

Shakespeare and Personality Development

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By 'personality development' I am referring essentially to the post-Kleinian model that views the mind as created by the process of having thoughts, step by step in a logical process of evolution. Gradually, through a succession of minor and major catastrophic changes, the personality *becomes itself*. The personality develops, in response to some emotional conflict that begins to press on the existing structure of the mind. The first step is to observe or recognise the existence of the emotional pressure; the next step is to build a symbol that can contain the attributes of the pressure and reflect a picture of its meaning. Despite many assumptions about development and creativity, it is clear from both literature and from clinical work that this is something the self is not capable of doing on its own; it is done by internal objects through a container-contained link with the infant or developing self. Hence Bion's stress on the health of links rather than simply on the qualities of objects.

Indeed this model of personality development is in many ways quite traditional, and has been adopted and pursued by poet-philosophers through the ages: as in Coleridge's insistence that an idea cannot be 'had' except in the form of a symbol, and that symbol-formation promoted the mind's innate 'principle of self-development'; following Plato, the getting of wisdom was a matter of 'becoming' rather than of possessing knowledge (Coleridge (1812) I. 473).

As always in a poetic narrative such as a Shakespeare play, we are looking for the deep grammar, the permeating flavour of the art-symbol, not necessarily the overt subject of the narrative, the plot. We want to know how the type of mental evolution that Bion calls catastrophic change is achieved, in any of these phases of life – the principle of evolution, of 'becoming'. In a poetic play, all the characters may be seen as aspects of one mind: representing different tensions or directions, which together map out the emotional developmental conflict. So in looking for the overall picture of personality development that takes place, we need to think not simply in terms of the development of any particular character or characters but the way in which they interact together to create a larger picture. The personality is pictured by the whole play and all its interacting characters, not by one or two alone, even though one or two may be the focus (the hero or heroine).

What is the function of a Shakespearean hero, or heroine? I suggest he is not necessarily intended to embody heroic qualities, picturing a set of ideal qualities for emulation. Nor does he correspond to the traditional Aristotelian definition of the tragic hero in the sense of being full of admirable qualities apart from having some particular unfortunate tragic fault that causes his ultimate downfall – generally associated with narcissism or hubris.

Rather, the hero in Shakespeare is one who - in terms of Keats's 'Chamber of Maiden Thought' metaphor - sees the door standing ajar into the next chamber of thought, and begins to move towards it, impelled perhaps by forces which he would like to resist. This movement draws the other characters, who are realigned around him with the increasing inevitability of a network of psychic tensions. Ultimately this may lead to the threshold of a brave new world, in either tragedy or comedy; or we may find, instead, that more has been learnt about the forces which impede development than those which promote it. But always, Shakespeare's underlying concern is with the struggle toward creative thought and development, as expressed both through individual protagonists, and through their wider context in the play with all its characters. Their mutual interaction makes a

picture of the *process* of coming to self-knowledge, and it is this that arouses our admiration and stimulates our own developmental identifications. This process is inextricable from the play finding its own shape or form, its cathartic resolution of the emotional conflict that set the drama in motion in the first place. The conflict becomes symbolised and therefore known and understood.

Jaques in *As You Like It* (II.vii.138-165) famously describes seven ages of man – the infant, the whining schoolboy, the lover, the soldier, the public servant, the elder beginning to shrink in size, and finally the second childhood and foretaste of mental ‘oblivion’ in which the body images the loss of mental faculties – ‘sans eyes sans teeth sans taste sans everything’. Many plays have the flavour of some specific stage of development in the course of a lifespan – oedipal, latency, puberty, adolescence, maturity, midlife, or senescence. Looking for pictures of these different phases is one way of organising our exploration of how Shakespeare tackles personality development.

With this in mind I shall take a brief look at a small selection of plays that each seems concerned with some particular phase in development. I have chosen four plays – *King Lear* in which we can see a picture of the weaning process in infancy; *Julius Caesar* which is founded on the eruption of latency tensions in the context of school life; *Antony and Cleopatra* which demonstrates the triumph of love that emerges from the same ‘Roman’ adolescent context; and *The Winter’s Tale* which is a wider survey of creativity including an appraisal of time and ageing.

To start with the picture of infancy in *King Lear*. In terms of plot, this play tells of the degeneration and death of an old man who has foolishly resigned his worldly kingship. In terms of deep narrative, it tells the story of a baby on the point of weaning whose reign over his mother-daughters (in the form of part-object breasts) has come to a natural end. His self-knowledge, in the beginning aptly judged by Goneril to be ‘slender’ (I.i.293), brings him ultimately to the crux when he finds himself bound on a ‘wheel of fire’, in a new passionate dependency in relation to his good object or internal mother, Cordelia.

This king-baby, sensing the approach of weaning, splits his maternal object into good and bad parts (Cordelia, versus Goneril and Regan) in an attempt to keep control of the inevitable process of dethronement. He makes ‘centaurs’ of his daughter-mothers – angels above the waist and devils below. The adulterous (adulterating) aspects of his mother are associated with foxes, wolves, dogs, tigers, bears and serpents whose sting and bite is disguised by the clothing of smooth words and the ‘furred robes’ of the court; while their male counterpart, represented by Gloucester’s ‘base’ or ‘bastard’ son Edmund, embodies masturbatory sexual impulses:

I grow, I prosper;
Now gods, stand up for bastards! (I.ii.21–22)

Edmund’s boast conveys through sexual innuendo of ‘standing up’ and ‘prospering’ a self-inflation which disguises only thinly his underlying insecurity and sense of worthlessness. Ultimately his sexual potency is revealed to be a sham – it is only excitability and has no passionate emotional foundation.

In contrast is the subterranean, hidden growth of Edgar, the ‘true’ heir to Lear and his baby-mind. Lear’s task is to find and recognise Edgar, and to allow him to succeed him in the Mind of England that is the scene of the play. Everything has to be done in disguise, since only disguise allows the truth to be spoken. Initially this is the function of the Fool, who sings nursery-songs to his fallen master, which both comfort and torment him, in order to spur him onwards towards self-knowledge. At times the Fool and Cordelia are interchangeable, suggestive of the earliest symbiotic bond between infant and mother; he has been ‘pining’ since his separation from her (I.iv.72). The title ‘Fool’ suggests ‘feel’, and he begins to put Lear in touch with his feelings about the absent object: ‘Can you make no use of nothing, Nuncle?’ he asks in musical babble (‘an-no-noth-nun’) (I.iv.136), echoing Cordelia’s keyword which had originally made Lear explode. The feelings of

which the 'sweet and bitter Fool' reminds Lear are puzzled, mixed, contradictory. They are a verbal expression of the preverbal – musical, mythical, picturesque. Indeed, the parting from Cordelia has resulted in the Fool being unusually 'full of songs', stimulating his creativity. He is at the evolutionary stage when sounds becomes words.

Lear discovers Edgar, the new growth-point of his personality, during the storm scenes on the heath, when he has banished himself from the false delusions of the court and from his former omnipotent control of his state and mind. He is assailed both by somatic inflictions (stinging, burning cold and wet, like the baby by his own bodily excretions), and by mental confusion – 'madness'. He is rescued from these confusions by Edgar in the form of 'poor Tom' the apparent madman, who is recognised by Lear to be a 'philosopher', a 'wise Athenian'. Tom is naked, which symbolises his emotional contact with 'unaccommodated man' – with the subterranean poetic spirit of growth, unimpeded by rule and custom. He enables both Lear and Gloucester, the parallel representations of babyhood, to 'see feelingly' despite apparent blindness, and to 'stay the course' and not escape from life before they have learned what they need to know – namely how to grow up, which in this play is symbolised by death – what Bion calls 'death to the existing state of mind'. What matters is the type of death – whether it is an escape (as in Gloucester's attempted suicide) or a consummation, an achievement of a new state of mind, in which 'ripeness is all'. Lear and Gloucester are both tempted towards escapism, though Lear is fiercer and stronger, and imbued with the characteristic tragic rage of his forebear Oedipus.

Gloucester survives the storm to be reunited with his son - his good object - though this breaks his heart; Lear's heart also breaks with a mixture of joy and sadness when he is reunited with Cordelia, though this breaking takes longer and is given more complex expression. The death of the breastfeeding mother is coextensive with the death of his babyhood. The infant protagonist struggles with emotional ambivalence in relation to the internal object that both gives and takes away ('aesthetic conflict'); his achievement is to integrate these conflicting aspects of the object, driven by his epistemophilic instinct – Bion's 'Oedipus' that is the foundation of the Grid of Thinking, rather than the traditional psychoanalytic Oedipal fixation.

Lear, the old baby, dies; Edgar the man becomes the new king. He does not discard the baby; instead he has suffered alongside the baby, bearing the emotional weight; and his new rule will be founded on this empathic experience of seeing feelingly:

We that are young shall never see so much, nor live so long.

For my next example I shall take a play about school life, *Julius Caesar*. Generally in Shakespeare we can take the old Roman world of Plutarch's histories to represent the latency phase and the values of what would later become the English boys' public boarding schools, in which to play the game was to win the war – if done in the right patriotic spirit and according to the comradely code, for the honour of the school, namely ancient Rome. The game of politics is an integral part of school life; and as always the code begins to break up when individual emotional attachments become more powerful than 'basic assumptions' – adherence to the community rules. Emotional-ity is associated with femininity, or the female principle within the mind as a whole; inevitably, suspicion is aroused when it enters the single-sex latency setting and disturbs its cleanliness and orderliness. (Really Jaques hasn't got the order of his seven ages quite right – in Shakespeare's own practice, the soldier state of mind comes before that of the lover, not after.)

In *Julius Caesar* there are various references to school and school-bonds (Casca was 'quick mettle when he went to school'; Brutus and Volumnius were at school together); rivalry is keen and there is a strong sense of age-ranking with due deference paid to minor differences of perhaps a year or two - Julius and Cassius the eldest, Cassius an 'elder soldier' than Brutus, Antony younger than both, followed by Octavius and finally Lucius, the boy under Brutus' protection. In the plebeians we have the playground hordes, ready to rehearse Hearts of Oak or Lord of the Flies – to tease the prefects

(tribunes) or lynch the swots for their 'bad verses' (Cinna the Poet). These demand, above all, entertainment from the 'Roman actors' of the upper school (as Brutus terms them): references are rife to stageplay and acting, to earning one's place in the public eye. The tribunes who would ridicule Caesar's image (pull scarves off his statue) are 'put to silence'. Caesar (head boy, cricket captain?) is the showpiece of the moment, and the people would applaud him though he had 'stabb'd their mothers' - such is the irrelevance of any emotional reality in this context. But if not Julius, then 'let [Brutus] be Caesar!' - or Antony! Anyone will do (knew they not Pompey?) Where the plebeians are massed, the values are those of spectacle, not of thought or emotion.

Caesar's demise is inevitable, and the time is ripe (the 'falling fit', the portents); and he has sufficient insight to accept 'death' as a 'necessary end' which 'will come when it will come'. How and by whom will he be succeeded? Brutus is his 'angel' (the 'noblest Roman'), but Antony is his 'runner' (sexually, to 'touch' his wife). Once upon a time he depended on Cassius, too, to survive the Tiber's flood and stay in power. These are Caesar's team, his 'lovers'; but now, with his loss of team spirit and self-inflation to a 'god' ('for always I am Caesar') he must be 'dismember'd' (in Brutus' telling phrase). At his height, the 'word of Caesar stood against the world'. During his fall, we learn a lot about the power of the word - above all how it is dependent on the audience of plebeians for its ability to excite and incite. Both Brutus and Antony, the great nationalist debaters, know this; Brutus' speech is also a good one and would have won the day in *Henry V*, but here Antony cannibalises its momentum; he does not negate it, but rather, stands on Brutus' shoulders and upstages him, making use of the sanctimonious excitement that Brutus has already aroused in the boys.

After Antony has let loose the mob, however, we never see the plebeians again. The ambience of team spirit and match-winning is superseded by the struggle with personal relationships. The play enters a new sphere of more serious debate. Gradually it works towards a split between the political and the personal: the word as power versus the word as expression. The word 'love' will come to mean something different from loyalty to the party. There will be a real 'battle' at Philippi over the question of Julius' dismembered 'spirit' - whom does it still govern, and in what sense? For the emotional heat of the play is at its most intense not at the death of Caesar (which is still the realm of excitement and entertainment, superstition and sentimentality), but during the famous quarrel between Brutus and Cassius before they move on to Philippi. This is the nearest the play approaches to catastrophic change, to the forging of new values in the fire of love.

The crux of the quarrel is Cassius' heartfelt accusation that Brutus 'loved Caesar better than ever he loved Cassius'. The superficial causes of the quarrel boil down to this. It is resolved with the pledge of faith which is made when the fact of Portia's death finds its way into words (and these words are contrasted with the 'vile rhymes' of the 'poet' who comically intervenes - rhetoric having earned a bad name by this stage in the play). Portia's 'swallowing fire' (not suffocating on coals as in Plutarch) images the new fiery spirit which infuses the deepened bond between Brutus and Cassius: 'I cannot drink too much of Brutus' love'. It is this love which leads to their political 'suicide'.

Having a 'wife', a feminine side to their nature, is one of the traits which Brutus and Julius would seem to have in common, just as they might appear similar in their sanctimony and obstinacy. But these similarities are really ground for contrast, as shown for example by the twin domestic scenes: Caesar with his nervous despised wife and false friends contrasts with Brutus who will 'never find any man but was true to him' and whose wife is 'dear as the ruddy drops that visit my sad heart'. The tomboy Portia with her self-wounding is Brutus' link with the Stoic tradition, the ability to bear pain. Brutus' feminine identification is also shown by his tender care of the boy Lucius who plays him music, helping him metabolise his 'evil spirit' - Caesar's ghost, and the ghost of his own ambition.

Indeed Brutus' self-idealisation is very different from Caesar's in its naivety and warmth; he believes in himself with true adolescent piety. Cassius, the strong swimmer, clearly found Julius a cold fish, but at each point of confrontation with Brutus, he is willing to sacrifice his political

acumen to Brutus' mysterious 'nobility'. Had 'envy of great Caesar' come before jealousy of him, Cassius and his team would now be rulers of Rome. We remember Cassius was first introduced to us, by Caesar, as one who 'thinks too much'. His relinquishment of a political goal for a personal one characterizes the thinking process which he has initiated in the world of the Roman aristocracy. Ultimately, Brutus follows him, responding to this form of 'suicide' with the moving private tribute:

Friends, I owe more tears
To this dead man than you shall see me pay.
I shall find time, Cassius, I shall find time. (V.iii.108-110)

– words worlds away from the flashy rhetoric of political display. And already there are signs that Antony, many plays later, will split his cold opportunism into Octavius and exile himself from Rome to become a great lover. The political relationships which have dominated their adolescence are being superseded by personal ones. Catastrophic change is on the horizon.

The next play I want to look at, which follows on naturally from this one, is Antony and Cleopatra. Here Shakespeare picks up his earlier villain-hero, the one who had ousted Brutus his previous favourite, and sets him 'on the rack' of emotional turbulence, forcing him to leave behind the values of the old Roman world for ever, and to undergo the type of personality change imaged again by death – or love. The daring goal of this play is to establish that the world will be a better place as a result of the love between Antony and Cleopatra. Although Shakespeare follows history in telling us Antony and Cleopatra are mature lovers, in their behaviour with their peers they come across as adolescents. They are on the point of expanding out of their native groups – the predominantly single-sex societies of Rome and Egypt. Rome's military might, spanned by its 'triple pillars of the world', interdigitates with Egypt's richness in treasures and natural fertility governed by the overflowing Nile. The action of the play flashes from one side of the world to the other in a multitude of short scenes; battles are fought and dismissed in moments, in characteristic Shakespearean disregard of the classical unities of time, place and action. The effect of this, together with the exalted world-imagery, is to evoke a sense of cosmic scale, both geographically and in terms of the abundance of powerful energies. Yet on another level the entire drama takes place within Cleopatra's bedroom: there is a very precise location of internal action, and everything that happens sheds some light on the developing sexual relationship between the hero and heroine.

There is hate, ugliness and humiliation in the play, but there are essentially no enemies to love. All the main characters in the play are lovers of some type. Caesar is no Iago with power to undermine; he is in fact a beneficial goad and ultimately a facilitator of the final act, love's triumph. He is seen by Antony and Cleopatra as 'the Roman boy', 'the young man', 'scarce-bearded Caesar'; his rigid phantasies of omnipotence embody the pressure of a younger generation that forces Antony to emerge from its confines and commit himself to his new identity. We should not doubt Caesar's love for Antony, however competitive his spirit towards this older-brother figure – 'we two could not stall together in the whole world'.

In Antony (uniquely in Shakespeare), the idea of physical feminine beauty is given a secondary role, in the person of Octavia, in order to focus on the beauty of objects, operating through the protagonists. For it is the internal objects who generate the ambiguity. Cleopatra is never described as conventionally beautiful, but rather as magnificent, mysterious and magnetic: pre-eminently in the speech of Enobarbus who is suspicious of her attraction, hence his famous description, 'The barge she sat in, like a burnish'd throne' etc, is all the more conclusive in evoking her power. Enobarbus in a sense represents the voice of the poet, the craftsman and analytical observer for whom Cleopatra with her infinite variety is 'a wonderful piece of work'. He finds Cleopatra 'puzzling', a significant and unusual term which Shakespeare uses also in Hamlet's 'To be or not to be' soliloquy. He is the descendant of Mercutio, wedded to reality not in spite of but because of his fertile imagination.

The Mercutio-poet, like a king's Fool, is dedicated to reminding his master of the truth when he appears to be out of touch with it; 'I had forgot that truth should be silent', says Enobarbus during the Roman council, and when Antony tells him to keep quiet, calls himself 'your considerate stone' (II.ii. 110). And invariably, from the analytical point of view, Enobarbus is right. But as the play progresses, and Antony follows tenaciously the instructions of his internal objects, given in the form of 'feelings', there gradually evolves a sense in which Antony, in parting from Enobarbus' advice, becomes even more right. The poet-craftsman aspect needs to learn from the poet-feeling aspect of the mind. It is not long before Enobarbus himself is destroyed by love – love for Antony, which is co-extensive with a new type of thinking, as he introjects Antony's generosity of spirit when even after his desertion, Antony sends his treasure after him:

This blows my heart:
If swift thought break it not, a swifter mean
Shall outstrike thought, but thought will do't, I feel. (IV.vi. 34-6)

He recognises Antony to be a 'mine of bounty' and this causes a developmental change in his own personality. The cynical old Enobarbus is reborn as Eros, Antony's young squire and assistant in the new war of love.

In the course of the play both Antony and Cleopatra make fools of themselves and have ugly moments. These ultimately serve to show up the authenticity of the hidden inner beauty which they are each impelled to discover in a love beyond their old egocentric selves and their respective old worlds with their military or tyrannical values. The second half of the play is dominated by imagery of changing and melting, a tempestuous mingling of psychic elements as identity is thrown into the melting-pot and re-formed. Antony feels he is losing his 'visible shape' and his identity is vapourising like a cloud:

That which is now a horse, even with a thought
The rack dislimns, and makes it indistinct
As water is in water. (IV.xiv. 9-11)

The type of thinking-process that killed Enobarbus kills Antony and then Cleopatra, but as with Gloucester and Lear, in a more extended and complex manner, in which Shakespeare explores fully the passionate distrust that attends the aesthetic conflict, with Cleopatra being – or acting – the 'right gipsy', the 'triple-turned whore'.

Antony's commitment or death is simple and direct by comparison with that of Cleopatra, who (unusually in Shakespeare) is sole heroine of the entire last act. The complexity of Act V is a wonderful investigation of the nature of introjection. Antony has to be 'dead' in order for Cleopatra to introject his masculine qualities, and present her new self to the Roman world of the future, so that other boys such as Octavius will have a chance of growing out of their latency period to become men and lovers. It is not only the Romans, but many subsequent critics and commentators, who misunderstand what is happening during her final act, the act in which she becomes a real queen for the first time – at the same time recognising that she is merely a woman, like the milkmaid:

No more but e'en a woman, and commanded
By such poor passion as the maid that milks,
And does the meanest chares. (IV.xv. 73-5)

Her absorption of Antony shows itself in the duel with Octavius the new boy-ruler. At the same time the monument in which she is confined represents the long history of womanhood, the female space in which Egyptian energies are concentrated and whose meaning she attempts to symbolise as part of her journey of self-knowledge. Instead of taking part in a Roman Triumph she will direct and perform a new play-within-a-play, generated by her own imagination. The manner of Cleopatra's death is the ultimate truthful poetic spectacle. She is the new poet, and Octavius is the

new audience, like ourselves. Ultimately she captures his attention and admiration:

She looks like sleep,
As she would catch another Antony
In her strong toil of grace. (V.ii.336-38)

As a true Roman, Caesar can accept, even embrace, being vanquished by one who has outmatched him in a fair fight – not Antony who had long lost interest in him, but Cleopatra, ‘bravest at the last’. His acceptance is founded on his own love for Antony and for Octavia, however flawed. He appreciates the ‘solemnity’ of the event and prefers it, in fact, to the omnipotent triumph. He, the wordster, has finally made contact with the poetic principle, in the form of the new Romanised Cleopatra – the powerful impact of the combined object. It is up to him now to read the poem of Cleopatra. Cleopatra, in becoming her own monument, has been successful in her attempt to ensure there will be more Cleopatras, beyond the reach of political pawning, rape and whoredom, free to exist in a state of grace in the new Roman world.

My final example this morning relates to later stages in life as explored by Shakespeare in his later romances. In the last plays, Shakespeare investigates the paradoxical possibility that the mind may continue to develop even when the brain and body are deteriorating. What happens to the psyche-soma when the cloud-capp’d towers melt into the mist? Where is the relationship with the object now? It is not strictly a new question: Cordelia harrowed hell like Christ-Orpheus when she appeared to Lear from the spirit-world; so did Cleopatra when, abandoning her lazy tyrannical ways, she raised Antony (‘dying, dying’) to the fields of Elysium by her own physical efforts. The most the personality can hope for is to be rescued from its personal Hades or Claustrum and restored to the Cave of shadows which can reflect self-knowledge through symbol-formation. Indeed every developmental phase is liable to become a Claustrum – or as Bion puts it, an exoskeleton – if contact is lost with the internal objects who watch over the poetic spirit. The self needs to perpetually remake its relationship with the object; this can never be taken for granted. As Bion emphasizes, the need to know the truth about oneself does not cease even in the case of terminal illness; indeed it becomes all the more ‘critical’:

I think that if I had never known the truth or wanted to hear the truth before, I would want to hear it in a serious situation. It is questionable whether any patient ever comes to a psycho-analyst unless they feel the situation is desperate... the patient himself feels that he needs a powerful injection of truth even though he may not like it. (Bion in New York and Sao Paulo [1980], p. 126)

This is the situation in which Leontes in *The Winter’s Tale* finds himself after he has destroyed his own contact with his object Hermione, owing to the lies invented by his pseudo-scientific brain, in which he convinced himself of her treachery. His observation is impeded and coloured by narcissism. As a result of the death of his son (breaking the narcissistic tie) he becomes sufficiently aware of what he has done to manage to request help from Paulina, his ‘analyst’-mother. He puts himself into the Claustrum, a state of ‘winter’, in which Paulina flagellates his conscience in ‘storm perpetual’ (III.ii.211). Yet flagellation is not the constructive force or healer, merely a superficial comfort. He needs an internal teacher that can do more than punish him for stupidity. Only the restoration of the object by the mysterious inspirational power of ‘great creating nature’ can pull the personality out of its stalled condition. While his analytical and misconceiving brain hibernates, Leontes dreams of summer and fertility myths, and subterraneously ‘recreates’ himself. Winter can be seen in two ways – either as a deathly force or as a hibernation that offers an opportunity for healing. The theme of time is emphasized; for any deep or lasting reunion with the developmental spirit cannot be hurried. The 16 years between enclosure and emergence reminds us that lifetime passes and cannot be restored. The ultimate restoration of Hermione’s body to living flesh has the impact of reinforcing the age of the elder couple.

Everything that happens in the Bohemian section of the play is in a sense Leontes' 'dream' about Hermione's inner world, through which she recreates his own. In casting out the baby whom he is unfit to bring up, Leontes is sending it to fitter soil for nourishment. So Hermione becomes the goddess of dreams, as when she appears to Antigonus in a dream on shipboard: Antigonus has been given the job of abandoning the baby but instead, the dream instructs him in its care, with a picture of breastlike whiteness enveloping him from above, with milk spouting from the eyes:

To me comes a creature,
 Sometimes her head on one side, some another;
 I never saw a vessel of like sorrow,
 So fill'd, and so becoming: in pure white robes,
 Like very sanctity, she did approach
 My cabin where I lay; thrice bow'd before me,
 And, gasping to begin some speech, her eyes
 Became two spouts ... (III.iii.24-31)

Antigonus then discards his courtly identity, which has become a prison to his better self, and metamorphoses into the Good Shepherd – a metamorphosis expressed by his being eaten by a bear. Leontes' court is obsessed by questions of bastardy and inheritance – obsessions of an omnipotent mentality concerned with its own status. Having shed these aspects of himself, the shepherd Antigonus fulfils his feminine potential and adopts the child: 'thou met'st with things dying, I with things new-born' (II.iii.111-12). The 'fairy gold' which accompanies the infant is only discovered after his decision to father it has been made, and represents Perdita's inner worth – his reward. In the land of milk and honey she becomes the 'queen of curds and cream' (IV.iv.161).

So when Leontes surrenders control over his diseased mind to Paulina, his self-induced sterile winter is transformed into the living soil of re-creation. The growth of the 'baby' – unknown to his conscious self – represents the unconscious development of his own mind during this dark period, and his child-self or lost principle of development and joy; when she returns, she is 'welcome . . . as spring to th'earth' (V.i.150), and the bringer of inspiration. The underlying myth of Proserpine vibrates through the play – a myth used by Milton and Keats, also, as a metaphor for the poetic process. Proserpine-Perdita is snatched away into a dormant period of apparent death; when spring returns, she not only revitalizes the earth, but also restores the earth's goddess, Ceres-Hermione, whose name suggests that of Mnemosyne, the Muse. It transpires that Leontes' muse was not dead, but entombed in stone: that he had destroyed not the internal deity herself, but merely his own access to her. This is the link which Paulina, a combination of conscience and artist, helps him to forge anew.

In the final stage of the drama, Leontes confronts the internal figures whom he thought his omnipotence had destroyed. Keats said: 'The Imagination may be compared to Adam's Dream - he awoke and found it Truth.' Now Leontes awakes from his dream, with a revitalized imagination, to find it truth. Paulina's 'poor house', never yet visited by Leontes, appears to contain an entire 'gallery' of works not merely collected but made by Paulina herself, of which Hermione's statue is the culmination ('the stone is mine', she says: V.iii. 58). Paulina's status is that of the artist-craftsman who, in a traditional metaphor for creativity, provides everything except the inspiring breath of life which is engendered by some divine influence. This influence only takes effect when the rest of the family 'awake their faith' (1. 95); then she can summon music, and say to the statue:

Bequeath to death your numbness; for from him
 Dear life redeems you.
 ... That she is living,
 Were it but told you, should be hooted at
 Like an old tale; but it appears she lives ... (V.iii.102-17)

No statue has been made in fact; nothing has been invented or constructed; but everything is seen differently.

Perdita-Proserpine cannot be possessed without the possessor reverting to an identification with dusky Dis (lord of the Claustrum) – something which momentarily tempts Leontes in the statue scene. The flicker of desire for the younger version of the love-object (once lost, now found) indicates a return of narcissistic possessiveness, but is corrected; for as Meltzer writes: ‘Desire makes it possible, even essential, to give the object its freedom’ (*The Apprehension of Beauty* [1988], p. 27). Hermione’s tense and drawn-out release echoes that of Leontes, in close reciprocity of his mental movements. When he is free, so is she: but it is the paradoxical type of freedom that acknowledges dependence on the object. This is the internal developmental constellation achieved after sixteen winters – the time needed for the mind to recognize the cast-out ‘baby’ that embodies its meaningful future, and that lives beyond its progenitor. Indeed the play’s structure indicates that this seasonal rhythm within the mind has a certain inevitability, like the oscillation between paranoid-schizoid and depressive orientations in psychoanalytic terminology. Shakespeare suggests, in effect, that it may not be possible for the self to kill its object, only to sever meaningful links – something that Bion would endorse in his theory that development stalls as a result of ‘attacks on linking’ rather than as a result of hate or envy as dominant emotions in themselves (as in older psychoanalytic theory).

In *The Winter’s Tale*, therefore, Shakespeare answers the question formulated in Macbeth: ‘Canst thou not minister to a mind diseas’d?’ The diseased mind is cured by restoring the internal child to the internal mother, the self to the Muse – a process dependent on both artistry and faith, the inspiring force. ‘Dear life redeems you.’ These internal relationships are outside the self’s control, but may be facilitated by the artist-analyst. Personality development therefore, as presented in Shakespearean deep grammar or the deep structure of the art-symbol, is a process of eternal ‘becoming’ and rests on the capacity to tolerate the unknown: which in itself requires a certain depressive faith in the internal object and its powers of rejuvenation, despite attack by projected infantile emotions. It demands that design and prediction (Bion’s ‘memory and desire’) be relinquished in favour of Keatsian ‘negative capability’, relying on the object to restore or rather re-shape the personality that is undergoing catastrophic change, as happens at all developmental moments, whether they are official as it were ‘registered’ phases in a lifespan or simply infinitesimally small attempts to capture and symbolize a new thought. New, that is, to us; for like personality development itself, there is a logical or ‘natural’ progression to having thoughts, laid down by ‘great creating Nature’ with its infinite variety of internal object-forms; and each one alters the existing structure of the mind.

The above paper is partly based on the following chapters by Meg Harris Williams:

‘Shakespeare: a local habitation and a name’. Chapter 1 of *The Chamber of Maiden Thought: Literary Origins of the Psychoanalytic Model of the Mind* by Meg Harris Williams and Margot Waddell. Routledge, 1991. To be reprinted in 2013.

‘Response to M. and M. Rustin on Julius Caesar’. *British Journal of Psychotherapy* (12:1), 5 June 2005.

‘Cleopatra’s monument’. Chapter 7 of *The Vale of Soulmaking: the Post-Kleinian Model of the Mind*. Karnac, 2005.