

THE DESIGN OF BENEVOLENCE IN *THE WINTER'S TALE*

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ABSTRACT

*The article explores the design of benevolence in *The Winter's Tale*. The design has a pattern of sin, suffering, repentance, and redemption. The major characters repent after committing sin. Their suffering and repentance ultimately lead them to redemption and resurrection. The supernatural powers keep constantly playing their benevolent roles. The conflict between benevolence and malevolence permeates the play. In the beginning, suspicion engulfs Leontes' mind, against his very close friend Polixenes and his wife Hermione. Evil triumphs as a destructive force on Leontes' complex mind. It destroys his peace, separates his family and friends. Leontes loses his wife, his son, his friend and loyal courtiers. But in terms of Shakespeare's plan, Leontes has to be redeemed to work out the design of benevolence. Therefore, Leontes goes through a long period of penance and mourning which paves the way for benevolence.*

KEYWORDS: *Benevolence, Malevolence, Sin, Suffering, Repentance, Redemption*

INTRODUCTION

Almost spiritual atmosphere pervades at the beginning of the play. The opening scene, its environment of friendship and peace is quite alluring. Polixenes' description of the shared boyhood of himself and Leontes, indicates the divine atmosphere:

*We were as twinned lambs that did frisk i'th' sun,
And bleat the one at the'other. What we changed
Was innocence for innocence. We knew not
The doctrine of ill-doing, nor dreamed
That any did. Had we pursued that life,
And our weak spirits ne'er been higher reared
With stronger blood, we should have answered heaven
Boldly, "Not guilty," the imposition cleared Hereditary ours.*

(I.ii.67-75)

It stresses the friendship of the two kings- 'there is not in the World, either Malice or Matter, to alter it' (I.i.33-34). Apart from references to the Oracle and occasional invocations to the gods, and examples are drawn from their behavior

the atmosphere is overwhelmingly Christian in tone. Great piety and resignation pervade the play, but the repentance is Christian repentance, through prayer, open confession, and good works. There is very little of the so-called Greek spirit in the play.

But this entire spiritual atmosphere is spoiled by Leontes jealousy. Polixenes acceptance of Hermione's request to stay for a couple of days more, which also has Leontes' approval, led Leontes to suspect his own wife. He accuses Hermione of adultery. Leontes' stubborn and obstinate mind prevents him to listen to anything from the outside world. Hermione is shocked. She fails to understand Leontes' accusation, who dreams to lay down his life for Leontes. She says:

Her. Sir,

You speak a Language that I understand not:

My Life stands in the level of your dreams,

Which I'll lay down.

Leontes replies:

Leo. Your Actions are my dreams.

You had a Bastard by Polixenes,

And I but dreamed it!

(III.ii.79-84)

The jealous mind alienates himself further from the outside world by determining the fate of Polixenes before listening to anyone. He is not ready to listen even to Camillo. Hence, the harmony and peace of Sicily are torn apart:

Leo. lower messes

Perchance are to this Business purblind? Say!

Cam. Business, my lord? I think most understand

Bohemia stays here longer.

Leo. Ha?

Cam. Stays here longer.

Leo. Ay, but why?

Cam. To satisfy your highness and the entreaties

Of our most gracious mistress.

Leo. Satisfy?

The' entreaties of your mistress? Satisfy?

Let that suffice.

(I.ii.227-235)

Leontes is driven to insane passion and feels that he is a cuckold or a foolish man whose wife has been unfaithful. He suspects his wife, but no one in Sicilia believes him. His councilor Camillo bluntly contradicts the king, and characterizes Leontes's jealousy as "diseased opinion":

Cam: I would not be a stander-by, to hear

My sovereign mistress clouded so, without

My present vengeance is taken: 'shrew my heart,

You never spoke what did become you less

Than this; which to reiterate were sin

As deep as that, though true.

(I.ii.279-284)

Leontes' jealousy is the major source of conflict in the first part of the play. Critics like Quiller-Couch, Coleridge, Nathan, Pafford, and Brooke have different opinions on this question. Quiller-Couch is emphatic that the dramatist 'bungled it'¹ while Coleridge thought the early action 'well calculated to set in nascent action the jealousy of Leontes',² and Nathan went even further, seeing Shakespeare's treatment of the passion as 'another proof of his craftsmanship'³. S.L.Bathell feels: 'This is his sin, the sin of sexual jealousy, and it comes upon him with no warning, apparently from withoutSin comes from without, as in the Christian scheme it comes from the temptation of the devil---we are concerned, I think, with the general origin of evil as well as with the particular sin of Leontes.'⁴

The factors that could motivate jealousy as detected by Coleridge seem to be quite reasonable. What Coleridge suggests is that Polixenes' 'obstinate refusal' to comply with Leontes' request,⁵ followed by great willingness and enthusiasm with which he is persuaded by Hermione, leads Leontes to suspect Hermione of unfaithfulness. His suspicion has tormented him from within. He expresses his inner thoughts. 'Leontes is shown as a man inwardly tormented. His misery expresses itself in short, stabbing sentences of great force'⁶:

¹ Quiller-Couch, *Workmanship*, p.290

² Coleridge, p.167.

³ Norman Nathan, 'Leontes' Provocation', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 19 (1968), 24.

⁴ Bethell, p.78

⁵ *Loc. cit.*

⁶ G. Wilson Knight. *The Crown of Life: Essays in Interpretation of Shakespeare's Final Plays* Methuen, 1948. p.80.

Too hot, too hot!

To mingle friendship far is mingling blood.

I have tremor cord is on me: my heart dances

But not for joy; not joy

(I. ii. 109-112)

His anguish is expressed in these words:

Go play, boy, play; thy mother plays, and I

Play too, but so disgrac'd a part, whose issue

Will hiss me to my grave: contempt and clamor

Will be my knell. Go play, boy, play. There have been

(Or I am much deceiv'd), cuckolds ere now,

And many a man there is (even at this present,

Now, while I speak this) holds his wife by the' arm,

That little thinks she has been sluic'd in s' absence,

And his pond fish'd by his next neighbor, by

Sir Smile, his neighbor...

(I. ii. 187-196)

Finally, he calls Hermione 'slippery'. Paulina tries to persuade Leontes but in vain. She goes to the prison to take the newly born babe in order to show the similarities between the infant and Leontes. Paulina's speech of divine freedom in prison is marvelous when the jailer does not allow her to take the infant from the prison. She tells the jailer the child is free 'By law and process of great nature'. Hence, there is no reason for him to fear:

You need not fear it, sir:

The child was a prisoner to the womb and is

By law and process of great nature thence

Freed and enfranchis'd...

(II. ii. 58-61)

Now the diseased mind of Leontes terms Paulina a witch when she shows him the newly born babe. He is not ready to change. He is not ready to accept that the infant is his daughter. He shouts: 'Out! A mankind witch!' (II. iii. 67). He orders the infant to be killed. He is, as Paulina observes, 'mad' (II. iii. 71). His attack gets more violent and excessively ugly. He does not even leave the poor infant and terms her 'bastard':

Traitors!

Will, you not push her out? Give her the bastard,

Thou dotard! thou art woman-tired, unroosted

By thy dame Partlet here. Take up the bastard,

Take't up, I say; give't to thy crone.

(II. iii. 72-76)

He continues abusing and threatening Paulia in an outrageous manner:

Leon. I'll ha' thee burn't.

Paul. I care not:

It is a heretic that makes the fire,

Not she which burns in't. I'll not call you tyrant;

But this most cruel usage of your queen—

Not able to produce more accusation

Than your own weak-hing'd fancy—something savors

Of tyranny, and will ignoble make you, Yea, scandalous to the world.

Leon. On your allegiance,

Out of the chamber with her! Was I a tyrant,

Where washer life? she durst not call me so,

If she did know me one. Away with her!

(II. iii. 113-124)

In casting out of Perdita and imprisoning Hermione, Leontes firmly opposes the divine order. The order to kill Perdita is the most horrible crime. This intended murder is “what Shakespeare makes the symbol for complete wickedness: the command to murder a child”⁷. In the play, infanticide takes an added horror from the fact that the child is Leontes’s own.

Unjustified sexual jealousy destroys his peace of mind. The country was at peace when the play begins. But Leontes destroys his peace of mind, peace of his family and peace of his kingdom by suspecting his innocent wife and friend. He is responsible for destroying an orderly love dominated world. His diseased mind causes chaos at the moral and social level in the country. What he does is against any religion, established belief or faith. It is completely against the ethos of the Bible. According to the Bible, “How many fools serve mad jealousy!”⁸ Further,

⁷ Paul N.Siegel, “Leontes A Jealous Tyrant.” *Review of English Studies* 1.4 (October,1950),307

⁸ Geneva Bible, Wisdom of Solomon (Apocrypha) 1.10

“The ear of jealousy heareth all things, and the noise of the grudging shall not be hidden.”⁹

Camillo, one of Leontes' courtiers is unable to understand Leontes' neurotic misconceptions. He fails to understand as to why Polixenes' agreement to stay in Sicilia is seen as sexual favor to Hermione. The opposition of Leontes is general. It is not only Camillo who opposes the king but Antigonus too raises his voice in dissent:

*Be certain what you do, sir, lest your justice
Prove violence, in the which three great ones suffer,
Yourself, your queen, your son.*

(II.i.127-129)

Camillo's tone is echoed by all the courtiers. All come forward defending the queen which reflects the possibility of human decency. They deny the accusation unequivocally which makes Leontes even more furious and he tries to justify his diseased opinion:

*Is whispering nothing?
Is leaning cheek to cheek? is meeting noses?
Kissing with inside lip? stopping the career
Of Laughter, with a sigh? (a note infallible
Of breaking honesty) horsing foot on foot?*

(I.ii.284-288)

Leontes's diseased mind denounces everything after his imagined sexual offenses:

*Is this nothing?
Why then the world, and all that's isn't, is nothing,
The covering Sky is nothing, Bohemia nothing,
My wife is nothing, nor nothing have these nothings,
If this is nothing.*

(I.ii.292-296)

Hermione patiently endures her suffering and leaves judgment on God. Her patient endurance of her husband's cruel abuse epitomizes the major theme of the romances: “This action I now [undergo] is for my better grace” (II.i.121-22). Confident that divine powers will vindicate her, she courageously surrenders to Leontes' will as she is taken off to prison. Later, at her trial, she is eloquent and articulate in her own defense, yet she finally rests her case with the gods: “Apollo be my judge!” (III.ii.116) Kenneth Muir writes Molly Mahood's opinion about Hermione that she plays the "symbolic role of Heavenly Grace" and "reappears literally as Patience on a monument" while "Perdita

⁹ Geneva Bible, Song of Solomon 8.6b

stands for his [Leontes'] self-forgiveness..."¹⁰.

Hermione's love is the manifestation of God's love. Her love is not sensual. It is more than romantic love. The ultimate aim of this love is to achieve divine grace. It will continue if it is given due importance, in other words, it is accepted. As M.M.Mahood has put it, Hermione "acts the role of regenerative grace to Leontes"¹¹ and all the varieties that are sustained in the opening scenes of the play have their ultimate source in the divine grace. But the grace can only continue if it is accepted. Leontes destroys it by rejecting the manifestation of grace.

Leontes, in the meantime, sends Cleomenes and Dion to the Oracle of Apollo for 'greater confirmation', realizing the danger of rashness and wishing to 'give rest to the minds of others' (II. i. 179-92). Cleomenes and Dion return awestruck, deeply impressed by the island's 'delicate' climate, the 'sweet' air and general fertility (III. i. 1-3). They pray that 'great Apollo' and the package sealed by 'Apollo's great divine' may quickly turn all 'to the best' and disclose something 'rare'.

Hermione is brought to trial. Leontes opens the proceedings with a disclaimer:

*Let us be clear'd
Of being tyrannous, since we so openly
Proceed injustice...*

(III. ii. 4-6)

Hermione's defense is characterized by lucidity and reason. Her 'integrity' (III. ii. 27) is in every syllable. She wields a martyr-like strength:

*Her. But thus, if powers divine
Behold our human actions, (as they do),
I doubt not then but innocence shall make
False accusation blush, and tyranny
Tremble at patience.*

(III. ii. 28-32)

She appeals to Leontes' conscience. Her language grows more and more convincing:

*Her. Sir, spare your threats:
The bug which you would fright me with I seek.
To me can life be no commodity;
The crown and comfort of my life, your favor
,I do give lost; for I do feel it gone,*

¹⁰ <http://www.uni-tuebingen.de/uni/nec/muir61.htm>

¹¹ Shakespeare's Wordplay, p.151

*But know not how it went. My second joy,
 And first-fruits of my body, from his presence
 I am barr'd, like one infectious. My third comfort,
 (Starr'd most unluckily), is from my breast,
 (The innocent milk in its most innocent mouth),
 Hal'd out to murder...*

(III. ii. 92-102)

Cleomenes and Dion swear on a 'sword of justice' (III. ii. 124) that the 'holy seal' (III. ii. 128) is intact; and the package is opened. The communication of divine truth is blatantly in Hermione's favor:

*Hermione is chaste; Polixenes blameless; Camillo
 a true subject; Leontes a jealous Tyrant; his innocent
 babe truly begotten; and the king shall
 live without an heir, if that which is lost be not
 found.*

(III.ii.132-35)

For Leontes, this is the terrible truth about his sinfulness. It should bring him through self-knowledge to contrition. But in his wrath, Leontes blasphemes by rejecting the words of gods:

*There is no truth at all i'th' Oracle:
 The sessions shall proceed: this is mere falsehood.*

(III.ii.140-141)

He pronounces the oracle 'mere a falsehood' that outrages divine power. Punishment follows with the death of his son:

*Serv. The Prince your son, with mere conceit, and fear
 Of the Queen's speed, is gone.*

Leo. How! gone?

Ser. Is dead.

*Leo. Apollo's angry, and the heavens themselves
 Do strike at my injustice.*

(III.ii.154-159)

The death of Mamillius is the most painful experience for Leontes. His death may be explained at two levels: first, naturalistically he dies because Leontes was cruel to his mother. He had put her in chains. His mother was charged with adultery. He dies as a result of torture to his mother by his father. He has also attempted to murder his daughter, Perdita. At the supernatural level, the death of his son is the result of his defying gods. He wanted to destroy all the manifestations of God's grace except his son Mamillius. He did not want to lose this gift of God. Therefore, God punishes him by taking away from him what he does not want to lose at any cost. In fact, Mamillius becomes the instrument of God to Punish Leontes. In *Cymbeline* too God employed the instruments to punish the one who defies this law. There, it was the evil instrument, the queen and Cloten, who were 'cast into the fire': Here, it is the child who is the very symbol of innocence, the child whom they destroyor allows Leontes to destroy. But, the punishment which follows Leontes is not only punishment to him alone. Mamillius is the son of Hermione as well.

Death of Mamillius opens Leontes' eyes. He realizes that God is angry. He now feels that he has committed a sin. He is suddenly overcome by a sense of his own sinfulness, experiences, contrition, and asks the god's pardon, confesses what he now realizes are his sins, and expresses his desire to make satisfaction to those he has wronged:

Apollo, pardon

My great profaneness 'gainst thine Oracle!

I'll reconcile me to Polixenes,

New woo my Queen, recall the good Camillo...

(III.ii.153-156)

His repentance, however, comes too late to save Hermione. She loses consciousness at the announcement of Mamillius' death and is later reported dead. Leontes next speaks two revealing phrases: 'I have', he whispers, 'too much-believed mine own suspicion', he admits 'being transported by [his] jealousies'. (III. ii. 152, 159) Leontes decides to spend the rest of his life in remorse and penitence. However, according to Richard Proudfoot, "His response to the first blow, the death of Mamillius, is selfish fear of Apollo's anger not compassion for Hermione."¹²

"Evil is inherent in human nature and the innocent suffer as a result"¹³. The death of Mamillius embarrasses most of the critics of the play. Paul N. Siegel writes, "The loss of [Leontes] son is more than made up for by the recovery of his wife and daughter"¹⁴. God punishes Leontes by taking away from him, his most beloved son. Mamillius' death is, in fact, a lesson to a father who fails to understand his hasty mother and innocent angel like a sister. Since evil is inherent in human nature and the innocent suffer as a result, Shakespeare as a great artist never hesitates to use any of the farfetched devices of romance that will serve his purpose. Both happiness and misery "both joy and terror" are human possibilities, and he insists upon the reality of both.

¹² Richard Proudfoot. "Verbal Reminiscence and the two part structure of *The Winter's Tale*" *Shakespeare Survey* 29(1976):67-78

¹³ Robert Grams Hunter. *Shakespeare and the Comedy of Forgiveness*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1965.p.203

¹⁴ Siegel, op.cit

Paulina describes the intensity of his sin. She is highly critical of his remorse. She says that the gods will never accept his repentance as his sin is far greater and heavier. Divine powers, through their instrument Paulina, conceal from Leontes the fact that Hermione is alive, which is the source of his sixteen-year long penance. Like Posthumous, Leontes too endures the false belief that he has killed the woman he loves but his suffering is far lengthier and more intense than him. Further, Paulina keeps on pricking Leontes' conscience saying that his prayer is not enough:

betake thee

To nothing but despair. A thousand knees

Ten thousand years together, naked, fasting,

Upon a barren mountain, and still, winter

In storm perpetual, could not move the gods

To look that way thou wert.

(III.ii.209-214)

Antigonus, exactly obeying Leontes' command, brings the child to a 'remote and desert place' on the sea-coast of Bohemia, where 'chance may nurse or end it' (II. iii. 175, 182). It is to be thrown at the mercy of nature:

Come on, poor babe:

Some powerful spirit instruct the kites and ravens

To be thy nurses! Wolves and bears, they say,

Casting their savageness aside, have done

Like offices of pity.

(II. iii. 184-188)

The supernatural powers, however, take charge of this infant. They direct Antigonus in his dream to leave the child to this fierce and rugged spot. 'Their sacred will be done' (III. iii. 7), he says. He recounts how Hermione has appeared to him in a dream, 'in pure white robes, like very sanctity' so that he regarded her as a 'spirit' come from the 'dead'. She tells him to leave the child in Bohemia. The dream was so convincing that it seemed more real than 'slumber'. He, therefore, forms an opinion that Hermione 'hath suffered death' and that, the child is 'in truth Polixenes', and it is Apollo's will to leave the child in his kingdom. So, either 'for life or death', he leaves the baby upon the 'earth' of this inhospitable place. He buries it, as a seed, to live or die, praying, 'Blossom, speed thee well'

Antigonus was unfortunate and unlucky too. Because of his role in disposing the infant Perdita on a remote, stormy seacoast, the nobleman Antigonus is chased offstage and eaten by a bear. This grotesque episode symbolizes the evil nature of man as well as the unpleasant and ugly consequences of psychological abuse. Even the mariners transporting Antigonus and the newborn daughter of Hermione—Perdita, "the lost one"—are drowned by an angry sea, which, like the bear, acts as Nature's instrument of retribution. Antigonus's death complicates the working of gods and the means by which heavens bring about the fulfillment of its designs. He had the ill luck to become the instruments of both Leontes and

the heavenly powers. He, however, does not want the infant to die. He is afraid of God.

The moral problem of the oath shown by Antigonus is debatable. The Anglican Church has taken a specific stand on it. According to the "Homilies": 'If a man at any time shall, either of ignorance or of malice, promise and swear to do anything which is either against the law of Almighty God or not in his power to perform, let him take it for an awful and ungodly oath.'¹⁵ Again, 'the example of such an oath given by Homilies is that of Jephthahy(Judges xi.30-39) who promised to sacrifice to God the first person he would meet upon the successful return from the battle, and who forcedhim to kill 'his own and only daughter' ¹⁶. It is possible to see Antigonus as a sinner who is punishable as he does not fulfill the oath to Leontes. However, the oath he has given to Leontes requires a crime has done which is worse than the oath-breaking. It does not, however, justify his killing by the bear. He becomes a victim of the gods' unalterable design for Leontes. The false apparition of Hermione defines the moral position of 'Good Antigonus' as follows:

fate, against thy better disposition

Hath made thy person for the thrower-out

Of my poor babe, according to thine oath,

(III.iii.28-30)

Quiller-Couch attributes the presence of a bear in the play 'to make a popular hit'.¹⁷ Biggins, in an extensive study of bears in Elizabethan drama, finds that 'there is no substantial proof that a real bear ever appeared in a play on the Elizabethan public stage, or elsewhere'.¹⁸ From this point of view, Quiller-Couch's suggestion seems unlikely: Shakespeare must have had other reasons for disposing of Antigonus in this manner. Hunter refers to the 'terrifying hilarity' ¹⁹of the bear, while Pafford sees the account as 'semi-comic';²⁰but both avoid the issue of what is tragic and what is not, preferring to see the episode as a blending of the two. Wilson Knight says 'We must take the bear seriously',²¹ and Bullough suggests that the incident is not laughable but a 'sharp and frightening climax to a scene of pity and foreboding'.²² The bear is Nature's means of punishment, and the death of Antigonus at 'Exit pursued by a Bear' is the precise moment at which the tragic portion of the play ends.

The sea-coast of Bohemia where Antigonus abandons Perdita on her fate waits for a divine agent. The role of the mysterious divine power comes into effect. The bear's exit is immediately followed by the entrance of a symbolic figure – the good shepherd. He is searching for his lost sheep and he finds the lost Perdita instead. The shepherd is an instrument of God, whose design of benevolence is presented to us in inexplicable ways. The baby is found with a casket of gold. The shepherd calls it a 'changeling' (III.iii.117) and attributes his luck to the 'fairies' (III. iii. 116). The storm which could symbolize divine displeasure may also represent the tempest of birth. The turning point is underlined by a remark made by the Shepherd, who discovers the infant Perdita, to the Clown, who witnessed the destruction of Antigonus: "Thou met'st with things dying, I with things new-born"(III.iii.112-113). Antigonus has paid with his life for the sins against Nature, and

¹⁵ Griffiths,p.78

¹⁶ Ibid,p.77

¹⁷ Quiller-Couch, *Workmanship*, p.292 p.293

¹⁸ Dennis Biggins, "'Exit pursued by a Beare": A Problem in *The Winter's Tale*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 13 (1962), 3.

¹⁹ Hunter, *Comedy*, p.196

²⁰ Pafford, p.lix n.

²¹ Wilson Knight, *The Crown of Life* , p.98

²²Bullough, VIII, 141.

so his death is, in a sense, an act of regeneration.

Now, the play begins in a pastoral setting, where Bohemian shepherds and shepherdesses enjoy a simple life away from the artificiality and corruptions of court. In this natural setting the kind old shepherd who finds the abandoned baby Perdita has reared her. She is now a beautiful young girl. Florizel, the prince of Bohemia, falls in love with her. Presiding over the sheep shearing festival as Flora, the goddess of flowers, she is the very beauty of spring with its renewal and rebirth. Life in Bohemia is not without adversity, however. The rogue Autolycus has come from the court to spy on countryfolks.

The theme of Time, however, pervades the play, because it is 'Time' which manages to restore peace to the scared spirit of Leontes. It is probably for this reason that Shakespeare introduces his Chorus costumed as Time. Only Time can eventually bring forth truth, after long repentance. But the cycle of Time covers the cycle of growth, decay, and regeneration in humankind as well as in Nature. The emphasis in *The Winter's Tale* is continually on regeneration and fertility. Perdita and Hermione disappear: Hermione in effect goes to the underworld, so also does Perdita, while the pregnancy of Hermione is discussed by her ladies in terms of a frank joy in fertility and the renewal of human life.

Camillo, who has become indispensable to Polixenes, begs to be allowed to return to Sicily to lay his bones there. Polixenes refuses. He asks Camillo to accompany him, in disguise, to the house of a shepherd whose daughter 'of most rare note' draws Florizel there daily. When the disguised Polixenes discovers that his son, also in peasant clothing, loves a lowly shepherdess, he is at first charmed by this beautiful young woman's behavior and appearance. Soon thereafter, like his friend before him, Polixenes explodes with anger. It is not the anger of jealousy but the anger of a father who does not want his royal son yoked to a common "queen of curds and cream." The young couple's plans for marriage thus seem shattered.

Florizel finds himself in a difficult situation. He believes that breaking ties with Perdita at this juncture would be quite unfaithful:

It cannot fail, but by

The violation of my faith; and then

Let nature crush the sides o' the' earth together,

And mar the seeds within!

(IV.iv.478-81)

Camillo advises Florizel and Perdita to flee to Sicily. His idea is that Polixenes and he, will then pursue them there, and everyone will be reconciled. Autolycus overhears the plan and tells the shepherd and clown who resolve to follow them to Sicily. Fleeing Polixenes' sudden cruelty, the young lovers arrive in Sicilia, where the long barren winter of evil and suffering has persisted for 16 years. But Leontes is now a wiser man than Polixenes, and the whole final action is concentrated at his court, where the young lovers take refuge. Leontes graciously welcomes them. At their reunion Leontes greets Perdita, before he knows she is his daughter, with the auspicious words: 'Welcome hither / As is the spring to the earth', indicating that he too, at last, has been 'restored to nature':

Penitence and devotion... can be raised to the level of sanctity, and the functions of 'blood', no longer the cause of

jealousies and divisions which have exhausted their tragic consequences with the passage of time, can now become a source of life to the unified and gracious personality.²³

Using both Christian symbolism and natural mythology, Shakespeare transcends the tragic pattern of sin, suffering, and death by incorporating resurrection and reconciliation in the final scene. To use Tillyard's phrase, they are now in a new plane of reality,²⁴ with the neurotic, disordered, violent world of Sicilia a remote memory.

Leontes offers to mediate between Florizel and his father. Therefore, when Polixenes arrives in pursuit of the elopers, Leontes embraces the friend; he so badly wounded 16 years earlier and asks his forgiveness.

As Leontes gazes on Perdita, Paulina remarks that his eye 'hath too much youth isn't' (V. i. 225), and reminds him of Hermione. 'I thought of her', he answers, softly, 'even in these looks I made' (V. i. 227).

The old shepherd follows Perdita and Florizel to the court and tells the story of how he got Perdita as a gift of God some sixteen years ago on the sea-coast of Bohemia. He shows the jewels in a casket he found along with Perdita. The king recognizes Hermione's jewel and the jewels she had put on her neck. In a bittersweet reunion, Leontes and Perdita rejoice in each other's presence but feel deep sorrow when Leontes tells his daughter of the fate of Hermione, the mother whom Perdita has never known. Their meeting was the occasion both a joy and sorrow. Their reunion was marked with wonder and alacrity:

*First Gent. They seemed almost, with
staring on one another, to tear the cases of their eyes:
there was speech in their dumbness, language in
their very gesture; they looked as they had heard of
a world ransomed, or one destroyed: a notable passion of wonder appeared in them, but the wisest
beholder,
That knew no more but seeing, could not say
if the importance were joy or sorrow; but in the extremity
of the one, it must need be.*

(V. ii.11- 19)

With the reunion of Leontes and his daughter: 'the Oracle is fulfilled; the king's daughter is found.' (V.ii.22-23). Now, the stage gets ready for Hermione's resurrection. Paulina plays an important role in the resurrection of Hermione. She is, in fact, the pattern of Leontes' conscience. 'Paulina represents the pure Christian conscience'²⁵.

Leontes, however, does not return to normal condition as he still feels responsible for the death of his innocent wife. Cleomines and Dion persuade Leontes to return to normal life for the sake of his people as he has suffered enough:

²³Derek Traversi, *An Approach to Shakespeare 2*, p.298

²⁴E.M.W.Tillyard, *Shakespeare's Last Plays* London:Chatto&Windus,1962 p.76-78.

²⁵G. Wilson Knight. *The Crown of Life: Essays in Interpretation of Shakespeare's Final Plays*Methuen,1948 .p88.

*Cleo.Sir, you have done enough, and have perform'd
 A saint-like Sorrow: no fault could you make,
 Which you have not redeem'd; indeed, paid down
 More penitence, than done trespass: at the last
 Do as the Heavens have done, forget your evil;
 With them, forgive yourself.*

(V.i.1-6)

Paulina too, says to him that he has fulfilled the will of gods by subjecting himself to a nightmare existence of self-torment. She prays to gods to take pity on his sufferings and allow him to awaken from his nightmare.

Now she takes Leontes, Polixenes, and others to her 'chapel', which is probably her private chamber, where Leontes last saw Hermione's dead body. Paulina shows them the statue, which excels anything the 'hand of man hath done' (V. iii. 17); and they are quickly struck again with the word 'wonder' (V. iii. 22). Leontes gazes, and recognizes Hermione's 'natural posture' (V. iii. 24); asks her to chide him, yet remembers how she was tender 'as infancy and grace' (V. iii. 27):

*O! thus she stood,
 Even with such life of majesty, warm life,
 As now it coldly stands, when first I woo'd her!
 I am asham'd: does not the stone rebuke me
 For being more stone than it? O, royal piece!*

(V. iii. 34-38)

Leontes remains still. His soul is pierced by her remembrance. Paulina, however, speaks realistically of the statue as art, saying how its color is not dry yet. She apologizes for the way it moves him. Her phrase 'for the stone is mine' (V. iii. 58) re-emphasizes how miraculous are this piece of art and her authority on this miraculous stone. She offers to draw the curtain, fearing lest Leontes' 'fancy may think anon it moves' (V. iii. 61). But Leontes remains quiet, fixed, in an other-worldly consciousness, a living death not to be disturbed, yet trembling with expectance:

*Leon. Let be, let be!
 Would I were dead, but that, methinks, already—
 What was he that did make it?*

(V. iii. 62-64)

*Now the statue seems no longer cold:
 See, my lord,
 Would you not deem it breath'd, and that those veins*

Did verily bear blood?

(V. iii. 63)

'Masterly done', answers Polixenes. To him 'the very life seems warm upon her lip' (V. iii. 65). We are poised between motion and stillness, life and art:

The fixture of her eye has motion isn't,

As we are mock'd with art.

(V. iii. 67-68)

Paulina reiterates her offer to draw the curtain to which Leontes replies:

No settled senses of the world can match

The pleasure of that madness. Let's alone.

(V. iii. 72-73)

He would stand here, spell-bound, forever; forever gazing on this sphinx-like boundary between art and life. Paulina, having functioned throughout as the Oracle's implement, becomes now its priestess. She hints at new marvels:

I am sorry, sir, I have thus far stirred you: but

I could afflict you further.

(V. iii. 73-74)

She has long caused and still causes, Leontes to suffer poignantly, and yet his suffering has undergone a subtle change, for now, this very "affliction has a taste as sweet as any cordial comfort" (V. iii. 76). As Paulina is about to "resurrect" Hermione, she says, "It is required you do awake your faith". (V.iii.94-95). 'Faith is a prominent theme in Christianity; the entire eleventh chapter of Hebrew's is a powerful discussion of faith'²⁶ Walter S. H. Lim writes in his article:

Faith in what? For Leontes, it is faith in the reality of miracles, the coming back to the life of a queen who has been dead sixteen long years. For William Shakespeare's audience, it is faith tied to the willing suspension of disbelief, a readiness to accept that theater is capable of representing just about anything.²⁷

What he feels that 'After all, faith, as the Bible puts it, has the power to move mountains'²⁸. When the "statue" is about to stir, Paulina says: "Bequeath to death your numbness; for from him/Dear life redeems you" (V.iii.102-103). These lines, according to Naseeb Shaheen have strong religious overtones²⁹.

Paulina makes the statue move with her design of wonder. Hermione steps down from the pedestal. Thus the emotional climax of the play comes to an end in the final scene, with its totally unexpected resurrection of Hermione. Leontes cries:

²⁶ Naseeb Shaheen .*Biblical References in Shakespeare's Plays* .University of Delaware Press. 1999.p.719

²⁷Walter S. H. Lim. "Knowledge and Belief in the Winter's Tale." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 41.2(2001):317

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Shaheen,op.cit.

Leon. O, she's warm!

If this be magic, let it be an art

Lawful as eating.

Pol. She embraces him!

Cam. She hangs about his neck!

(V.iii.109-113)

As in *Pericles* and *Cymbeline*, the final state of harmony is achieved in *The Winter's Tale*, too. According to Hunter, this is "Shakespeare's most inspired moment of reconciliation and forgiveness"³⁰. And "the sense of miracle is overwhelming"³¹. Hermione singles out Perdita, the Sicilian hope of harmony and regeneration, for her benediction:

You gods look down,

And from your sacred Vials pour your graces

Upon my daughter's head !

(V.iii.121-123)

The moment of resurrection is depicted as Leontes true repentance. His reunion with Hermione and his daughter is the benevolent design of God. He loses his son Mamillus in this process but gets Florizel in exchange. Paulina is "the final artist and wonderworker of the play"³². She is "a true descendant of her namesake, the Apostle Paul," because she, too, awakens our faith in a way similar to Paul's call³³. Hermione's coming down is suggested as "the iconography of Christ's Resurrection"³⁴. Today, when all established norms and systems have collapsed, Shakespeare through the tale asks us to awaken our faith. The younger generation ushers in 'new innocence and new hope'³⁵. There is reconciliation between the two generations at the end of the play. And it is the design of a great benevolence made dramaturgically manifest once more.

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³⁰ Robert Grams Hunter. *Shakespeare and the Comedy of Forgiveness*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1965. p.201

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³⁵ David Daiches. *A Critical History of English Literature*. New Delhi: Allied Publishers Ltd, 1960. p.301-302

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