

The vindication of the just in the Winter's Tale

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Abstract: Hermione represents a Christ figure who is crucified by the jealous, irrational and sinful man Leontes, to be resurrected 16 years later after Leontes repents of his jealousy, irrationality, selfishness and egocentrism. His sin was disbelieving the goodness and fidelity of Hermione, much like unbelievers crucified Christ and refused to believe he was their savior and Messiah. At her resurrection, Leontes comes to see how foolish he was all this while, much like the persecutors of Christ repent at his resurrection when they realize they had wrongly accused Christ and he is indeed the good and rightful Messiah of the world. The vindication of the innocent Hermione parallels the vindication of the innocent Christ who was wrongly accused and crucified for no crime of his own. The play thus testified to the vindication of the righteous over the course of time. Time will reveal the innocence of the wrongly accused, just as Hermione is vindicated at her resurrection Christ will reveal his true innocence and status as the true Messiah when he returns in final glory at the second coming.

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"They would be content to die if there were no other excuse why they should desire to live."

Act 1, Scene 1, Lines 44-46. Leontes is the king of Sicilia. Polixenes is the king of

Bohemia. These two kings have been bosom friends since childhood. Archidamus, a Bohemian courtier, has just offered glowing recommendations for Mamillius, Leontes' only son. Camillo, a courtier to the king of Sicilia, supports the comments made by Archidamus, saying "They that went on crutches before he was born desire yet their life to see him a man." Camillo offers this quote. All seem to believe that Mamillius is a talented young man. Continuing to be full of praise for Leontes, Mamillius, and his fellow countrymen, Archidamus says "If the King had no son, they would desire to live on crutches till he had one."

"We were two lads who thought there was no more in the future but such a day tomorrow as today, and to be boys eternal." Act 1, Scene 2, Lines 79-82. Hermione is Leontes' wife, his queen. Complimenting her husband, as usual, Hermione has been trying to get Polixenes to stay in Sicilia a week more. Polixenes has been in Sicilia for some time, visiting his long-time friend Leontes. Hermione stirs up memories of the past, saying "tell me of my lord's tricks and yours when you were boys." Polixenes offers this quote. But in spite of her insistence, he is determined to quickly return to Bohemia. Polixenes has business to tend to in Bohemia.

"One good deed dying not spoken of kills a thousand accompanying it. Our praises are our wages."

Act 1, Scene 2, Lines 118-120. Leontes praises his wife's effort to encourage Polixenes to extend his stay in Sicilia. He says "once before you spoke to better purpose." The two of them, happy as can be to have Polixenes there in Sicilia, banter with each other, Hermione responding to his comment, by saying "not twice; not more than twice?" She says "Cram us with praise, and make us as fat as tame things." She then offers this quote. She asks "what was the first time I spoke to better purpose?" He says when "thou didst utter I am yours forever. There is no marital friction between them.

"I may be negligent, foolish and fearful. These are such infirmities that honesty is never free of."

Act 1, Scene 2, Lines 310-325. Hermione has persuaded Polixenes to stay in Sicilia for another week. But Leontes has now become jealous of Polixenes, believing that Hermione in her persuasive efforts has been seducing Polixenes. Now convinced that Hermione and Polixenes are more than just friends, believing she has had a "too close relationship" with Polixenes, Leontes throws a tantrum at his aide, Camillo, for not seeing what Leontes now believes is her adultery. Camillo doesn't quite know how to react to Leontes, saying this to defend himself.

"Do not weep, good friends; there is no cause. When you shall know your mistress has deserved prison, then abound in tears as I come out."

Act 2, Scene 1, Lines 141-146. An enraged Leontes, believing Polixenes to be the cause of Hermione's pregnancy, imprisons Hermione. Hermione maintains composure, speaking only to her ladies, asking that they

attend her in prison to help her during her late stage pregnancy.

"Often, the silence of pure innocence persuades when speaking fails." Act 2, Scene 2, Lines 50-51. Knowing the king is very upset with Hermione, imprisoning her, Paulina, one of the queen's ladies-in-waiting, offers to tell Leontes of the birth of their daughter, hoping she can "prove honey-mouthed" and ease the friction between the two of them. Paulina says "We do not know how he may soften at the sight of the child." Paulina offers this quote. Emilia is another lady-in-waiting. Paulina remains ignorant that Leontes believes Polixenes is the child's father.

It is the heretic that makes the fire, not she who burns in it."

Act 2, Scene 3, Lines 148-149. Paulina has just told the king at length how much the child looks like him, saying "the print be little, the whole matter and copy of the father." She continues to describe how much the two look similar. Leontes believes none of it. He says "I'll have thee burnt." She says "I care not" and says this.

"Some powerful spirit instruct the hawks and ravens to be thy nurses." Act 2, Scene 3, Lines 227-228. Leontes has just commanded Antigonus, another of the king's courtiers, to take the child to some remote desert out-back in Bohemia and to desert the baby there. Antigonus, having agreed to do anything to save the child from being burned, agrees to the command. He picks up the child and offers this prayer.

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 suffering endured with calmness.”

Act 3, Scene 2, Lines 29-33. The court’s indictment has read that she committed adultery with Polixenes and conspired with Camillo to take away the life of her husband, Leontes. Leontes has been unjustly cruel Hermione was calm as she listened to the accusations. The queen offers this speech soon after the judgement.

O thou tyrant, do not repent these things, for they are weightier than all thy woes can stir.”

: Act 3, Scene 2, Lines 228-230. Hermione dropped unconscious when the Court was told that Mamillius had died. She was carried out of the courtroom. Paulina followed her out. Leontes apologized to the court. Paulina re-enters and reveals truth to the court. She says “But the last woe, O lords, the Queen’s dead.” She then offers this quote to the court and to Leontes, going on to say to the king “A thousand supplicants for ten thousand years could not move the gods to look that way thou wert.”

“What’s gone and what’s past should be past grief.”

Act 3, Scene 2, Lines 246-247. Paulina has reported to Leontes and to the court that Hermione is dead. Paulina continues to chastise Leontes. A lord asks her to “Say no more.” She says “I do repent.” She says this to the court.

“I cannot forget how I destroyed the sweet’st companion that e’er man bred his hopes out of.”

Act 5, Scene 1, Lines 12-13. Perhaps twenty years have now passed since Leontes’ wife

Hermione collapsed and he was told she had died. At that same time he had learned that their son Mamillius had also died. It was then that Leontes, furious, had demanded that their baby girl Perdita be taken to the Bohemian out-back and left there. He continues to suffer from remorse over his willful orders.

Dear queen, who ended when I but began, give me that hand of yours to kiss.”

Act 5, Scene 3, Lines 53-54. Paulina has led the royal family into the gallery to view the statue of the queen, all standing in honor and wonder at the statue as Paulina draws back the curtain. Perdita kneels and then talks to the statue, offering this quote. Paulina calls Perdita back, saying “O patience! The color’s not dry

When she was young, you wooed her; now in age is she become the suitor?” Act 5, Scene 3, Lines 134-135. Paulina to Leontes. Paulina has just asked Hermione, standing in the gallery as a statue, to descend. She does. For the moment, all are in shock and awe. Leontes then says “O, she’s warm! If this be magic, let it be art.”

“You gods, from your sacred vials pour your graces upon my daughter’s head.”

Act 5, Scene 3, Lines 153-155. Having appeared to be a statue, Hermione now has descended from a platform and embraced her husband. Paulina introduces her to her daughter. As we now know, Hermione hadn’t seen her daughter since the day she was born, some sixteen to twenty years ago.

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irrationality, selfishness and egocentrism. His sin was disbelieving the goodness and fidelity of Hermione, much like unbelievers crucified Christ and refused to believe he was their savior and Messiah. At her resurrection, Leontes comes to see how foolish he was all this while, much like the persecutors of Christ repent at his resurrection when they realize they had wrongly accused Christ and he is indeed the good and rightful Messiah of the world. The vindication of the innocent Hermione parallels the vindication of the innocent Christ who was wrongly accused and

crucified for no crime of his own. The play thus testified to the vindication of the righteous over the course of time. Time will reveal the innocence of the wrongly accused, just as Hermione is vindicated at her resurrection Christ will reveal his true innocence and status as the true Messiah when he returns in final glory at the second coming.

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