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King Lear Reveals the Tragic Pattern of Shakespeare

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ABSTRACT

Rather than focusing on the obvious traditions of evaluating Shakespearean tragic heroes, this paper presents a groundbreaking approach to unfold the pattern William Shakespeare follows as he designed his unique characters. This pattern applies to most, if not all, Shakespearean tragic heroes. I argue that Shakespeare himself reveals a great portion of this pattern on the tongue of Lear as the latter disowns Goneril and Regan promising to have “such revenges on [them] both” in *King Lear*. Lear’s threats bestow four unique aspects that apply not only to his character but they also apply to Shakespearean tragic heroes. Lear’s speech tells us that he is determined to have an awful type of revenge on his daughters. However, the very same speech tells us that he seems uncertain about the method through which he should carry out this revenge. Lear does not express any type of remorse as he pursues his vengeful plans nor should he aim at amnesty. He also admits his own madness as he closes his revealing speech. This research develops these facts about Lear to unfold the unique pattern Shakespeare follows as he portrayed his major tragic figures. This pattern is examined, described and analyzed in *King Lear*, *Othello*, and *Hamlet*. We will find out that the pattern suggested in this study helps us better understand Shakespeare’s tragedies and enables us to provide better explanations for some controversial scenes in the tragedies discussed.

Keywords: Dual realization of crimes, Revenge, Tragic pattern of Shakespeare.

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1. Introduction: From Hamlet to King Lear

Critics have usually approached Shakespeare’s tragedies from traditional perspectives based on Aristotle’s theory of tragedy presented in *the poetics* and A. C. Bradley’s readings of Shakespeare’s plays. David Bromwich insists on the “feeling of pity and fear which [Shakespeare’s] audience [should] share with the [tragic] hero[es].” He also reproduces Aristotle’s concept of ‘recognition’ and calls it the hero’s “self-knowledge” (132). C Subba Rao’s “Teaching Shakespeare” praises the traditional methods of studying Shakespeare’s tragedies; “we do not mind witnessing ambition, vengeance, bloodshed and murder if there is something noble in the content...” (74).

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Other critics, in recent times, have started to resist these traditional methods of reading Shakespeare's plays. For instance, Harding Craig and David Bevington criticize this "Aristotelian fashion" of reading *Romeo and Juliet* calling such an approach "a desperate argument" (quoted in Kriegel p.138). Instead, they suggest that both lovers might be victims of their circumstances and their sociopolitical environment rather than being tragic heroes. In his comparative study of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, Kumaresan P takes us to "the possible corollary that a tragic villain can possess qualities that can be on par with tragic heroes" (162).

But what other critics have not considered as they analyzed tragic heroes is their incapability of granting and asking mercy as they are incapable of making right or wise decisions such as granting mercy in the strict sense. Characteristically, anger, love, jealousy or ambition are typical driving powers of which one at least is ultimately responsible for their shortsighted decisions before they go through 'recognition.' For instance, anguish is the ultimate driving power, which makes Hamlet incapable of amnesty in *Hamlet* 3.3. Thus, he withholds mercy from his uncle who expresses his remorse for killing his brother, the former king and Hamlet's father. His uncle's prayers do not move Hamlet at all, although we expect them to do so. Instead, Hamlet neither takes revenge nor does he absolve his uncle that I take as two shortsighted decisions; if Hamlet forgave his uncle, there would have been no tragedy. On the other hand, if Hamlet took revenge and killed his uncle, the tragedy would have ended as early as 3.3 and Hamlet and his mother could have survived. An alternative ending of *Hamlet* might have been one in which Hamlet and Ophelia get married which might be a typical ending that aims at a relatively happy closure of the play.

In fact, if Hamlet's uncle was killed in 3.3, I do not think this scenario would be really seen as a dramatically tragic one because we might take it as a form of poetic-justice incident in which the bad figure is punished. Thus, if Hamlet killed his uncle, I would have taken it as a wise decision. But Hamlet's anger blinds him enough that he postpones revenge and withholds mercy from his uncle. In other words, he makes two shortsighted decisions, which eventually lead to the death of the entire royal family. But these two shortsighted decisions are typical of any tragic hero who is not supposed to be able to forgive or make good decision until they go through recognition. Once they go through recognition, they can overcome the negative influence of their emotions or ambitions and as a result, they can pardon others but not themselves because it is too late to do so especially if they had committed serious crimes in which a victim is killed; there is no way to bring a dead person back to life nor can we ask a dead person to absolve us since clemency is an exclusive right of a victim in the first place (Al-Ibia 2013).

All the three tragedies I deal with in this paper along with a great number of early modern tragedies revolve around crimes that take place within a family, and thus the tragic heroes become victims as soon as they go through recognition and thus they cannot pardon themselves for the tragedy they have already created. Thus, they usually commit suicide or die out of grief. Still, they might be able to grant clemency to other characters even if they cannot do so for themselves. For instance, as Hamlet dies in the final scene of Shakespeare's 1603 tragedy, he goes through recognition in a relatively short period of time. The only sign of recognition in the case of Hamlet is his ability to absolve his own killer. Hamlet who could not pardon his uncle throughout the play becomes a very tolerant person after his anguish is gone as a result of fulfilling vengeance. Laertes asks Hamlet to exchange forgiveness with him. Hamlet forgives Laertes but dies without forgiving himself (5.2 283-88).

The stage directions, which precede these lines, show Hamlet as he forces his uncle to drink the poison. His uncle dies right away. Thus, Hamlet takes revenge for his father's and mother's deaths. In other words, his long overdue revenge is fulfilled and his extreme anger is gone by the time his uncle dies. Thus, when he is asked clemency, he grants it even to his killer because Hamlet now is no longer under the negative effect of his anger. Thus, he can finally make a good decision when he absolves his killer. But it seems to me that Hamlet has gone through recognition in a relatively short time if we compare him to any other typical tragic hero of Shakespeare. Hamlet's has postponed revenge to the last moments of his life. Once Hamlet's uncle dies, Laertes tells Hamlet that the latter will die soon because

the sword the former used is poisoned. Thus, Hamlet realizes that he does not have enough time to express remorse in a typical prolonged manner. Instead, he absolves his killer, which we can take as a positive sign that Hamlet has already gone through recognition and then speaks few words in which he asks Horatio and the audience to tell his story because he does not have time to say anything else since he is dying as he speaks to them. He never says he does forgive himself for the tragedy he created.

This contradictory conduct of Hamlet is not unique in Shakespeare's world. This research investigate Shakespeare's underlined pattern of portraying tragic heroes. This pattern applies to most, if not all, Shakespearean tragic heroes. I argue that Shakespeare himself reveals a great portion of this pattern on the tongue of Lear as the latter disowns Goneril and Regan promising to have "such revenges on [them] both" in *King Lear*. Lear's threats bestow four unique aspects that apply not only to his character but they also apply to Hamlet and Othello. Lear's speech tells us that he is determined to have an awful type of revenge on his daughters. However, the very same speech tells us that he seems uncertain about the method through which he should carry out this revenge. At the same time, Lear says that he will not express any type of remorse as he pursues his vengeful plans nor should he aim at amnesty. Lear's also admits his own madness as he closes his revealing speech. The aforementioned facts about Lear do apply to Othello and Hamlet as well. This research develops these facts about Lear to unfold the unique pattern Shakespeare follows as he portrayed his major tragic figures. This pattern will be examined, described and analyzed in *King Lear and Othello*. We will find out that the pattern suggested in this study will help us better understand Shakespeare's tragedies and enable us to provide better explanations for some controversial scenes in the tragedies discussed such as the one in which Hamlet postpones the act of revenge. I argue that Hamlet had no choice but to postpone revenge since the Shakespearean pattern of portraying tragic characters makes the act of postponing revenge inevitable. Hamlet also seems uncertain about the method through which he should commit his crime. This pattern also applies to Othello as well.

2. King Lear reveals the tragic pattern of Shakespeare

After being denied by his two daughters, Lear is so angry that he cannot absolve their offenses. Lear is a tragic hero who cannot make good decisions like asking or granting clemency. It seems to me that Lear and all tragic heroes of Shakespeare share a unique tendency to espouse vengeance. Although tragic heroes might be granted or asked clemency, they usually withhold it if asked to absolve someone and they will not be usually capable of asking it no matter how bad they need it. Still, I do not argue that Lear should ask Goneril's or Regan's mercy. But rather I argue that tragic heroes share this common tendency to vengeance and demonstrating an inability to absolve. When Lear goes on his knees and asks Regan to accept him and his men, he does so because he plans on using Regan's power and authority to take revenge against Goneril. But Lear's plan fails and what he gets out of Gloucester's castle, he experiences another humiliating treatment at the hands of his "beloved Regan." It is because Lear lives on the hope that Regan is able to give him his shelter and power of revenge that he does not give up and keep trying to convince her of having him and helping him. Lear gives it another try and appeals to Regan's emotions for a third time reminding her of their family bond: "We'll no more meet, no more see one another: / But yet thou art my flesh, my blood, my daughter" (241-42). But again he is turned away by Regan. It is at this point that Lear realizes that Regan will never help him out and thus he adds her to his unpardonable list. Once he comes to the realization that Regan has given him up, Lear shifts to a typical tragic mode of vengeance: "I will have such revenges on you both, / That all the world shall--I will do such things,-- / What they are, yet I know not: but they shall be / The terrors of the earth. You think I'll weep / No, I'll not weep: (2.4 306-10).

It seems to me that Lear's threats reveal the unique elements of a Shakespearean tragic hero's thoughts on vengeance which I can sum up in four points. The first one is that revenge is the only satisfying option for a tragic hero's anguish. The second is certainty of revenge in the sense that a tragic hero will never give up his plan of revenge, making them incapable of forgiveness. The third one is uncertainty of the method through which the tragic hero should carry out their plan of revenge. For instance, while Hamlet never gives up his revenge plan, he was never sure how he is supposed to carry

it out not until his mother dies after she drinks the poisons and he goes for the poisoned drink as the method through which he takes revenge and kills his uncle. The fourth element of a tragic hero's thoughts of vengeance is regretfulness of revenge as a tragic hero looks forward to revenge and will never give it up (Al-Ibia 2013).

Lear makes his promise of vengeance and leaves Gloucester's castle. Lear seems deeply saddened by the bad treatment he receives from his daughters. His tragic signs start to appear in his behavior as well. Obviously, tragic heroes fall from prosperity into misery. This applies to Lear as he leaves Gloucester's castle. In other words, we can see his tragic symptoms—which vary from madness to death wishes as a typical phase every tragic hero should undergo. In the case of Lear, he goes insane and wanders in the woods (3.1-4.7). Upon hearing the news, Cordelia leads the French army to help her father restore his authority. In so doing, Cordelia actually forgives her father totally and unconditionally. 4.7 opens with Cordelia in the company of a doctor whom she brings to examine Lear. It is very obvious that Cordelia has forgiven Lear even before she meets him because the scene opens with Cordelia wondering; “how shall [she] live and work, / To match [Lear's] goodness? [Her] life will be too short, / And every measure fail [her]” (4.7 1-3). Cordelia not only forgives her father but also she is so worried about him. The doctor tells her that Lear is very sick that he might not awake soon. But true Cordelia kisses her father because she knows the source of his sickness and his medicine (32-34).

Although we never get a direct statement of mercy in which Cordelia pardons her father, it seems that she has already done it. In other words, Cordelia had pardoned her father before he asked mercy. Lear had committed three significant offenses or crimes against his daughter in 1.1; disowning her, depriving her and not blessing her marriage. Yet, true Cordelia pardons them all before being asked mercy by Lear.

Whether it is absolute or not, Cordelia's clemency to her father is conducted voluntarily. We all are moved by Cordelia's mercy to her father. On one hand, we admire her compassion. On the other, Cordelia's mercy enforces the emotional impact of the moment at which it is granted. But the contribution of Cordelia's mercy does not stop here in this play. It furthers the tragic impact to destroy the entire family. After Cordelia reunites with her father, Lear and his daughter launch a war to restore Lear's kingdom. But what is more important here is that Lear's vengeance plan, which he promised in 2.4 is being carried out through this war. Cordelia might not be aware of the fact that she has launched a vengeance war since she aims at restoring her father's power and kingdom. But for Lear, it is not only a matter of restoring the kingdom and his power, but it is also an opportunity of vengeance. However, Lear and Cordelia are defeated by the English army. They get captured and Edmund decides to send them to prison and secretly orders his soldiers to kill Lear and Cordelia. Lear begs Edmund to send him and his daughter to prison instead (5.3. 8-11).

Interestingly, Lear does not ask Edmund's mercy but rather he asks him for a different kind of punishment. Again, forgiveness will always remain a foreign concept a tragic hero would never ask or grant or otherwise they would not bring their own tragic doom or would not be called tragic heroes in the first place. If tragic heroes grant mercy to their enemies there would neither be a tragic hero nor be a tragedy. Clemency might be granted to tragic heroes by other characters only to find that doing so creates more tragic ends.

The final scene of the play takes a dramatic and bloody turn of events in King Lear. Edgar kills Edmund (5.3 300). We learn of the death of Gloucester in the same scene as well. Goneril poisons Regan out of jealousy because she plans to get rid of her husband and marries Edmund. Goneril, however, kills herself when her treachery is revealed to Albany (264-66). Edmund's betrayal of Cordelia leads to her needless execution in prison as we are informed by Lear (306). Lear finally dies out of grief at Cordelia's death (365). Unlike comedy in which the final scenes are concluded with relatively happy endings through mercy, forgiveness does not appear in the final scene of *King Lear*. The only time we have a statement of mercy is the one at which Edmund says he absolves Albany for the latter's accusations against the former. Albany finds the secret letter from his wife to Edmund and faces him with his

treachery. Edmund denies the true accusations and says; “I do forgive thee” (5.3 195). But Edmund’s forgiveness is offered without any true reason. We understand that Edmund tries to play the good friend using this false statement of forgiveness. But we know these accusations are true and Edmund’s forgiveness is false because he is the guilty party in this relationship. Again, forgiveness will always remain an exclusive right for a victim and can never be granted by the guilty party. Here, Edmund is a guilty party and thus he cannot offer forgiveness but should ask it instead. But Edmund’s false statement of forgiveness does not interest me as much as I am interested how it is mercy, which creates the powerful tragic end of this play.

In the final scene and as Lear shows up on the stage carrying the deceased Cordelia between his arms, he looks like a different person (5.3 305-10). He is offered to restore his kingdom but he rejects the offer and dies shortly after (365). It seems to me that there are two reasons for his death. The first one is that Lear is a rare type of a tragic hero who could not carry out his vengeance plan. It is true that the two bad sisters are killed; Goneril poisons Regan out of jealousy over Edmund and then kills herself when her treachery is revealed to Albany (264-66). But it is equally true that Lear has nothing to do with it. Thus, I argue that Lear’s vengeance plan never comes true. Lear’s inability to fulfill his vengeance plan is one element, which contributed to Lear’s death. The second reason is that after the death of his true Cordelia, Lear achieves recognition and realizes the bad decisions he made earlier in the play such as withholding forgiveness from Cordelia, disowning and depriving her. He also realizes that the bad decisions he made are responsible for the tragedy he experiences at the moment. On one hand, Lear cannot absolve himself for creating this tragedy in the first place. Thus, he thinks of himself as the guilty party. On the other hand, Lear is deeply saddened by the death of his true Cordelia and thus he cannot pardon himself nor can he ask her mercy. Thus, he thinks of himself as an acting victim who will never forgive. I do believe that once a tragic hero feels that he is in this dual position where he thinks of himself as a victim and guilty at the same time, suicide is possible. This dual realization becomes vital that the tragic hero might commit suicide if he could survive this dual realization of being a victim and guilty of the very same crime. In the case of Lear, he could not survive the realization of this dual position.

3. Othello confirms Lear’s pattern

Shakespeare’s 1606 *Othello* is another domestic tragedy in which a jealous husband kills his innocent wife because she is falsely accused of having an extramarital affair with the husband’s lieutenant, Cassio. Othello, the Moor of Venice, falls in love with Desdemona who loves him beyond imagination and thus marries him against the will of her father, Brabantio. Her father never blesses her marriage and disowns her because she takes Othello as her husband. Interestingly enough, mercy is withheld from her toward the end of the play by the husband she has chosen over her father and she is murdered by him as well.

The play opens as Iago and Roderigo discuss the elopement of Othello and Desdemona. Roderigo is hurt by the fact that Desdemona has fallen in love with Othello and Iago adds salt to his injury as he encourages Roderigo to go and tell Desdemona’s father that the daughter and Othello have eloped in the middle of the night; “Call up her father, / Rouse him: make after him, poison his delight, / Proclaim him in the streets; incense her kinsmen” (1.1 68-70). Iago uses the imperative structure as he directs Roderigo to go and inform Brabantio of the elopers because the former is emotionally vulnerable since he is a former pursuer of Desdemona. Iago also makes sure that Roderigo not only informs Brabantio of the elopement but also outrages him. But because Iago wants to make sure that Brabantio should fly in rage, he accompanies Roderigo to Brabantio’s house. He also asks the most offending questions which drives Brabantio to distraction after he finds out that Desdemona has indeed eloped. Brabantio denies the news of elopement and tells Iago that “[he] is a villain” (117). Iago’s reply is an interesting one: “you are—senator” (118). Thus, he reminds Brabantio of his Venetian position and the impact the elopement scandal of his daughter could have on a man of his rank. Iago keeps manipulating Brabantio whose anguish reaches a limit as soon as he finds out that the elopement has actually taken place. Brabantio faith in daughterhood is shaken as a result; “O treason of the blood! /

Fathers, from hence trust not your daughters' minds/ By what you see them act..." He considers her action an unforgivable treason and advises other fathers not to trust their daughter or judge them basing on their obvious behaviors. Then, he tries to find an explanation for the elopement and thinks that his daughter is under the effect of some sort of magic because he does not want to believe that his daughter has chosen her lover over her father. In other words, he lives on in the hope that Desdemona will return home (1.1 169-72). Thus, he calls on his men and they start searching for the elopers. But when Brabantio finally locates Othello, Brabantio and his daughter's eloper are called to the Duke of Venice to assist in an urgent matter.

Before Brabantio and Othello arrive in the Duke's palace, we understand that Othello is needed to lead the Venetian army against the Ottomans. When the senator and Othello meet the Duke, Brabantio tells the Duke that his daughter has been kidnapped and for it he demands justice. Since the Duke does not know it is Othello who has eloped with Desdemona, his initial response was that the perpetrator will receive the severest punishment of "the bloody book of law" as Brabantio recites it (1.3 69). But once the Duke finds out it is Othello who Brabantio charges with kidnapping, the Duke's tone is changed and he seems interested in hearing Othello's side of the story. The duke changes his position simply because he needs Othello, the experienced leader, to fight the Ottomans and not because of anything else. In his defense, Othello makes it clear that Desdemona has voluntarily eloped because she is in love with him. He also explains that he is in love with her and wants her to be his wife. Because Brabantio lives on the hope that his daughter would never choose a husband over her father, he protests and asks the Duke to listen to her testimony on the case: "I pray you, hear her speak: / If she confess that she was half the wooer, / Destruction on my head, if my bad blame" (1.3 176-179). Surprisingly, Desdemona says; "I do perceive here a divided duty:/ To you I am bound for life and education;" (182-83) "I am hitherto your daughter: but here's my husband,/ And so much duty as my mother showed/ To you, preferring you before her father,/ So much I challenge that I may profess/ Due to the Moor my lord" (186-191).

Desdemona's position concerning her love to Othello as we can see in the lines above echoes Cordelia's views on love in *King Lear*. They both believe that they should love their fathers according to the family bond. They both would like to love their fathers with one half of their hearts so they can spare the other one for loving their husbands. Interestingly, it is not only the daughters' position on love which echoes one another in the two tragedies, but also the fathers' reactions to their daughters' love philosophy are very similar. Just like Lear, Brabantio finds his daughter's position of love an offensive one. Thus he disowns her (194-200).

In so doing, Lear's decision echoes Brabantio's reaction to what they both consider offensive and unexpected philosophies from their own daughters. Thus, we might argue that one of Shakespeare's various theses on clemency is that the old generation, as represented by fathers at least in *Othello* and *King Lear*, is less open to amnesty than the younger one. For instance, Cordelia forgives her father for disowning and depriving her although Lear never considers forgiveness as an option he might grant or ask. In *Othello*, Brabantio's anguish is no less powerful than the one of Lear so that he does not hesitate to disown Desdemona. The daughter's reaction to their fathers' disowning decisions is also similar. Desdemona and Cordelia both never ask their fathers' forgiveness nor do they ask them to reconsider their decision. Instead, they say nothing and remain silent after the disowning decisions are made.

It does not seem to me that Shakespeare has designed these two cases in which the two different daughters of two different plays remain silent as a coincidence. But rather I believe that Shakespeare's decision to keep the daughters silent after being disowned has something to do with the Early Modern time period. Disowning a daughter is the severer type of punishment a father could do for his daughter since she will be unlikely to obtain a marriage proposal. We can imagine also that disowning a daughter will mean that she might not be able to see or talk to her family members. In *King Lear* 2.4 for instance, Lear reminds Regan that he will never talk to Goneril because he disowns her and thus he is no longer able to see or talk to her. He also warns her of being disowned; "We'll no more meet, no more see one another:/ But yet thou art my flesh, my blood, my daughter;" (2.4 241-42). Thus, I think disowning a

daughter, although not an easy decision, is not an amendable one because once it is made, daughters cannot be claimed anymore. It is also true that the daughters do not look at the issue from the same perspective. For the daughters, the fathers have committed a horrible offense once they disowned them. Thus, they see themselves as victims and see their fathers as offenders. Thus, Desdemona and Cordelia never try to ask their fathers' mercy and they both prefer to remain silent. Thus, we should not be surprised with Desdemona's silence after she has been disowned in 1.3 of *Othello*.

I am not interested in Desdemona's silence as much as I am interested in the duke's neutral reaction to Brabantio's decision of disowning Desdemona. We might expect the duke, the supreme authority at the moment, to interfere and make a good decision such as declaring the lovers a husband and a wife or to offer Desdemona a dowry. We might expect him to come up with some kind of solution or an agreement under which the two parties can come into satisfying terms since we are used to these scenes in which dukes and kings offer hybrid solutions such as paying a financial compensations or issuing martial verdicts which enable lovers to be together. For instance, the King of France in *All's Well That Ends Well* offers Helen a huge dowry to make Bertram be interested in marrying into her. In the final scene of the same play, the king offers Diana a dowry and a husband of her choice. But the Duke of Venice in *Othello* does not offer the disowned bride anything. Neither does he play a negative role. Instead, he turns to Brabantio and gives him a consoling speech. The duke asks Brabantio to move on in life while he could encourage him to accept love and bless his daughter's marriage (204-7). In giving his consoling speech, the duke not only violates the poetic and state principles, but he also violates the Shakespearean traditions of the trial scenes which are more common in comedies rather than tragedies; the duke does not apply his "bloody book of the law" to Othello's partially because he needs Othello's help in facing the Ottomans and partially because Desdemona has voluntarily eloped. But still, the duke does not encourage Brabantio to approve it nor does the duke order Othello to give up the idea of marriage. The duke also does not come up with a poetic justice solution that brings everybody into good terms because his most urgent need is for Othello's experience in the wars against the Ottomans.

It is also clear that Brabantio does not blame the duke for being neutral about his "daughter treason." After the Duke of Venice finishes his consoling speech, Brabantio says, "So let the Turk of Cyprus us beguile; / We lose it not, so long as we can smile" (212-13). In my estimation, there are two reasons which made Brabantio says the aforementioned line in response to the duke's consoling speech. The first one is that Brabantio understands the duke's neutralism on the case of his daughter and understands the duke's critical need for Othello at that particular time. The second one is that Brabantio is willing to change the subject of discussion because he is not willing to pardon his daughter for choosing her lover over her father. If we examine the duke's consoling speech again, we will find it clear that the duke urges Brabantio to forget his sorrows and move on in life. But how can a man forget a bad experience before he pardons it in the first place? It is almost impossible to forget our bad experiences unless we pardon the person who created these bad experiences. When the duke asks Brabantio to forget past and move on, his request is one of forgetfulness and forgiveness at the same time. The duke might not realize the sophisticated nature of his request but Shakespeare does since Brabantio's response changes the topic to discuss the political tensions between Cyprus and the Ottomans.

I wholeheartedly believe that the incapability of forgiveness is a key motive in this play not only for Brabantio but for Othello as well. When it comes to the moor, I do not believe his race has anything to do with his tragic doom and crime. Othello has been radically influenced by Iago's poisonous insights of sexual love and his handkerchief trick. I do not believe that there would be any man who could survive Iago's sophisticated tricks. Any man regardless of his race would easily fall for Iago's well-carried plan of presenting Desdemona as the unfaithful wife. We should also remember how easy it was for Iago to poison Brabantio's faith in his daughter at the beginning of the play. Iago put more effort and time as he poisons Othello's faith in his wife compared to that he employed to poison her father's thoughts of her. Thus, I do think that Othello's anguish and jealousy are natural reactions that would have been experienced by any other man being in Othello's shoes. Being a typical tragic hero, Othello should be

blinded with extreme anguish that he becomes incapable of making good decisions and incapable of clemency as well. But again, he would not be able to reach this tragic condition unless he is motivated by Iago's sophisticated plan and trick.

Iago takes his time as he introduces innocent Desdemona as the unfaithful wife. Because his plan is so long in terms of the time and steps he takes, I would like to give two examples which shows the most lethal steps Iago makes as he poisons Othello's mind. Both of these examples are steps he makes in 3.3 and these are the most influential ones. The first step is the one in which he reminds Othello of Desdemona's deceit: "She did deceive her father, marrying you" (206). Thus Iago starts with a reasonable argument of how possible it is for Desdemona to be unfaithful. Of course, the fact that Desdemona has chosen Othello over her father makes her vulnerable to Othello's doubt which Othello seems to resist until Othello is told that the handkerchief he gave as a gift for Desdemona was gifted by Desdemona to her lover, Cassio. As soon as Othello hears the handkerchief trick, he goes insane and believes that his innocent wife is unfaithful. Othello's anguish is so extreme that he wishes he could kill Desdemona forty thousand times (3.3 443-51).

Othello's wishes come from his uncertainty about the method through which he should carry out his "black vengeance." Thus, he reminds us of King Lear who says "I will do such things, - / What they are, yet I know not: but they shall be / The terrors of the earth" (2.4 307-309). Again, tragic heroes all share this uncertainty of the method through which they should carry out their vengeance. Iago though is ready to step in and help Othello deal with his uncertainty. The loyal friend totally manipulates Othello and directs him to go and "Do it not with poison, strangle her in her bed, even / the bed she hath contaminated" (4.1 197-98). But before Othello is told to carry out his vengeance plan, he could not get a reasonable explanation from Desdemona about the handkerchief. In 3.4 as Othello asks Desdemona to give him the handkerchief, Emilia is present at the time but never says anything about the handkerchief or that she found it and gave it to her husband Iago (65-93). If she did, she would have changed the course of the action. Thus she is as equally guilty in murdering Desdemona as her husband is. Because Desdemona does not know that her handkerchief is stolen, she could not provide Othello with a clear answer whether or not she still has it. Othello takes her unclear answer as evidence against her but never takes any action not until he sees the handkerchief with Cassio.

We know that the handkerchief was given to Cassio by Bianca whom was given it originally by Iago. But Othello is told that his wife has gifted it to her lover and knows nothing more. Early in 4.1, Othello speaks to Iago and the loyal friend comes up with another false accusation that he has seen Cassio and Desdemona in bed together (10-30). It happens also that Othello sees his handkerchief with Cassio later in the same scene (165). It is right after he sees his handkerchief with Cassio that Othello believes all about his wife and his treatment of the subject starts to change dramatically after this point in particular. His anguish goes so uncontrolled that we see him striking Desdemona (4.1 228). The innocent wife thinks that she does "not deserve" to be struck (229). But Othello calls her a "devil" for the first time in the play (233). Thus, we can start to see Othello as a typical tragic hero who becomes incapable of making good decisions due the negative effect of his anguish. Interestingly, while his tragic symptoms begin seriously in later stage of 3.3 when he speaks of his "black vengeance," Othello never reaches the typical state of anguish we see in a tragic hero until he sees his handkerchief with Cassio in 4.1. Thus, the period of time at which we can see Othello as a tragic hero is relatively short if compared to the one of Lear or Hamlet.

The delay in dramatizing Othello's anguish returns to two main reasons. The first one is that Iago's plan to present innocent Desdemona as the unfaithful wife is well-studied and carried out slowly so that it becomes a time consuming one (Al-Ibidi 2013). Technically, there was not any way to dramatize Othello's anguish at an earlier point in the play. The second one is that while other Shakespearean tragic heroes are usually uncertain of the method through which they can carry out their vengeance plan and thus they need a longer time to figure it out, Othello is completely controlled and manipulated by Iago who directs Othello to strangle Desdemona.

In 4.2 as Othello accuses Desdemona of having an affair with Cassio, she denies it; “No, as I am a Christian:” (82). We know that Desdemona tells the truth but we know that Othello is so blinded with his anguish that he does not believe her. Because Othello’s voice rises, Emilia enter the room and Othello puts off his revenge so nobody can see him killing her (93). Later the same night, Othello comes home with revenge in mind. In 5.2 Othello enters their bedroom as Desdemona is sleeping. She awakes and calls him to bed. Othello asks if his wife has preyed at that night or not and when she says she did he tells her that he is going to kill her (25-31). Desdemona asks heaven to have “mercy” on her and Othello says that he hopes “with all [his] heart” (32-34). Thus, Desdemona “hope[s] [he] will not kill [her]” (35). Although Desdemona is innocent, Othello does not listen to her desperate calls for mercy and forgiveness; “O, banish me, my lord, but kill me not!” “Kill me tomorrow, let me live tonight!” (78, 80). But Othello is firm on his decision of vengeance simply because he is incapable of forgiveness due his extreme anguish. Again and again, once a tragic hero reaches an extreme state of anguish, he becomes incapable of making good decisions such as granting mercy. Eventually he stifles her (77). Desdemona has failed to convince Othello of delaying her murder at least long enough to enable her to say one last prayer (76).

Desdemona fails to convince Othello of pardoning her or at least delaying her murder not because her speech is not appealing enough but because such calls for mercy do not make any sense for a tragic hero such as Othello. Just like Lear, Othello is willing to carry out his plan for vengeance no matter how bad forgiveness is required or needed. Othello is just like any typical tragic hero whose vengeful thoughts consist of four major elements. The first one is revenge as the only option for a tragic hero as a result of anguish. Thus, Othello never considers clemency as an option. The second is certainty of revenge in the sense that a tragic hero would never give up his plan of revenge until they take revenge and go through recognition. Thus Othello is incapable of forgiveness. The third one is ambivalence of the method through which the tragic hero should carry out their plan of revenge. But in the case of Othello, I have argued earlier that this element is reduced to the minimum in dramatizing Othello simply because he is guided to vengeance by Iago. The fourth element of a tragic hero’s thoughts of vengeance is not regretting revenge since the tragic hero looks forward to revenge and will never give it up. Thus, Desdemona’s calls for mercy are meaningless for Othello. It is obvious that Othello does not regret his crime as we can conclude from last words he says for Desdemona before he strangles her; “Had all his hairs been lives, my great revenge / Had stomach for them all” (74-75). Again, he says what he says because the concept of forgiveness is meaningless for Othello.

Interestingly enough, Othello’s incapability of clemency is juxtaposed with Desdemona’s capability of complete mercy. As Desdemona dies, she insists on her innocence, “A guiltless death I die” and tries to protect Othello when Emilia asks who killed her, “Nobody; I myself. Farewell” (122,124). Surprisingly enough, she dies while she is in love with her murderer. Ironically enough, we usually blame Iago more than Othello or we put such values upon matrimony since we know that Othello committed his crime in ignorance. But we also sympathize with Othello because he kills his wife out of ignorance. As soon as Emily tells Othello that her husband Iago has taken the handkerchief and once Othello comes to the realization that Desdemona was indeed faithful, Othello goes again through another hard state of uncertainty but this time about the punishment he deserves for killing his wife. Othello addresses himself and laments his fair wife (5.2 275-284).

After Othello enters a state of recognition, he becomes capable of clemency that he can ask it or grant it to other people. As I explained earlier in the introduction to this paper in relevance to Hamlet, while tragic heroes become capable of making good decisions like asking or granting forgiveness to other people, they can never forgive themselves for committing the crimes they committed in ignorance. For instance, Hamlet forgives his killer as he dies, but never says that he pardons himself. Similarly, Othello asks Cassio’s forgiveness (303). But he never forgives himself for murdering his innocent wife. Because Othello is not able of asking forgiveness from his deceased wife, he addresses her and says “I kiss’d thee ere I kill’d thee: no way but this; / Killing myself, to die upon a kiss” and dies right away (364-65). Theoretically, Othello and other tragic heroes tend to commit suicide or die toward the end of tragedies because they go through a dual state of being victims and guilty parties of the same crime

they committed earlier. Othello, for instance, comes to the realization that his wife whom he killed is innocent and thus he looks at himself as the guilty party. At the same time, he regrets killing his lovely wife and feels he is the victim of his own crime. This dual state or status is lethal for a tragic hero. If they survive this dual realization, they usually commit suicide. For instance, Lear could not survive this dual realization of being a victim and a guilty party of his own crime and dies as a result. Othello, on the other hand, survives this dual realization of being a victim and guilty party of his own crime but is overwhelmed with it enough that he commits suicide because he cannot forgive himself for murdering his innocent wife.

Interestingly enough, Othello refuses to kill Iago who is responsible for every single crime that took place in this play. Instead, Othello wounds him and keeps him alive (289-94). In so doing, Othello neither forgives Iago nor does he withhold it from him. Wounding Iago is defiantly a form of punishment as estimated by Othello. We all know that Iago deserves to be dead in return for the horrible crimes he has committed throughout the play. However, I do believe the punishment Iago receives can be measured according to a poetic justice scale rather than a state justice one. Again, poetic justice is the principle in which the bad character is punished while the good is rewarded. But rewards and the punishment under the poetic justice principle are usually lighter or severer than they should be in real life. Iago's punishment is way lighter than what he deserves in real life. Thus, his relationship to Othello might be one of poetic justice rather than one of state justice or one of mercy.

4. Conclusion

To sum up, Lear's threats bestow four unique aspects that apply not only to his character but they also apply to Hamlet and Othello. Lear's speech tells us that he is determined to have an awful type of revenge on his daughters. The very same speech tells us that he seems uncertain about the method through which he should carry out this revenge though. At the same time, Lear says that he will not express any type of remorse as he pursues his vengeful plans nor should he aim at amnesty. Lear's also admits his own madness as he closes his revealing speech. The aforementioned facts about Lear do apply to Othello and Hamlet as well. Othello, for instance, goes into a dual state in which he thinks of himself as a victim and the guilty party of the very same crime. Thus, he cannot forgive himself and commits suicide. Thus, Othello reminds us of King Lear who could not even survive the dual realization of being a victim and guilty party of the crimes he caused throughout King Lear. This dual realization of being a victim and guilty of the very same crime is so typical for tragic heroes who either cannot survive this realization or commit suicide shortly after they come to this kind of dual realization. It applies to most of not all tragic heroes we see on the early modern stage.

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