely what is not presented visually on stage.

As Syme himself stresses, however, this apparently divided commitment – on the one hand to make the theatre a space of richly sensuous experience grounded in mimesis, and on the other to generate the possibility of an imaginative escape, through language descriptive of what is not

<sup>1</sup> I certainly do not want to saddle Rothberg with this, but in the two numbers mentioned together we should also be ready to hear an allusion to Luke 17:17, where Jesus expresses annoyance that only one of ten lepers he has cured bothered to return to thank him, so that mention of one *and* nine also potentially suggests the familiar notion of one *in ten*, and thus the relation between the notion of individual exceptionalism and 'the rest', and along with that the idea of common and uncommon gratitude and ingratitude.

<sup>2</sup> This remark is extensively developed in Syme 2011.

directly seen, from that very space – is essential to Shakespeare’s dramaturgy, which invariably complicates the strict opposition, traditionally attributed to Plato, between mimesis and diegesis, and gives a particular, theatrical inflection to Genette’s claim that “*Mimesis is diegesis*” (Plato 1963: 637-9 [392d-394c]; Genette 1982: 133). Stanley Cavell and Lorna Hutson, approaching the relation between action and narration in Shakespeare in very different ways, both at once underscore the extent to which narrative is integral to Shakespeare’s dramatic practice and equally understand that practice as confronting the idea that either mode shows itself inadequate in relation to the other (Cavell 1987: 193-221; Hutson 2015: 5-10). Cavell’s reading of *The Winter’s Tale* (to which I shall return) sees the play as struggling to transcend the competition it stages between narrative and mimesis, while Hutson argues, more broadly, that Shakespeare’s narrative excurses, far from being signs of theatrical deficiency, as earlier generations of Shakespeare critics supposed, are the outgrowth of a classical mode of drama which, rather than confining dramatic representation within the unities of time and place, is better seen as enabling the diegetic production of an extra-mimetic “world” through imaginative inference.<sup>3</sup>

Narrative in Shakespeare comes in different forms. A preliminary taxonomy might go something like this: we find, in Shakespeare’s plays, narratives describing 1) events that happen off-stage but during the temporal span the play covers, whether in continuous dramatic time or during a temporal hiatus; 2) events that happened before the play began; 3) events that are anticipated but will never occur (as in some prophetic narratives); 4) narrated events that never happened (viz., fictions, like Mamillius’s “sad tale” that is “best for winter” or Iago’s “I lay with Cassio lately . . .”); 5) events that are first presented mimetically, and thereafter are reported in narrative form; and 6) explanations that do not happen but are promised for the future, usually at the end of certain plays, where there is the implication that events that have been shown, mimetically, require further narrative explanation.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Holger Schott Syme’s argument (2011) about mediated authority in early modern theatre and law has a similar implication for the relation between the mimetic (visual) and the diegetic in Shakespeare, with neither one independent of the other, and each relying on the other for authorization; at the same time, Syme’s argument amounts to a rehabilitation of narrative authority on the stage against the supposed precedence of the visual, a position that places him in broad agreement with Hutson.

<sup>4</sup> One observation suggested by this taxonomy is that narrative passages in Shakespeare’s plays probably follow a kind of barbell pattern, with a preponderance occurring early (in first and second acts) and late (in fifth acts). I have not tested this hypothesis, but it seems reasonable, and appears to be the case at least in *The Tempest*, as Bigliuzzi 2014: 116 has shown.

Each of these present a distinct relation to the mimetic, and ought properly to be treated separately. Marjorie Garber describes the first kind (narratives of events that happen off-stage but during the temporal span of the play) as “unscenes” typically oriented towards a formal visuality suggesting the literary genre of the emblem and implying an affective content irreducible to language (thus when the Gentleman tells Kent about Cordelia learning of her father’s fate, what she *says* is emphatically trivialized in favour of her reported behaviour; or, when the dishevelled Hamlet visits Ophelia in her bedroom, neither, judging from Ophelia’s account, speaks a word) (Garber 1984: 35-50; Syme 2011: 241-4). But this logic – a dramatic economy in which the choice between mimesis and diegesis is determined by the effects Shakespeare is after, as for example using diegesis to preserve an ambiguity that would, mimetically, emerge differently or not at all – seems inapplicable in cases where mimesis is not, for whatever reason, an alternative. Similarly, the epistemological difficulty that narrative may be said to introduce – we know what we see in ways qualitatively different from our belief in the truth of what we are told – sometimes matters, in Shakespeare (as when Prospero’s account of his history with Ariel and Caliban arouses our suspicions), but often enough does not; certainly, we do not ask whether the gentleman telling Kent about Cordelia is telling the truth (though we may in the case of Edgar telling of his father’s death, largely because we have learned to mistrust this teller’s pieties and bromides).<sup>5</sup>

Additionally, in Shakespeare, one may distinguish between the story behind the mimesis and the mimesis itself. Hutson does so in terms of the structuralist distinction between *fabula* and *sjuzhet*, in which *fabula* is the story as it exists outside of any telling, the sequence of events, perhaps as a kind of back-formation from the *sjuzhet*, which is the “discursive presentation in narrative of those events” (Jonathan Culler, qtd in Hutson 2015: 8). Edward Costigan, comparably, speaks of “the relationship of enacted events to the history they form” (1996: 327). Here “mimesis is diegesis” in the sense that we need, and we supply ourselves inferentially with, a telling in order to understand what we are shown, so that there is no mimesis that is not shadowed by diegesis. Hutson uses the language of inference and projection to describe how we get from the one to the other. Shakespeare and other early modern dramatists, she says, “began to write in a way that invites actors, audiences, and readers to project, from the slightest textual hints, the *fabula* of the play as an extramimetic world expanding both inwardly (into ‘character’) and outwardly, into the ‘unscene’ of imagined

<sup>5</sup> But see Syme 2011, who puts pressure on the assumption that the early modern period saw a crisis of representation in which scepticism about mediated reports predominated.

places and times”, and later she refers to the same process as metonymic, parts working to elicit the whole (Hutson 2015: 19, 142).

My suggestion here is that, in Shakespeare, we can also describe the relation between *fabula* and *sjuzhet*, as well as between instances of telling and showing in the plays, as one that is articulated *numerically*. In this hypothesis, numbers in Shakespeare would tend to appear where the relation between mimesis and diegesis is being negotiated. Numeric and narrative sequence share a common vocabulary in words of ambiguous reference like tell, tale, account, accounting, count (cf. French *conte*, tale or story), counting, recounting and so on, suggesting a deep association between counting and telling a story. This association is perhaps nowhere more alive than it is in Shakespeare. Rather than testing this hypothesis as a general proposition, which would be too much to take on here, I will read a few relevant passages in *Hamlet* and *The Winter’s Tale* where the connection seems to be present.

Where narrative works supplementally in a strict sense, in the theatre, it registers as supplying missing steps in a sequence, as if counting out or marking points along a number line; but numbers work in different ways in the plays, and linear counting is only one of them. Notice, for example, the *multiplicative* supplementation imagined in the *Henry V* Chorus, where *fabula* is produced out of *sjuzhet* not so much by inference, projection, or metonymy as through a kind of numeric generativity: “this great account” owes its effect to the arithmetic of place value (crooked figures at-testing “in little place a million”), and to the division of “one man” “into a thousand parts” (*Henry V*, Prologue 15-17, 24). In Shakespeare, I will argue, narration is sometimes linear and sometimes multiplicative or, as I will call it, logarithmic.

I begin with the opening scene of *Hamlet*, where mimesis and diegesis are combined with striking effects that seem to arrange for the inception of the plot itself. Early in 1.1, the sentry Barnardo begins to explain to the newly arrived Horatio what he and Marcellus have seen the night before.

BARNARDO    Last night of all,  
                   When yon same star that’s westward from the pole  
                   Had made his course t’illuminate that part of heaven  
                   Where now it burns, Marcellus and myself,  
                   The bell then beating one –  
                   (*Enter the Ghost*)

MARCELLUS    Peace, break thee off. Look where it comes again.  
                   (1.1.34-9)

The simplest way to read this moment is as one in which mimesis replaces diegesis, with telling and showing in competition, and the actu-

al ghost upstaging a story about the ghost. In a marvellous reading of these opening scenes, Stephen Booth long ago accounted for this particular moment as part of a systematic manipulation of affective states he saw as characteristic of the beginning of the play, the simultaneous satisfaction and frustration of the desire for explanation: just when we are ready to hear the story of what Marcellus has called “this thing” (1.1.19) we instead see it appear before our eyes, a shift to mimesis that supplies both more and less than we have been hoping for and expecting (Booth 1969: 141-2). A moment later the Ghost’s reentrance enacts a similar displacement, though in this case Horatio’s story (1.1.78-124; augmented in Q2 with an extra nineteen lines absent in F) has wandered further and further from the point at hand rather than closing in on it; and the Ghost seems to wait politely for him to finish before entering again.

For Costigan, the moment of the “bell then beating one” marks the convergence of the (narrated) past and (performed) present, as if the story has at just this moment caught up with action on stage (1996: 328). Yet the past only catches up in the special sense that what happened happens *again*: it is a coincidence, or a repetition, at the same time that this repeated appearance (it is in fact the third time the ghost has appeared) is marked by the clock striking one, as if the concern is about moving from singularity to plurality. The sense of repetition is reliant upon marks of cyclicity in the natural and human worlds: the star was then (last night) where it is now (tonight); and the bell then beat one just as now, we are perhaps to suppose, it beats one again, though no one on stage says it does, and there is no stage direction. It is the word “beating” that stands out; its use here is not idiomatic and is not found elsewhere in Shakespeare, where it is mostly hearts, pulses and brains that beat, and people and drums that are beaten; nowhere else in the plays do bells (or clocks) beat. The association is distinctly corporeal, as if the ills and disorders of the kingdom, like the disjoint time so familiar in this play, are represented as though they were occurring inside a human body.<sup>6</sup> More to the point here, “beat” is a word that renders the singular as plural; as editor Harold Jenkins offers in his gloss of this line, “the suggestion is rather of rhythmic repetition than of

<sup>6</sup> See OED, v. 33, citing as first of two mentions this passage in *Hamlet*: “There is often a combination of the notions of the beating of the heart, the pulse, or chronometer (senses 13, 14) with that of the beating of a drum, the beating of time, etc.”



a single stroke" (1982: 1.1.42n).<sup>7</sup> In short, the very word that signals the single stroke of one multiplies that stroke into a beat, a rhythm, of repeated strokes, just as the bell that beat one last night beats one again tonight, and just as it signals the ghost's third appearance: we have begun to count – one, two, three – and in the act of counting the plot is afoot.<sup>8</sup> And I mean that as a pun, since the Folio stage direction – "Enter the Ghost" – not only substitutes grammatically for what would have been the completion of Barnardo's sentence in some such statement as "the ghost appeared" ("the bell then beating one, enter the ghost"), but also supplies the four syllables missing from the pentameter line Barnardo has begun (though it does so with the trochee of "Enter", disturbing for a single metrical foot the iambic rhythm of an otherwise seamless transition from narrative to performance).<sup>9</sup> If as a script prescribing a performance the text of *Hamlet* here marks a shift from diegesis to mimesis (from telling a story about the Ghost to the entrance of the Ghost itself), on the page the same moment can also

<sup>7</sup> "Beat" seems invariably to carry the sense of repetition, repeated blows or strikes rather than a singular blow or strike. See OED. It is worth noting that Q1 *Hamlet* has "towling" instead of "beating," though whether this is an indication that whoever wrote Q1 remembered beating as (the more familiar though not particularly Shakespearean) tolling, or whether there is some other explanation, can only be conjectured. Although etymologically distinct, tolling resembles telling in having a counting dimension when used, as it often was, to denote the sound of a clock striking the hour (OED, s.v. toll v. 2).

<sup>8</sup> This moment in the play asks to be linked to others where traumatic repetition is associated with the initiation of counting, as with Claudius's reference to the "first corse" (1.2.105), and those that followed after it. See Hirschfeld 2003. But whether the impulse to count represents a resistance to the repetition compulsion or a particular manifestation of it, or both, is unclear.

<sup>9</sup> In both Q1 (sig. B1v) and Q2 (sig. B1v), the stage direction reads "Enter Ghost", leaving the line one syllable short of completion. It seems clear from all three texts that the speech following, Marcellus's "Peace, breake thee of: / Looke where it comes againe" (F TLN 51-52), represents a full line of pentameter verse, even though F's lineation places the stage direction to the right on TLN 51; both Q1 and Q2 give the stage direction its own line, and run the two halves of Marcellus's speech together on the same line after it. This is a more complicated issue that can be managed here, but it may be worth noting that Maguire 2016: 152 mentions a Q *Lear* stage direction ("*She takes a sword and runs at him behind*") that, as was first noticed by Peter Blayney, is a perfect iambic pentameter line and therefore likely to be authorial. My point here is simply that in reading any of the three texts, the stage direction, although clearly identified as such, also makes itself available as the metrical extension of spoken narration, resulting in a delicate ripple in the otherwise placid surface of the distinction between mimesis and diegesis. The argument that stage directions have found their way into dialogue through errors in transcription is not uncommon. For one example, in *The Tempest*, where a single-word stage direction may have been mistaken for dialogue, see Craik 1997 – a particularly germane instance because it too involves counting and telling: the word in question is "Tell" (*Tempest* 2.1.15).

present itself as a grammatical continuation of the diegetic across dialogue and stage direction. Stage directions do not usually work in this complicated way, and although it is impossible to tell whether any such effects were planned, whether Shakespeare was counting on any of this being noticed, he seems clearly to be thinking here about telling as counting in the same breath as he is about telling stories through a juxtaposition of the diegetic and the mimetic.

In *Hamlet*, in short, the senses of telling seem bound up with the play's broader preoccupation with mimesis and diegesis. This is an association perhaps even more emphatically present in *The Winter's Tale*, with the notorious crux presented by its inclusion of one narrated *anagnorisis* (the revelation of Perdita's identity) and one performed *anagnorisis* (the revelation that Hermione has remained alive). These scenes are themselves mostly beyond my reach here, where I can only consider in detail two less complex passages. First, at the beginning of act four, Time enters to explain that sixteen years have passed since the end of the previous scene. In language that plays on the unorthodoxy of this move, Time asks that the spectator (or reader)

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.  
 (4.1.4-9)

Here, Time is managing the passage between one and sixteen – at once between birth and marriageability and between represented time (the sixteen years said to have passed) and the time it takes to represent that interval (“one self-born hour”). Cavell is surely right to imply, in his reading of *The Winter's Tale*, that “the concept of telling is used both to cover the progress of relating a story and to cover the progress of counting or numbering, as if counting numbers were our original for all further narration” (1987: 205). For Cavell, however, Time's intervention is about the divergence between telling as counting and telling as narrating, between numeric and non-numeric “counting”, suggesting that in the former, times, sizes and distances are fixed ahead of time, where “in telling tales it is their pleasure to work these things out as part of the telling, or as part of a mode or genre of telling – it is why what the teller of a story does is to recount – count again – so you needn't be making a mistake if you let lapse a space of sixteen years in your account of certain kinds of things” (ibid.). And it is true that in one sense what Time is doing in “leav[ing] the

growth untried Of that wide gap”, is *not* counting, marking the passage of sixteen years without, as it were, counting them out, or, indeed, recounting much of what happened during them. But “recounting” here is not, as Cavell implies, non-numeric counting, since Time’s speech consists of sixteen couplets, as if to show that Time’s generativity is both narrative and numeric (Truth as the daughter of Time): a conversion of time into form that appears here as a counting and a recounting not by ones but by twos (thirty-two lines in sixteen couplets, but also that couplet-to-come, Florizel and Perdita). This process, by which lost years are replaced by couplets that avoid actually depicting what happened in them, obtrudes itself again where Time somewhat oddly refers to what we have seen performed, the mention of Polixenes’ son, as his own narration: “Gentle spectators . . . remember well I *mentioned* a son o’th’ King, which Florizel I now name to you . . .” (emphasis added) – as if the play is a story that Time is telling. Mimesis, again, seems to become diegesis, in a move that is everywhere in the play threatened or promised.<sup>10</sup> Cavell asks “why a play is being called a tale” (*The Winter’s Tale*), and this is a deep question, one having to do with Shakespeare’s dramatic explorations of the romance form. *The Winter’s Tale* was a tale before it was a play, namely Robert Greene’s immensely popular narrative romance, *Pandosto*. It is surely no accident that in this play, where the source was (it has been claimed) the single most popular story in early seventeenth century England, Shakespeare departs so radically from that text in the matter of Hermione’s apparent reanimation (which does not happen in Greene) (Newcombe 2002). And, converse-

<sup>10</sup> It may be that, as Tiffany Stern suggests, the appearance of diegetic language where it ought not to be is explained by the loss of an appearance of Time earlier in the play (so that, as Stern speculates, *The Winter’s Tale* at one time more closely resembled *Pericles* in featuring a narrator who reappears); see Stern 2004: 52; Stern 2009: 107. Stern shows that omissions of choruses and other ‘interim texts’ were not unusual. If *The Winter’s Tale* did in fact resemble *Pericles* in this respect, of course, the Folio text would have had to lose at least *four* such appearances, one at the beginning of each of the other acts, and one at the conclusion of the fifth. These would have been significant omissions indeed; they would have constituted post-authorial skirmishes in the struggle Cavell identifies in the play as a whole, between its origination as a tale and its destiny as performance, their cumulative effect being to draw the play further in the direction of the latter than it had in an earlier form been willing to go. It is also striking that, since we *have* heard, from Polixenes himself, about Florizel, this information need not have been, and could not only have been, delivered by Time. Are we to imagine then accompanying revisions that shifted the delivery of content from diegesis to mimesis? Similarly, although the opening scene (1.1) is richly performative in a way possible only through mimesis (and resembling, in this respect, other Shakespearean openings, for example, *Lear* 1.1), it does do significant narrative work, as though it is standing in for some Chorus-like opening speech.

ly, we are told that the reunion of Perdita and her father – which is narrated rather than performed before our eyes – is so strange as to be “hooted at like an old tale” (5.3.17): surely it is no accident that this scene *does* occur in Greene’s narrative.

*The Winter’s Tale*, then, seems to go out of its way to make it hard to tell how it feels about both being and not being a “tale”. For me, this difficulty is bound up with the sense that this play also presents us with multiple ways of counting. If the numeric expression of the relation of the mimetic to the diegetic is how to get sixteen years out of “one self-born hour”, or the extravagant and wheeling temporalities of a prose romance narrative into three hours of stage time, the opening scenes of this play, like those of *Hamlet*, approach the same problem as that of *beginning* to count, beginning to tell. As Cavell observes, the last word of *Winter’s Tale* 1.1 is “one”, and the first word of *Winter’s Tale* 1.2 is “nine”, so that the play’s opening challenge is how we get from the one number to the other, what falls between them (1987: 109).<sup>11</sup> At 1.1.39–40, Archidamus remarks that “If the king had no son they [the people of the kingdom of Sicilia] would desire to live on crutches until he had one”. The king at this point does have a son, but soon enough he will not, and the play performs the duration (with a sixteen year gap in the middle) until he has one again, or rather until he has a son-in-law. Whether the son-in-law replaces the dead son – whether this substitution *counts* – is, you could say, the play’s first and last preoccupation. King to son to son-in-law: this is an arithmetic of succession in which what counts (if it does) is always singular; it resembles Time’s later counting by twos, even as the latter doubles it, as if the conversion of time into form has twice the force. But in opening the immediately following scene with the last graphically unique Arabic numeral in base ten, instead of the first, Polixenes seems to be exploring other ways of counting.

Nine changes of the wat’ry star hath been  
 The shepherd’s note since we have left our throne  
 Without a burden. Time as long again  
 Would be filled up, my brother, with our thanks,  
 And yet we should for perpetuity  
 Go hence in debt. And therefore, like a cipher,  
 Yet standing in rich place, I multiply  
 With one We thank you many thousands more  
 That go before it.  
 (1.2.9)

<sup>11</sup> Cavell also notices, “for fun”, that Polixenes’ speech is itself nine lines, “the last not (yet) complete”, and that “of Polixenes’ seven speeches before he accedes to the command to stay, all but one are either nine lines or one line long” (209).

Purely linear counting, it would seem, will not get you anywhere – it is too slow, it fills up time, and you incur new debt faster than you can pay off the old – and the power of numerical place in the Arabic number system is necessary to escape the absorption of life into accounting for life.<sup>12</sup> Polixenes of course is not the only one who is multiplying here; his language of burdens and filling up and enriched zeroes registers his awareness that his hostess is poised to give birth at any moment. He is eager to be off, and his mention of his nine month's stay, which makes plausible Leontes' suspicion that his friend is the father of his wife's child, makes him seem uncomfortably if imperfectly aware of this motivation. The "burden" his throne has lacked is at once himself; anticipatorily his own son, who will succeed him on it; by analogy Leontes' son, the one who will not live to succeed him; Hermione's pregnancy; and his own sense that accounting for living threatens to become coextensive with living itself, as if, as in Time's speech, diegesis threatens to displace mimesis.

Not all counting is linear counting, then, and there is more than one way to get from the "one" of 1.1 to the "nine" of 1.2, as Polixenes suggests as he moves from the implicit linearity of "nine changes of the wat'ry star", which hints at a multiplicative logic it has yet to attain (and which like Barnardo's "Last night of all . . ." involves an enumeration deriving from the repetition of natural cyclical patterns), to the explicitly multiplicative logic of his ciphers standing in rich place.

I suggest that *The Winter's Tale* is about this shift, but more importantly about getting from one to nine, from the problem of the succession of the heir to the problem, which is also a solution, of sexuality, and equally about getting from nine to one, which is surely what Polixenes is trying to do as the play opens: to get free of the threesome he finds himself uncomfortably a part of, to go back to being one or at least to the linear order of fathers and sons, kings and heirs; Leontes wants the same thing, but in a different way. This is the unfortunate arithmetic of jealousy and suspicion that here intervenes between the singularity of the heir and the multiplicity of the heir's production; nine is the figure of pregnancy: it is three to the second power, three pregnant with itself.

But how *do* you get from one to nine and, equally, from nine to one? By way of what? To put it another way, what stands, numerically, midway between them? In a *linear* numeric sequence, the answer is five: four more than one and four less than nine. This is in effect the approach Polixenes recognizes the futility of. But the *logarithmic* midpoint between one and

<sup>12</sup> A great deal has been written about the power of the zero, or cipher, in Shakespeare and in mathematics generally. See for example Sheerin 2013; and, in *The Winter's Tale* specifically, Raman 2008.

nine is not five but three, because  $\log_3(1)=0$ ,  $\log_3(3)=1$ ,  $\log_3(9)=2$  and, conversely,  $3^0=1$ ,  $3^1=3$ ,  $3^2=9$  (Hardesty 2012). In human (as well as animal) perceptions of quantity, this kind of logarithmic scale appears to be innate and is only, and only partially, replaced by means of an educational model that emphasizes instruction in the operations of addition and subtraction and also practical exercises in measurement by fixed numerical units applied to different spatial situations. The theory that, neurologically speaking, the scaling of numerical magnitudes is logarithmic rather than linear derives from the work of Ernst Heinrich Weber and Gustav Theodor Fechner in the mid-nineteenth century; the Weber-Fechner law states that “linear increments in sensation  $S$  are proportional to the logarithm of stimulus magnitude  $I$ ” (Nieder and Miller 2003: 149), that is, that over a wide dynamic range, the threshold of discrimination between sensations of different magnitudes (loudness, duration, or numerosity, for example) increases logarithmically as magnitude increases (Dehaene 2003: 145); more simply, “increasingly larger quantities are represented with proportionally greater imprecision, compatible with a logarithmic internal representation with fixed noise” (Dehaene, Izard, Spelke and Pica 2008: 1217). Nieder and Miller have since concluded that this “compressed scaling of numerical information” describes “both behavioral and neural measures of visual quantities” (2003: 149).<sup>13</sup> The concept of the logarithm was introduced by the Scotsman John Napier in his *Mirifici logarithmorum canonis descriptio* (1614) (Clark and Montelle n.d.). But if we are prepared to accept the evidence supporting the Weber-Fechner law as demonstrating that logarithmic scaling is innate, the historical emergence of logarithmic *mathematics* is strictly speaking irrelevant.

In what therefore may be described as a logarithmic logic of counting in *The Winter's Tale*, the intermediate step between one and nine is not five (a number mentioned only four times in the play), but *three*, of which there are twenty-one mentions (a greater number than in all but two oth-

<sup>13</sup> Dehaene, Izard, Spelke, and Pica 2008 show that like young children in Western cultures, both adults and children of the Mundurucu, in Amazonian Brazil, locate the spatial placement of numeric values logarithmically rather than linearly, as do Westerners of any age when thinking about larger numbers spatially, a “compressive response” that follows a logarithmic distribution of points on a line; “A shift from logarithmic to linear mapping occurs later in development, between first and fourth grade” (1217).



er plays by Shakespeare), with sixteen of them coming in Act 4.<sup>14</sup> For Leontes, the (linear?) counting that saw him paired in his youth with Polixenes is broken by the jump from one to three, in the form of the “three crabbed months” that intervened between his proposal and Hermione’s consent; these prepare in turn for the next (logarithmic) step, the nine of Hermione’s first (and second) pregnancies. Act 4, with its sixteen threes, can be seen as working backward from nine to one, repairing the damage by supplying in effect new links between the one and the nine. All of the threes of Act 4 – the songs, parts, carters, dancers, shepherds, neatherds, swineherds, and so on – work in effect to undo the toxic threesomes of the first three acts – not only the implicit threesome of Leontes, Hermione, and Polixenes, but the “three crabbed months” (1.2.104), as well as the “three great ones” (viz., Leontes, Hermione, and Mamillius; 2.1.130) Antigonus warns will suffer if Leontes persists in the prosecution of Hermione, and the “three daughters” whom, Lear-like, he says he would geld (2.1.146) – as if marking the way back (and forward) to the singularity of the heir, the “one” that ends 1.1. The play also aligns the twenty-three years Leontes looks back on his younger self (1.2.157), the twenty-three days it takes for Cleomenes and Dion to return with the Oracle’s answer (2.3.198), and the twenty-three years after which, the Old Shepherd says, young people stop being so much trouble (3.3.198); and these (twenty-) threes seem poised between problem and solution, between a stalled narrative and one that moves forward towards its resolution.

I would argue then that there is a deeply logarithmic engagement with counting in the play, in which moving between one and nine involves three as the logarithmic midpoint between them. Arguably, too, logarithmic sequence is the numeric ordering natural to mimesis in contrast to diegesis, which is perhaps more closely associated with the linear. I have tried to show that where diegesis and mimesis share the stage, a preoccupation with counting seems to hint at the sequentiality of narrative, the intimacy between counting and recounting. The final act of *The Winter’s Tale* notoriously involves *two* recognition scenes, one that is primarily diegetic (5.2,

<sup>14</sup> Whether or not *The Winter’s Tale*’s preoccupation with numbers and counting is quantifiably greater than what we find in Shakespeare’s other plays (I have not done the necessary counting), its affinity for the number three ranks it third, exceeded only by *Love’s Labour’s Lost* (with its “three years’ fast”, 1.1.24, undertaken by its three protagonists), and *The Merchant of Venice* (with its three thousand ducats for three months). A graph of the frequency of the numbers from one to ten in all of Shakespeare’s works collectively shows a continuous decline from one through six, followed by an upswing at nine and again at ten. In *The Winter’s Tale*, in contrast, the comparable graph shows an uncharacteristic spike at three, followed by a return to the pattern of the average across all the plays.

in which we hear the story of Leontes and Perdita being reunited) and one that is primarily mimetic (5.3, in which the statue of Hermione is revealed to be Hermione herself). Rather than mimesis and diegesis jostling directly up against one another, then, in this play each has its own space in which to operate. Why this should be the case is a question too large for me to attempt to answer here. Syme has persuasively upended the conventional claim that Shakespeare cannily omits representing as spectacle the reunion of Perdita and her father in order to avoid upstaging the revelation of Hermione that is to come: these readings, Syme argues, assume that presence trumps representation, that “it is the specific *presentational* mode of the theatre that supposedly allows us to forget that we are witnessing fiction and puts us in touch with something like a miraculous, breathtaking reality. The visual in such an account ultimately wins out over the verbal as the true locus of theatricality, and the audience is figured as expecting, even hungering for scopic satisfaction, so that the withholding of such stimulus is understood as a form of aesthetic starvation” (Syme 2011: 207). Syme argues, in contrast, that the play “repeatedly affirms the centrality of credit and undercuts the power of faith” (208), and that 5.2, which trades in the credibility of report, is in many ways the more important of the two scenes, supplying as it does the existence of an heir for Sicilia, after which the return of the mother is, dynastically speaking, irrelevant. As Syme notes, Simon Forman, writing in 1611, considered 5.2 the climax and resolution of the plot of the play and does not mention 5.3 at all (205).

Syme’s reading of 5.2 shows how carefully constructed this scene is, and how integral to the play’s overall design. Perhaps because it is (through line 110) devoted wholly to filling out the story of events that have occurred off-stage, however, it would not appear to be concerned with articulating the relation between mimesis and diegesis, at least not numerically. But – just “for fun”, as Cavell (1987: 209) says in noting other numerical surprises in the play – we may observe that this scene of sustained narration reads pseudo-palindromically *in its Folio speech prefixes* through line 110, just before the entry of the Old Shepherd and the Clown. In other words, there is strong point symmetry around the middle speech prefix, as follows, with the three Gentlemen designated in the Folio text by their numbers (Gent. 1., Gent. 2., Gent. 3.), and Autolycus designated as A:

A1A123232313131321A

To make clear the symmetrical organization of these exchanges, we can divide them into segments, leave off the opening exchange between Autolycus and Gent. 1., and isolate the middle point:

A123 - 2323 - 1 - 3131 - 321A



This is undoubtedly good dramaturgy, with the less-than-reliable Autolycus requesting a reliable, authoritative report, and each gentleman in succession supplying more detail and more proof, with Gent. 1. occupying the central position with six speeches, engaging with each of the other two in turn, first with Gent. 2., and then, symmetrically, with Gent. 3., who is the best informed of all. Then, after the others leaves the stage, Autolycus rounds things off by narrating his own role in having set the reunion up by getting the Old Shepherd and his son on board the ship bound for Sicilia. Judged strictly with respect to numerical sequence, however, this organization of the scene's narrative suggests, roughly speaking, a linear counting (A123), recounting (232313131) and uncounting, that is, counting down (321A). Numeric sequence seems to pin down narrative development, map it out, recursively rather than progressively – rather like the way the iPhone learns your fingerprint, making successive passes to fill in the missing bits – but nevertheless according to a linear model of counting.

It is possible to imagine stagings of the scene that would elicit some of the symmetries involved here, but obviously the numeric dimension of the pattern emerges only in the speech prefixes in the Folio text; the spoken words themselves tend, as Syme notes, in the other direction, away from abstraction and towards individualization, with each gentleman more precisely characterized (and thus able to speak more authoritatively) than the one before him (2011: 233-4). Like the stage direction we have considered in *Hamlet*, the numerical story is one that can be told only partially in performance. But in a play so patently interested in numbers it is a story not quite as easy to dismiss as it may at first seem; and, again if only “for fun”, we may note that the total number of the numbered gentlemen's speeches in the scene is the play's magic number, sixteen: the number of couplets in Time's speech, the length in years of the wide gap in time, and, of course, Perdita's age.

But if recursive linearity here works to move the story ahead decisively, we have seen that it can also express an impasse, a stalling of forward movement, as it appears to do for Polixenes in 1.2, where linear counting at once threatens to stop the story (Polixenes cannot get his thanks said and get out of Sicilia) and precisely in this obstruction determines the unhappy direction in which it will move forward. In this, 1.2 is mirrored not in 5.2 but in 5.3, which, as the play rapidly draws to a close, acknowledges the structural possibility of a similar stall. Using language that recalls Polixenes' initial expression of frustration at the linear mechanics of giving thanks, Paulina in 5.3 says that the royal visit to her house “is a surplus of your grace which never My life may last to answer” (7-8), hinting simultaneously at delay and the imminence of ending: her life (she says) will be over before she can express the proper gratitude; and the play is almost

over too. Similarly, Leontes, seconded by his daughter, insists that they could continue to gaze at the statue for another “twenty years” (84), a stall that seems to prompt Paulina to offer, for the first time, to “make the statue move indeed” (88); no one, after all, can at this point spare another twenty years. If the “statue” qua statue is the stall, eliciting an anti-kinetic wonder, to make it move is to end the play by moving the plot along, mimetically, to its resolution. In a way consistent with arguments like Hutson’s and Syme’s for the complementarity of mimesis and diegesis in Shakespeare’s theatre, we might say that the numeric sequencing of dramatic enactment will always involve both the linear and the logarithmic. But if diegesis restores us to the singularity of the heir in 5.2, mimesis reproduces in 5.3, gratuitously as it were, the original threesome, with what possible consequences we are not invited to ask. Greene’s *Pandosto*, which not only kills off Pandosto’s wife early on but dispatches him, too, at the end, may have had the better idea.

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