Marthe Eide Dalheim

“I never will speak word”: Linguistic Violence and Silence in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth, Othello*, and *King Lear*

Master’s thesis in English Literature
Supervisor: Paul Goring
November 2023

Master’s thesis

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Abstract

English playwrights writing during the Elizabethan and Jacobean era portrayed many instances of violence in their dramatic texts. In light of this, this thesis examines the concept of linguistic violence in three of Shakespeare's major tragedies written during the middle period of his career between 1603-1606. Focusing on the tragedies of *Othello, King Lear*, and *Macbeth*, it is a study of the primary antagonists Iago, Edmund, and Lady Macbeth and it explores the ways in which they act as linguistic manipulators in select settings. It traces and discusses what consequences their use of linguistic violence has for their characters on a psychological and structural level. Using the method of close reading with particular attention to speech, stylistic patterns, and staging, a dramatic pattern is identified in these plays where the antagonists initiate a form of trick to garner attention before engaging in a conversation characterised by coercive language with whomever they need to manipulate. Here they weaponize expectations and use different persuasion techniques expressed through language. The thesis then shifts its focus from the antagonists' use of linguistic violence to tracing how their mode of expression affects their character development. Mainly, they move towards silence where Lady Macbeth has silence forced upon her, Iago chooses silence for himself, and Edmund moves between the two opposites. Discussing how the unmanageability and unpredictability of violence lays the foundation for their downfall and move towards silence, the thesis identifies changes happening on a psychological, verbal, and structural level, analysing them in relation to the concepts of silence and absence. Apart from identifying a less talked about form of violence in Shakespeare, the thesis offers a new approach to viewing, interpreting, and understanding the character development of the antagonists, as well as pointing out how Shakespeare repeats certain structural patterns in his tragedies.

Because a definition of linguistic violence is lacking despite there being an increased awareness of how language can inflict violence and/or harm, the thesis sees linguistic violence as language intended to put restrictions on or alter actions, behaviour, or inclinations. It is an undue or enforced constraint (expressed during interpersonal communication) designed to alter the state of mind of someone else or coerce them into action. Though the definition is flexible and malleable, it is only applied to moments where Iago, Edmund, or Lady Macbeth specifically use language or linguistic strategies to manipulate their intended targets with the intention of achieving control, influence, or harm.

Sammendrag

Engelske diktere som skrev under den elisabethanske and jakobinske perioden portretterte mange tilfeller av vold i sine dramatiske tekster. I lys av dette undersøker denne masteroppgaven konseptet språklig vold i tre av Shakespeares store tragedier skrevet i løpet av mellomperioden av hans karriere mellom 1603-1606. Med fokus på tragediene *Othello, King Lear* og *Macbeth* er oppgaven en karakterstudie av hovedantagonistene Iago, Edmund og Lady Macbeth som utforsker på hvilke måter de fungerer som språklige manipulatorer i utvalgte kontekster. Den sporer og diskuterer hvilke konsekvenser deres bruk av språklig vold har for deres karakterer på et psykologisk og strukturelt nivå. Ved å bruke nærlesning som metode med særlig fokus på tale, stilistiske mønstre og sceneoppsett blir et dramatisk mønster identifisert i disse skuespillene hvor antagonistene orkestrerer et type triks for å få oppmerksomhet før de engasjerer seg i en samtale preget av tvangsaktig språk med personen de trenger å manipulere. Her bevæpner de forventninger og bruker forskjellige overtalelsesteknikker utrykt gjennom språk. Masteroppgaven skifter deretter fokus fra antagonistenes bruk av språklig vold til å spore hvordan deres uttrykksmåter påvirker deres karakterutvikling. De beveger seg hovedsakelig mot stillhet hvor Lady Macbeth blir påtvunget stillhet, Iago velger stillhet, og Edmund beveger seg mellom de to ytterpunktene. Masteroppgaven diskuterer så hvordan uhåndterligheten og uforutsigbarheten skapt av vold legger grunnlaget for deres fall og hvordan de beveger seg mot stillhet. Den identifiserer også forandringer som skjer på et psykologisk, verbalt, og strukturelt nivå før den analyserer dem i ly av konseptene stillhet og fravær. Utenom å identifisere en mindre omtalt form for vold i Shakespeare tilbyr masteroppgaven en ny tilnærming til å se, tolke og forstå karakterutviklingen til antagonistene, samt den påpeker hvordan Shakespeare gjentar visse strukturelle mønstre i sine tragedier.

Ettersom det ikke foreligger en definisjon på språklig vold (på tross at det er økende bevissthet på hvordan språk kan påføre vold og/eller skade andre) ser masteroppgaven på språklig vold som språk ment til å begrense eller endre handlinger, oppførsel eller tilbøyeligheter. Det er en utilbørlig eller påtvunget begrensning (uttrykt under mellommenneskelig kommunikasjon) som har til hensikt å endre sinnstilstanden til andre eller tvinge dem til handling. Selv om definisjonen er fleksibel og formbar brukes den bare i øyeblikk hvor Iago, Edmund eller Lady Macbeth spesifikt bruker språk eller språklige strategier for å manipulere deres utvalgte mål med den hensikt å oppnå kontroll, innflytelse eller skade.

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This thesis has been long in the making. Much longer than I anticipated. It is with mixed emotions I write this the day before submission. Part of me is happy for finishing the project; there have been countless hours where I have doubted myself, been confused, been frustrated, or even despaired, and to be able to say "It is done" is a relief. But the other part of me feels a sense of grief knowing it is over. I have found an immense joy in Shakespeare, and I consider myself privileged to have been able to work with that which I love for such a long time. Writing this thesis has reminded me time and time again how much literature means to me, and I will forever be grateful for the experience. It is therefore with a heavy heart I write the final words, but I choose to take comfort in Gandalf's last words to the Hobbits: "I will not say: do not weep; for not all tears are an evil". With that said, I want to thank everybody who have been with me on this journey.

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Chapter 1: Shakespeare and Violence: Introducing a Brief Overview and the Concept of Linguistic Violence

Violence is an inescapable aspect of life. Be it rooted in natural disasters, wars, structural inequalities, or socio-economic reasons, or caused by physical violence, sexual violation, or non-physical abuse, few (if any) are the lucky ones who go through life without being victimized in one way or another. Despite its correlation with power and the execution of power, it is a universal experience, which explains why accounts of various forms of violence permeate cultures across time and space. Violence has been a central concern in the arts and entertainment for thousands of years with artists, writers, and audiences delighting in and revolting against violence in all its forms and expressions. The English stage during the Elizabethan and Jacobean period was no exception to this tendency as the dramatic texts supplied "many violent moments – duels, armed combats of many varieties, pitched battle, murders, even maimings" (Dessen 39). This is especially true of Shakespeare's work in which one finds multiple examples of what I am here labelling linguistic violence. An examination of how linguistic violence is employed by different characters can offer, I suggest, new readings that have been largely left unexplored by various critical traditions.

Linguistic violence is a specific form of manipulative language found in *King Lear (Lear), Othello (Oth.)*, and *Macbeth (Mac.)*. It is primarily utilized by the aggressive antagonists Edmund, Iago, and Lady Macbeth with the intention of achieving revenge, power, recognition, or status. I therefore will argue that a dramatic pattern appears in these plays. Motivated by social control, these trickster types rely on coercive language to gain compliance from their target characters, engaging them in conversations with the intent of manipulating them. Here they weaponize the expectations of others (be it their belief in how things are, or how things ought to be), while simultaneously using different techniques expressed through language (like "persuasion, offers of exchange, promises, forming of alliances, […] modelling, […] the use of threats [and] punishments" (Tedeschi 465)). These cunning influence tactics are often improvised either due to unforeseen circumstances, or the failure of their original plans. Nevertheless, relying on linguistic violence makes Edmund, Iago, and Lady Macbeth increasingly vocal figures within their respective plays as their ability to weaponize language is the source of their initial success and increased prominence on stage. However, a shift occurs about halfway through the action because where the first half of the plays is concerned with the intention behind the use of linguistic violence, the second half is concerned with the effects. Mainly, violence gains a momentum of its own and

its intended and unintended consequences become increasingly unmanageable and unpredictable to the point where Edmund, Iago, and Lady Macbeth's prolonged use of linguistic violence proves to be their tragic flaw that eventually causes their downfall. This is characterised by a loss of control and silencing as the three antagonists move away from being organizers of events to passive observers where they either choose silence for themselves, have silenced forced upon them, or move between the two. Hence, availing oneself of linguistic violence is shown to be unsustainable as it destroys and silences the vocal characters it initially helped establish and sustain.

Though violence is a concept familiar to all, it remains hard to define. *The Culture of Violence* states "Great difficulties are encountered in searching for definitions of violence" (Rupesinghe 23). Making matters more complicated is the question of how narrow or broad a definition ought to be not only because "Attempts are frequently made […] to broaden the definition of violence" (Elwert 267), but because violence is commonly connected with everything from physical violence to family violence, structural violence, psychological violence, or economic violence. The term appears in many different settings unrelated to physical force, suggesting violence is an elusive idea that can be productively applied to different situations, conflicts, and purposes. Among various forms of violence, what linguistic violence is, is harder to pinpoint as no comprehensive definition exists. It is widely acknowledged that language can cause violence and harm be it in person or online, and the terms 'linguistic violence' and 'verbal violence' have already been used by a few writers, among them Chaemsaithong in the paper "Person reference, identity, and linguistic violence in capital trials", Guay and colleagues in the paper "Verbal violence in the workplace", and Ponzio in the paper "Linguistic Violence and the 'Body to Come'". However, though it remains undefined by the critical field, I see linguistic violence as language intended to put restrictions on or alter actions, behaviour, or inclinations. It is an undue or enforced constraint, designed to coerce others into action or a state of mind that would not come naturally to them without outside influence. In addition, linguistic violence happens in the present, and is expressed during interpersonal/direct communication. In the same way as the concept of violence is hard to narrow down, my understanding of linguistic violence is quite flexible and malleable as it can be used in several settings, including ones where the motives of the perpetrator are ambiguous, and the harm caused is difficult to measure. It is a broad concept, though I only apply it to moments where select antagonists specifically use language or linguistic strategies to manipulate their intended targets with the intention of achieving control, influence, or harm. Apart from being an expression of power, it generates and exploits

an unequal power dynamic shaped by harmful and manipulative language in which the victim is made to suffer and (often unknown to themselves) coerced into taking action that otherwise goes against their core beliefs.

Much has already been said about Shakespeare and violence. Notable studies include *Shakespeare's Culture of Violence* by Derek Cohen, *Shakespeare & Violence* by R.A. Foakes, *The Aching Hearth: Family Violence in Life and Literature* edited by Sara Munson Deats and Lahretta Tallent Lenker, "Shakespearean violence: a preliminary survey" by Jonas Barish and "Reading Shakespearean Violence" by J. Gavin Paul. In fact, Shakespeare studies is an extensive academic field that stretches back to the late 17th century with Samuel Johnson in the 18th century leading "the way for editors in the increasing awareness of Shakespeare's verbal art" (Clark 28). Critics have discussed numerous aspects of the plays, and in "the thirty years between 1986 and 2016 […] the MLA International Bibliography lists more than 1,500 items, a figure that is doubtless an underestimate" (Luckyj 43) on *Othello* alone. Considering it would be impossible to give a full and detailed overview of the critical backstory of *Macbeth, King Lear,* and *Othello* in this introduction, a brief overview of the most relevant material focusing on violence in Shakespeare and the antagonists Lady Macbeth, Edmund, and Iago will have to suffice as these topics are most central to my thesis.

Though much has been written about his verbal art, the question of linguistic violence is largely unexplored as searches of databases like JSTOR, ProQuest, Wiley Online Library, EBSCOhost*,* NTNU's digital library and the MLA International Bibliography using select search terms (including but not limited to "Shakespeare", "violence", "linguistic violence", "verbal violence", "tragedy", "silence", "language", "Iago", "Lady Macbeth", "Edmund", "Macbeth", "King Lear" and "Othello") and different combinations of these search terms yield few relevant results. That is not to say there are no books or papers on these topics; relevant research may have been overlooked either due to not searching through the correct databases, the wrong use of search terms, not using the right combinations of words when conducting my searches, or ignoring papers and books whose titles and/or brief summaries have made them appear irrelevant to my topic. Nevertheless, combining two distinct topics (linguistics and violence) that have received attention on their own but not in relation to each other (according to my research), one not only gets a greater appreciation for Shakespeare's use of language, but how linguistic violence is a recurrent theme in his work. Character studies are also abundant within Shakespeare criticism, and though the field regularly falls in and out of fashion, situating my work within this tradition by looking at Iago, Lady Macbeth, and Edmund contribute to already existing character studies. What is more, by viewing these

characters through their use of linguistic violence, I am not only bringing the conversation in a different direction (as the antagonists' use of language has received little attention), but identify overarching patterns used by Shakespeare in his tragedies, as well as zooming further out than many critics by noting the similarities between Lady Macbeth, Iago, and Edmund as they use the same approaches, though with different results. Hence, where most critics look at each character individually and independently of others (apart from characters within their respective plays), I identify how they are shaped by the same structures, and thereby hope to cast new light upon Shakespeare's repetitive use of structure in his tragedies and tendency to repeat and explore recurring patterns.

Despite the multitude of topics discussed throughout the ages, new research questions and topics are continually being brought to the forefront, indicating not only the relevancy of Shakespeare and his work, but that it is still possible to contribute something novel to the ongoing discourse. According to Paul, writings of notable critics like Foakes, Dollimore and Reynolds "suggest that acts of violence are ready access points at which to engage with Shakespeare in all of his textual and theatrical manifestations" (798-799) as violence is a key feature in most of his plays. Violence appears in many forms, among these "either before our eyes in stage action, […] reported as offstage action, or […] in the language alone" (Barish 101). Foakes and Barish agree that Shakespeare shows an early interest in violence for its own sake (Barish 121) and a "delight in sensational stage violence for its theatrical excitement" (Foakes, *Shakespeare* 8). Barish further argues that Shakespeare becomes increasingly mature and civilized throughout his career as he comes to associate violence "with unruliness, disorder, and whatever interferes with life" (121), while Foakes suggests that in his late works, "violence is represented as an inescapable aspect of human experience that can only be comprehended in the long perspective of time" (*Shakespeare* 8). Foakes later elaborates on the role of violence in the romances, writing that "Human violence is related to the violence of nature, to storms and tempests [...], to the dangers of sea-travel, and to natural forces" (*Shakespeare* 183) and that it can "erupt suddenly in bursts of anger for which there is no adequate explanation" (*Shakespeare* 183). In addition, "Shakespeare's late plays accept violence as an inescapable part of the natural world and of human society, and are more interested in ways to moderate, control or atone for" it (Foakes, *Shakespeare* 183). To summarize, Shakespeare's attitude towards violence moves from a superficial delight in the grotesque and shocking to a mature awareness of violence's workings in the natural world.

It is worth noting that Shakespeare's interest in violence did not exist in a vacuum as theatregoers in the 1590s revelled at the sight of blood and "enjoyed public spectacles of

torture and violence" (Foakes, *Shakespeare* 36). Shakespeare's early delight in crude violence has also been attributed to his admiration for Christopher Marlowe, and Foakes claims Shakespeare set himself up as Marlowe's competitor, competing "in composing plays that invent more and stranger incidents of torture and murder" (*Shakespeare* 36). The aforementioned features are characteristic of his early English history plays and Roman plays, but as he matured as a writer, Shakespeare's "humanistic concerns displace violence and redirect its energies into more culturally satisfying projects" (Fly 6) where the inner lives of his characters increasingly replace the "action-oriented spectacle of blood" (Fly 6) and violence becomes absorbed into the poetry itself (qtd. in Dickson 5). It is following Shakespeare's move into the realm of comedies and tragedies that critics start to identify two forms of violence within his work: the comic and the tragic form. Comic violence in Shakespeare is associated with laughter, as well as jokes, practical jokes, and mischief, and the most common expression of comic violence in his canon is vicious pranks carried out by trickster characters where the "gull is harmed by being gulled" (Simon 427). For Simon, comic violence "functions as a knowledge claim about its target" (423) and its motive is usually rooted in epistemological security. Historical and textual sources suggest Shakespeare then began experimenting with tragic violence (associated with despair, loss, and misery) as he moved towards tragedy, developing "an interest in unmotivated or inadequately motivated human violence" (Foakes, *Shakespeare* 61) and homing in on individual(s) and the pain violence inflicts. Shakespeare's focus thus shifted from viewing violence as an amusing plot device to examining violence in relation to personality and individuality.

Iago is arguably the most obvious typification of this shift. Coleridge argued the Venetian's evil lacks motivation, but as he "enjoys deceiving, tricking, and humiliating others, and […] can stab his friend and his wife without hesitation" (Foakes, *Shakespeare* 141), violence appears to have become incarnate with a consciousness and will of its own. The idea of violence incarnate is also evident in the character of Edmund who has been considered both "as a shrunken Iago" (Foakes, *Shakespeare* 143) and as "more brilliant than Iago" (Bloom 482). He is willing to manipulate and lie, fashioning a violent reality of his own that inevitably devours those close to him. Lastly, Lady Macbeth has been labelled a particularly violent character, though critics disagree about the origins of her brutality. Foakes believes *Macbeth* "probes more deeply than before into the problem of violence in a society conditioned by war" (*Shakespeare* 155) and that Lady Macbeth's violent tendencies illustrate the "discordances between open violence in battle and secret violence in murder" (*Shakespeare* 155). Furthermore, Foakes claims the play explores "the problem of violence in

relation to the limits of what it is to be a man" (*Shakespeare* 158), though this has been contended by Raber who claims that *Macbeth*'s violence originates from "the heart of the family" (304) where the family unit is governed by "a woman, a mother, whose instincts cannot be contained or controlled" (304). That is, Raber claims Lady Macbeth is a murderous mother (a popular trope in Renaissance drama) spearheading a "bloodthirsty, insatiable, resistant" family (304).

Critics have also focused on the structural aspects of violence, including the repetition of violent episodes featured in the plays. Barish presents in his preliminary survey of Shakespearean violence seven structurally similar episodes of violence that recur throughout Shakespeare's tragedies (and some of his Roman histories). Though a complete overview will not be included in this introduction (see Barish, Jonas, "Shakespearean violence: a preliminary survey" for more information), some episodes are worth mentioning. The first one is the repetition of swordplay or duels often "between mortal enemies" (Barish 102) (like Edmund and Edgar) who are roughly equal in skill, age, rank, and status. The second image identified by Barish is "deliberately unbalanced encounters, killings - usually unprovoked or unexpected - of the weaker by the stronger" (Barish 104). This form of aggression is especially prominent in *Othello* as Iago kills Roderigo and Emilia in his bid to protect and serve himself. The third image is of "hyperaggressiveness" (Barish 109) or killings that provoke further violence. Characteristic of these is that "the violence committed in order to forestall violence only provokes worse outbreaks of new violence" (Barish 106), causing the escalation of a conflict that often ends in a bloodbath. Lastly, the fourth form is of self-inflicted injuries that mainly include suicide where characters tend to be driven either by honour (as seen with Shakespeare's Roman characters) or desperation (Goneril, Romeo, and Juliet).

Apart from repeating scenes depicting specific instances of violence, Shakespeare explores select forms of structural violence, as well as its origins and consequences. The first major form of structural violence depicted in the tragedies is domestic/family violence, and critics generally agree that "*Othello* not only portrays domestic violence as tragic, rather it portrays domestic violence *as* the tragedy" (Crosby 51) as it has the power and function to destroy individuals. *Othello* explores "the institutionalized abuse of women by men in our society" and "the legitimation of violence" (Deats 91), highlighting ways in which social structures threaten to punish women and inflict violence regardless of their culpability. According to Cohen, acts of violence also "belong to the patriarchy as surely as fathers do" (*Shakespeare's Culture* 1), and he argues that violence in the tragedies "can be demonstrated

to function as an inherent feature of the political system of patriarchal authority" (*Shakespeare's Culture* 1). For Cohen, Shakespeare's women must be controlled if the social system is to survive, a fact Iago takes advantage of as he uses Desdemona and her imagined sexual transgressions to destroy Othello. This ties in with Paul's claim that for Shakespeare, violence is "an expression of power, or violence [is a] manifestation of ideological struggle[s]" (803). This is arguably most evident in *Macbeth;* Wofford argues that "the warrior ethos that opens and closes the action reveals violence to be the means to political power […] [and that] the violence of ambition itself is shown to be the source of the political order established at the end of the play" (523). However, rather than being rooted in difference (especially difference between genders), the violence in *Macbeth* "assumes a momentum of its own" (Cohen, *Shakespeare's Culture* 9), almost annihilating differences, suggesting social violence is subordinate to political violence. (By contrast, Haverkamp claims violence originates from Macbeth and his wife as the former character is a Machiavel and the latter "the 'most eloquent agent and theoretician' of the 'new violence' theorized by Machiavelli" (qtd. in Shohet 107)). The last notable form of structural violence in Shakespeare's tragedies is racial violence, though race and blackness (and thus Shakespeare's approach) has been understood differently throughout the last 400 years as his "plays continue to be shaped by their historical moment and their performance histories" (Young 254). Though interpretations and sentiments have changed over the years, modern critics seem to disagree on the question of whether Othello experiences racial violence at the hands of Iago and the Venetian society. Iago's use of racial language and the contrast between black and white nevertheless suggests Othello experiences two forms of racial violence; he is discriminated against and insulted due to his race within the play, and audiences are motivated to see Othello as inseparable from the stereotypes tied to his race. One might therefore claim Shakespeare explores racial violence in relation to *Othello* and its title character, though a critical consensus is lacking.

In view of all this evidence, there is obviously "no monolithic way [to] discuss violence in relation to Shakespeare" (Paul 799) as the question of violence has yet to be exhausted. Critics agree violence is a key feature in his writing, though existing criticism has primarily focused on his early and late career and how his ideas of violence have developed from a superficial delight to a mature awareness. However, I am looking at the middle of his career, and though it is agreed that the inner lives of his characters became more important, this period has not been elaborated upon in terms of the trajectory of violence within his works, or how the same expressions of violence are repeated throughout the tragedies.

Granted, structural violence and the repetition of violent episodes within *King Lear, Macbeth*, and *Othello* have been discussed, but I specifically look at how select characters use linguistic violence as an expression of power. As explained above, where critics have identified violent episodes, structures, and characters within Shakespeare's tragedies, my focus is on violent language and how characters deliberately and consistently use this form of language throughout their respective plays. I am thus positioning my argument within a specific niche by viewing character, language, and structures in relation to each other (aspects which have otherwise been viewed separately). Hence, where critics agree Lady Macbeth, Edmund, and Iago are violent characters existing within violent structures/societies, I look at how they navigate these societies using linguistic violence, and what consequences it has for them as characters in terms of their psychological development and the development of tragedy.

Discussions of linguistic violence are especially relevant due to the emerging focus on how language can cause harm in person and online. Hate-speech, cancel culture, and online harassment are on the rise, and there have recently been events where the deliberate spread of misinformation combined with silence have given rise to dangerous situations like the January 6 United States Capitol attack in 2021. Besides tracing this emerging concept back to its earlier roots, discussing linguistic violence and what it might look like provides a broader understanding of the idea, as well as introducing new contexts in which it can be discussed. Lastly, where critics have discussed silence in relation to women and feminism in Shakespeare, I see it in relation to violence, language, character, and structure, highlighting how silence is a governing structure present in three of Shakespeare's tragedies, and how it can be a productive entryway to discussing various aspects of his plays.

My approach for this thesis is therefore to look at each play individually and chronologically (while drawing attention to similarities and contrasts between them), and identifying and analysing the most important moments where Lady Macbeth, Iago, and Edmund use linguistic violence. I will then trace their movement towards silence, looking at how their psychological development and Shakespeare's use of structure/generic conventions determine their immediate response and eventually their endings. Structuring the paper according to the chronology of the plays by following the characters' story arcs in a chronological order is vital to my argument as Shakespeare maps the trajectory of linguistic violence onto the plot and story arcs of the villains. Or rather, the story arcs and the trajectory of violence are inseparable as Shakespeare conflates the two, meaning the origins and consequences of violence necessarily must be understood in relation to the story arcs as they develop throughout the plays. After all, Lady Macbeth, Iago, and Edmund are similar because

of their propensity to avail themselves of the same mode of expression (linguistic violence) through the first half of their respective plays, only for this to be followed by a move towards silence where silence appears as a form of punishment or as a negative consequence of their prior actions. Lastly, following the plays in a chronological order reveals how Shakespeare repeats the same structural patterns in his tragedies and how linguistic violence governs said structures. Consequently, as my primary concern is the trajectory of violence, tracing the story arcs is a fruitful endeavour as violence itself is a continuum and its development and short/long-term effects can only be understood fully by viewing it in relation to its chronological arrangement.

Chapter 2: *Macbeth*

Chapter 2.1: "Had I so sworn as you have done to this": The Ways in Which Lady Macbeth Uses Linguistic Violence Against Her Husband to Facilitate Duncan's Murder

Shakespeare's approach to violence develops throughout his career as he moves away from a delight in sensational stage violence seen in his early plays. That is not to say stage violence is absent from the tragedies; there are numerous instances of physical violence in *Macbeth, Othello,* and *King Lear,* but violence nonetheless becomes increasingly absorbed into the poetry (qtd. in Dickson 5). The move from stage violence to violence expressed through language is prominent in the opening scenes of *Macbeth* as the play opens on a battle happening off-stage and characters reporting on it on-stage. Apart from depicting a world caught "in the throes of uncontrollable energies of destruction" (Cohen, "Macbeth's Rites" 62), the scenes establish one of the recurring themes of the play, mainly that Scotland is under threat from inside and outside forces. Violence is also depicted as a natural part of the world of Macbeth as audiences are told of some of his bloody heroics, like how "he unseamed him from the nave to th'chaps / And fixed his head upon our battlements" (*Mac.* 1.2.22-23). Lastly, the battle against Cawdor and the Norwegians expresses something about the play's attitude towards violence. Collective violence is depicted as justifiable and necessary for the upholding of the state as Duncan (the embodiment of the state) legitimizes "force in the form of physical sanctions" (Elwert 274), and richly rewards his fiercest and most brutal fighters as "He bade me, from him, call thee Thane of Cawdor: / In which addition, hail his most worthy thane" (*Mac.* 1.3.103-104). Violence as a collective and legitimate undertaking is later contrasted with the destructive individual and illegitimate violence done by the Macbeths throughout the play, highlighting not only how violence in relation to character and personality becomes more important than violence for its own sake, but how attitudes change as violence moves from one realm (stage violence) to another (linguistic violence), and breaks down societal order, relationships, and identities.

The shift in focus from collective, legitimate, and physical violence to individual, illegitimate, and linguistic violence is evident as Lady Macbeth enters the stage in act I, scene V. Apart from exhibiting an aggressive and ambitious nature, the scene establishes power and a desire for recognition (be it for herself or Macbeth) as her primary motivations as she intends for her husband to take the throne despite being "too full o'th'milk of human kindness" (*Mac.* 1.5.15). Though she does not explicitly state that she will use linguistic violence against Macbeth, she indicates to the audience in her first soliloquy that she means to

use language to gain compliance from her target character and coerce her husband to do her bidding (regicide being an individual and illegitimate act of violence). This is first seen as she states “Thou’dst have, great Glamis / That which cries, ‘Thus thou must do’ if thou have it;” (*Mac.* 1.5.20-21). Though “That which cries” may refer to the crown, kingship, or Macbeth’s ambitious nature, it may be a reference to Lady Macbeth’s voice, indicating that she will edge him on using language. Naturally, this may be read as her planning to encourage him or stating what role she will play in the tragedy, but considering she is motivated by social control, it can be interpreted as her intending to gain compliance from and/or motivate Macbeth through linguistic means. She then states “That I may pour my spirits in thine ear / And chastise with the valour of my tongue / All that impedes thee from the golden round” (*Mac.* 1.5.24-26). While the spirits referred to may be the same spirits “That tend on mortal thoughts” (*Mac.* 1.5.39) or another form of supernatural powers, “my spirits” may also refer to characteristics like “Courage; boldness, assertiveness, mettle” (“Spirit, n., sense I.ii.6.a”). That is, she intends to transfer these characteristics onto Macbeth by speaking directly to him. Lastly, it may be read as a metaphor for the serpent in the Garden of Eden and the way it tempted Eve to eat the fruit by luring her into a dialogue on its own terms, which is what Lady Macbeth intends to do to her husband. Howell is thus correct in assessing that “Rather than being the moral compass, leading her husband back from his errant ways, Lady Macbeth becomes instead the instrument of his corruption” (11).

Following the “unsex me here” speech and Macbeth entering the stage in act I, scene V, Lady Macbeth engages him in a short conversation where she uses different linguistic techniques to alter her husband’s behaviour and inclinations towards Duncan, coercing him into doing her bidding by acting as a catalyst for his ambitions. Like Iago at the opening of *Othello*, Lady Macbeth deliberately uses pronouns in her manipulation, but where Iago shifts from you-language to thou-language in his conversations with Roderigo, Lady Macbeth does the opposite. Macbeth does not appear in act I, scene V until line 52, but Alan Stewart argues in *Shakespeare’s Letters* that the letter sent by him to his wife and her subsequent reply become “a dialogue between sender and recipient” (qtd. in Corcoran 17) (i.e., lines 1-28 can be read as a conversation between the Macbeths where he speaks from line 1-12, and she speaks from line 13-28). Besides delivering necessary exposition in terms of the plot, it reveals “compelling psychological and emotional information” (Corcoran 17) as both Macbeth and his wife consistently use thou-language when referring to each other: Macbeth uses “thee” (*Mac.* 1.5.9), “thou” (*Mac.* 1.5.10) and “thy” (*Mac.* 1.5.11), while Lady Macbeth uses “thou” six times, “thy” once, and “thee” trice from line 13-28. However, when Macbeth

enters the stage, Lady Macbeth adopts a politer way of speaking by using 2nd person singular formal throughout lines 1.5.58-68, using the pronoun "your" four times and "you" once. This may be an example of Shakespeare inserting linguistic variety in his play, but considering Edmund, Iago, and Lady Macbeth shift from you to thou-language (or vice versa) when speaking to their target persons, "it must mean something" (Crystal 193). As "The upper classes used *you* to each other, as a rule" (Crystal 193), the shift to you-language may be an example of Lady Macbeth adhering to social conventions as Macbeth has been named Thane of Cawdor (and thus risen in social rank). But as "The usual thing was for *you* to be used by inferiors to superiors" (Crystal 193), I would argue this grammatical shift and invocation of hierarchy is a deliberate way to increase the "distance between them, so that Macbeth can feel his power and superiority" (Eshreteh and Draweesh 693). As Macbeth's kingship has been prophesied and Lady Macbeth knows her husband's nature is "too full o'th'milk of human kindness" (*Mac.* 1.5.15), the invocation of hierarchy becomes a way for her to boost his ego and confidence and make him experience first hand what it entails to be powerful. Indeed, by stressing social positions, Lady Macbeth gives him a taste of what social advancement entails, thus exploiting his desire for power and tempting him to act. Hence, where Iago uses thou-language to create kinship between himself and Roderigo, Lady Macbeth uses you-language to make Macbeth feel powerful, boosting her husband's ego with the intention of manipulating and enticing him into committing regicide.

Lady Macbeth further manipulates her husband into doing her bidding by weaponizing their marriage and deliberately portraying them as a unit with a common goal in mind. The emphasis on unity is found in the lines "and you shall put / This night's great business into my dispatch, / Which shall to all our nights and days to come" (*Mac.* 1.5.65-67). She starts off by referring to him using the personal pronoun "you", before referring to herself using the determiner "my", and finally to their unity using the possessive determiner "our". As noted by Smith, "This relationship is, like everything else in the play, constructed and conveyed linguistically" (130) as she verbally singles out their individual identities before merging them into one, thus replacing individuality with a group identity. Apart from establishing a perceived closeness between husband and wife based on the idea of them belonging to the same alliance (as opposed to Edmund who, in *King Lear*, uses group identification to sever the bond between Edgar and Gloucester), Lady Macbeth weaponizes this sense of unity to manipulate Macbeth. That is, as "identification with one's violent group serves as a strong motivator for participation in violent behaviour" (Littman and Paluck 94), Lady Macbeth evidently uses group identity to increase the chances of making Macbeth engage in violent

behaviour and murder Duncan. By making Macbeth associate himself with her, he "will be motivated to comply with the group's violent standards […] regardless of the individual's own views" (Littman and Paluck 89). Consequently, by verbally constructing a unit adhering to violence and convincing Macbeth to associate with it, Lady Macbeth's weaponization of their relationship and marriage becomes a form of linguistic violence as it has the intention and effect of restricting and altering Macbeth's behaviour and inclinations to her advantage, while simultaneously increasing her control over him by restricting his freedom to act.

In addition, like Iago (whose use of proverbs is one of the two distinctive characteristics of his ability to persuade (which will be discussed later in this thesis)), Lady Macbeth uses proverbs to her advantage, though to a lesser extent. Claiming Duncan "O never / Shall sun that morrow see" (*Mac.* 1.5.58-59), she tells her husband "Your face, my thane, is a book where men / May read strange matters" (*Mac.* 1.5.61-61), before instructing him to "look like th'innocent flower, / But be the serpent under't" (*Mac.* 1.5.63-64). Though Shakespeare routinely included proverbs throughout his plays (many of his "well-known lines quote proverbs or have a substratum of proverbial language or thought" (Braunmuller, Introduction 47)), I would make the argument that Lady Macbeth uses proverbs not only to give legitimacy to her words, but to assertively impart key knowledge, offer advice, and persuade her husband to act. For instance, the proverbial analogy between "face" and "book" states a general truth (i.e., Macbeth's culpability, ambition or conspiratorial nature may be revealed by studying his face) and implicitly offers an important piece of advice, mainly that Macbeth needs to wear a disingenuous mask to beguile others. Apart from making it appear to be information passed from the experienced to the unexperienced, the use of proverbs grants greater potency to what is being conveyed by virtue of its inherent authoritativeness, indicating that this is a clever persuasion technique as Lady Macbeth uses proverbs to coerce Macbeth into acting deceitfully. The use of proverbs is further evident when she advises him to look like the innocent flower but be the serpent under it; "based on the proverbial 'Snake in the grass'" (Braunmuller, THE PLAY 143nn63-64), Lady Macbeth not only effectively teaches Macbeth what to do, but the rhetorical power of the proverb and its Biblical allusions grant legitimacy to actions (the planning and execution of Duncan's murder and deceiving the Scottish court) which would otherwise be considered illegitimate. The allusion to gardens and serpents, and more specifically to Satan in Eden furthermore legitimizes Lady Macbeth's words. Naturally, the reference to the serpent convincing Eve to eat the fruit from the forbidden tree can be read as a succinct metaphor for what Lady Macbeth is doing to her husband. (I.e., Lady Macbeth (Satan) tempts her husband (Eve) to eat the forbidden fruit

(murdering Duncan), which leads to the fall of man (the acceleration of violence, Lady Macbeth succumbing to guilt, and Macduff killing Macbeth in battle).) On the other hand, by telling Macbeth to be like the serpent, Lady Macbeth coerces her husband to take on traits like subtlety ("Serpent, n., sense 2") and model the serpent's "guile, treachery, or malignancy" ("Serpent, n., sense 1.d"), and by situating them within a framework infused with Biblical undertones, Macbeth is inspired to act. That is, using proverbs, Lady Macbeth not only establishes how Macbeth is expected to conduct himself, but it is a way to manipulate him with the intention of controlling his behaviour and inclinations.

Another way in which Lady Macbeth uses language (or the absence of language) to restrict her husband's behaviour and actions with the aim of controlling him is by weaponizing silence. Towards the end of their second conversation, Lady Macbeth speaks a rhyming couplet (a dramatic convention used to signal the end of speech) with the intention of silencing her husband: "Which shall to all our nights and days to come / Give solely sovereign sway and masterdom" (*Mac.* 1.5.67-68). However, when Macbeth ignores said dramatic convention (echoing Jaques at the end of *As You Like It* speaking after Duke Senior's first concluding couplet (*AYLI* 5.4.201-208)) and speaks against her saying "We will speak further –" (*Mac.* 1.5.69), he is quickly interrupted by another couplet from his wife: "Only look up clear; / To alter favour ever is to fear" (*Mac.* 1.5.69-70). The inclusion of a hyphen may be the work of an editor, but the effect is nevertheless to illustrate that he is cut off mid-line. This harks back to what MacGregor and colleagues call "'silent' socialization", which "is the repression of human speech" (50). Mainly, by denying her husband a voice by repressing his speech (i.e., interrupting him), Lady Macbeth forces her own agency upon him, and denies him the opportunity to articulate his own thoughts and desires. It becomes an enforced constraint in the sense that her will goes unchallenged because Macbeth is denied his own defence and is given no room to oppose his wife in word or deed. Thus, in addition to relying on language to manipulate her target person, Lady Macbeth uses silence and dramatic conventions (a rhyming couplet is a metaphorical punctuation mark used to signal a scene is over) to restrict Macbeth's behaviour and inclinations, replacing his will with that of her own. Like Iago and Edmund, she uses silence to her advantage, forcing silence upon others to control them, making the silencing a form of non-linguistic violence by virtue of its intention and effect.

Judging by act I, scene V, it is thus evident that Lady Macbeth has become a vocal figure in *Macbeth* as she dominates the conversations with her husband in terms of the control exerted, and she is the one speaking most of the lines. Apart from being the first to articulate

the plan of murdering Duncan ("O never / Shall sun that morrow see" (*Mac.* 1.5.58-59)) and instructing Macbeth on how to behave, she speaks a total of 68 lines to her husband's three lines, highlighting how she is at her most vocal. (Though their respective strengths become reversed between act I, scene V and act III, scene I.) However, this pattern of the antagonist initially being more vocal than their target person(s) is not unique to *Macbeth*. This pattern appears in *King Lear* and *Othello* as Edmund and Iago dominate the early conversations with Gloucester and Edgar, and Roderigo and Othello in terms of lines spoken and control exerted (as will be argued later in this thesis). This may be explained in view of structural necessities. Firstly, as the tragic antagonists serve the narrative purpose of setting in motion the tragedy (be it the main or sub-plot tragedy), one would expect them to have an increased prominence on stage in terms of lines spoken and time appearing on stage at the opening of their respective plays. Secondly, as the tragic antagonists exist to create discord and conflict, one would expect them to be central characters within the narrative, especially in the early acts. Thirdly, Lady Macbeth, Iago, and Edmund serve as catalysts for the fall of the tragic heroes (Macbeth, Othello, and Edgar), meaning they need to be influential and vocal if they are to serve their narrative purpose. That said, though Lady Macbeth's vocalness can be viewed as a structural necessity, it is nevertheless evident that she remains in control as she weaponizes language and exploits Macbeth's ambitions, successfully making her husband further consider going through with the regicide.

Lady Macbeth continues her use of linguistic violence in her third conversation with Macbeth in act I, scene VII where she equates action with masculinity and cowardice with passivity, weaponizing the assumption that cowardice is a negative trait to convince Macbeth to do her bidding. By questioning his courage, she coerces him into a state of mind where he seriously considers going through with the murder of Duncan, if only to uphold his reputation as a man. As he says "We will proceed no further in this business" (*Mac.* 1.7.30), she replies:

> Art thou afeard
> To be the same in thine own act and valour,
> As thou are in desire? Wouldst thou have that
> Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life,
> And live a coward in thine own esteem,
> Letting I dare not wait upon I would,
> Like the poor cat I'th'adage? (*Mac.* 1.7.39-45)

By grouping together the words "act" and "valour", and contrasting them with the word "afeared" in the previous line, Lady Macbeth implicitly links action with courage, suggesting the ability to act is a hallmark of fearlessness. She then equates cowardice with passivity as

the action of not daring to go through with the regicide automatically renders one a coward in "thine own esteem" (and, arguably, in her esteem). Van Oort is thus correct in the assessment that "She drowns the sense of guilt by calling him a coward and questioning his manhood" (146); cleverly threatening him with the reality that he will be seen as a coward if he fails to go through with the murder, especially knowing that Macbeth the warrior can hardly accept being labelled as one, Macbeth is more liable to act as the alternative (i.e., passivity) threatens his identity as a military nobleman. Indeed, by suggesting Macbeth to be a pusillanimous person if he "dare not", the murder becomes a challenge for him to prove his manhood, coercing him into action not necessarily with the motivation of taking the crown, but to disprove that the narrative of him being a coward is true. Thus, Lady Macbeth's strategy of threatening to label her husband a coward if he does not act in "their" best interest becomes a form of linguistic violence not only as "verbal violence […] is aimed at intimidating and belittling others" (Imbusch 25), but because she erodes his resolve by tarnishing the action of passivity by equating it with cowardice.

Lady Macbeth also weaponizes narrative and the persuasion technique of forming alliances to coax Macbeth into going through with the regicide. Attempting to sway her husband, she inquires "What beast was't then / That made you break this enterprise to me?" (*Mac.* 1.7.47-48), before claiming "And dashed the brains out, had I so sworn / As you have done to this" (*Mac.* 1.7.59-60). But as correctly pointed out by Foakes, "nowhere in the text does Macbeth bind himself by an oath to do the deed" (*Shakespeare* 151). Naturally, Macbeth might have made his promise off-stage between act I, scene V and VII, but Lady Macbeth's claims that he has made a promise may be clever lies designed to coax him into keeping his word (or rather, doing what Lady Macbeth falsely claims he promised). Granted, her narrative of Macbeth swearing to murder Duncan is only mentioned twice in the space of a few lines and is far away from as detailed as Edmund and Iago's narratives, but it nevertheless serves a specific purpose; portraying them as allies where Macbeth made a promise specifically to his wife, he is expected to honour his word (i.e., his honour compels him to act) as he has a responsibility to his wife to fulfil his promises. Thus, by relying on the (potentially fictious) narrative of Macbeth swearing to murder Duncan, Lady Macbeth effectively coaxes her husband into going through with the regicide despite the idea still being abhorrent to him, restricting his behaviour to the point where the latter is left with no choice.

She then weaponizes gender expectations, and challenges his manhood in particular, to prepare "Macbeth for the deed" (Leggatt 196) and manipulate him into doing her bidding. Harkening back to the connection she made between action and valour, Lady Macbeth tells

her husband “When you durst do it, then you were a man. / And to be more than what you were, you would / Be so much more the man” (*Mac.* 1.7.49-51). Playing “on the idea of manliness as daring, the courage to go beyond limits, to meet any challenge” (Foakes, *Shakespeare* 151), she equates his level of courage with the level of his manhood; the action of daring to murder (“durst do it”) makes him “a man”, and the more courageous he proves himself to be, he would be “so much more the man”. Knowing courage is a desirable trait in the world of *Macbeth* and that Macbeth himself claims “I dare do all that may become a man” (*Mac.* 1.7.46), I would make the argument that Lady Macbeth uses the concept of manhood to persuade her husband (echoing Rauber’s comments on “Lady Macbeth’s strategy of questioning Macbeth’s manliness” (qtd. in Biggins 255)). By claiming courage determines his worth as a man, Macbeth is unwittingly coerced to prove himself either to defend his honour, or to uphold his view of self. Her weaponization of gender is further evident from the ensuing narrative of how she would kill her own child: “I would, while it was smiling in my face, / Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums / And dashed the brains out” (*Mac.* 1.7.56-58). Though it is unclear whether this is representative of her own determination to murder or a fictious narrative made up on the spot, the narrative nevertheless conveys two messages. Firstly, if she can do this to her own flesh and blood, there should be nothing stopping Macbeth from doing the same to Duncan, a man who arguably means less to him than the babe does to Lady Macbeth. Secondly, if a woman can murder her own child in cold blood, a true man would have no problem killing a sleeping king. Hence, the narrative becomes a form of linguistic violence because by stressing what she, a woman, would do in Macbeth’s place, his inclinations are restricted to the point where murder is the only solution as not going through with the regicide would prove him to be a coward and less than a woman.

Consequently, come act II, scene II, it is evident Lady Macbeth has become an increasingly vocal character and that her weaponization of language and manipulation of her husband is the source of her initial success. Not only does she successfully coerce Macbeth to go through with the regicide as confirmed by his resolve “I am settled and bend up / Each corporal agent to this terrible feat” (*Mac.* 1.7.79-80), but by act II, scene II, he enters the stage telling her “I have done the deed” (*Mac.* 2.2.14). However, unlike Iago and Edmund who make no excuses for their behaviour, have no moral qualms about what they do, nor seem to be inhibited by their manipulation of the characters closest to them, the opening of act II, scene II shows inconsistences between what Lady Macbeth claims to be and what she is capable of, inconsistencies never seen in Iago and Edmund. Throughout the first act of the play, Lady Macbeth has been boasting of her capacity for violence both in her “unsex me here

speech" (*Mac.* 1.5.36-46) and "I have given suck and know" speech (*Mac.* 1.7.54-59), but when she waits for Macbeth to return from the murder, she starts making excuses for why she does not murder Duncan herself, claiming "Had he not resembled / My father as he slept, I had done't" (*Mac.* 2.2.12-13). One might make the argument that she always intended for Macbeth to carry out the deed (which makes sense from a narrative stance as Macbeth is the primary antagonist), but by comparing Duncan to her father, she suggests that if circumstances were different, she would have committed her first act of physical violence in the play. According to Drakakis, "Lady Macbeth is prevented from acting by virtue of a residual patriarchal imperative" (10), and while I agree with this claim, I would also make the argument that she may be using patriarchy as a convenient excuse not to act. Considering she has consistently tried to convince Macbeth to go through with the murder, facilitating everything by laying "their daggers ready" (*Mac.* 2.2.11) so "He could not miss 'em" (*Mac.* 2.2.12), one is given the impression that Lady Macbeth is either unwilling or incapable of committing the physical deed. However, admitting that she is unable to commit a violent deed contrasts with her boast of being willing to murder her own child if so promised, meaning if she is to uphold her view of the self she has articulated to Macbeth and the audience in act I, scene V and VII, her identity is dependent on a sufficient explanation of why she cannot kill the king. Hence, considering Scottish culture dictates that she is a woman and should, by cultural standards be obedient to the men in her life (her father, her king, and her husband), it would be convenient for her to blame patriarchal powers. By saying "Had he not resembled / My father", she utilizes the patriarchy when fashioning an explanation as to why she cannot or will not engage in physical violence, upholding the identity she has fashioned for herself through her use of verbally articulated violence.

However, though Lady Macbeth's excuse for why she cannot kill Duncan "is the first sign that the play gives us of a vacillating resolve" (Drakakis 10), she nevertheless remains vocal and in control of the action. As her husband recounts what he has done, she consistently appeases his fears and guilt by undermining the severity of his actions, telling him "A foolish thought, to say a sorry sight" (*Mac.* 2.2.24), "Consider it not so deeply" (*Mac.* 2.2.33), "Go get some water / And wash this filthy business from your hand" (*Mac.* 2.2.49-50), "A little water clears us of this deed. / How easy it is then!" (*Mac.* 2.2.70-71) and "Be not lost / So poorly in your thoughts" (*Mac.* 2.2.74-75). Of course, Lady Macbeth calming her husband and downplaying the murder may be a way for Shakespeare to illustrate Macbeth's increasing corruption; by establishing how "with each murder he becomes increasingly deaf to his conscience" (Van Oort 140), this moment reads as the beginning of Macbeth's personal

tragedy, illustrating how a man with a conscience becomes increasingly corrupted throughout the play. Another explanation has to do with Macbeth needing someone to coax him on, preventing him from giving into his conscience. According to Van Oort, Macbeth's frenzied actions "are undertaken in an effort to drown and thereby silence guilt" (140), but in act II, scene II, Lady Macbeth is the one who does it for him as Macbeth has not yet become desensitized to the action of murder. Lastly, neither Lady Macbeth nor the tragic narrative can afford Macbeth giving into his guilt. As the movement of tragedy and Lady Macbeth's ambitions hinge on Macbeth overcoming his horror at Duncan's murder, the structure of the play demands Macbeth is pacified, and as his wife is his co-conspirator, it is natural for her to serve this role. In sum, though Lady Macbeth being in control of the action can be explained by dramaturgical reasons, it is evident that she has become a vocal figure who controls her husband and dictates the movement of the tragedy.

Chapter 2.2: "Will these hands ne'er be clean?": How Lady Macbeth Has Silence Forced Upon Her by Her Conscience

Upon the discovery of Duncan's murdered body, Lady Macbeth's character undergoes a notable change as she starts to retreat into the background, becoming increasingly passive and silent. Upon hearing the ringing of a bell, she inquires "What's the business / That such a hideous trumpet calls to parley / The sleepers of the house?" (*Mac.* 2.3.74-76), to which Macduff (addressing Banquo) replies "Our royal master's murdered" (*Mac.* 2.3.80). About 20 lines later Macbeth describes how he murdered Duncan's grooms in a rage, but upon hearing this, Lady Macbeth cries "Help me hence, ho" (*Mac.* 2.3.111), which is followed by the stage direction "[*Exit Lady Macbeth, helped*]". Braunmuller writes that "Traditionally, Lady Macbeth faints here, and critics have long debated […] whether her collapse is real or feigned" (THE PLAY 172n112). It is an ambiguous moment, especially as "the only possible answer is always a contingent one in a specific performance" (Smith 135), but the textual ambivalence opens for two interpretations. If we accept her distress is a playact and performance, her collapse may be read as a deliberate trick designed to divert attention away from Macbeth while simultaneously appearing innocent of the crime. Having already advised her husband to "look like th'innocent flower, / But be the serpent under't" (*Mac.* 1.5.63-64), her feigned weakness may be a way of keeping up appearances to hide the truth. By appearing fragile and inconspicuous, taking on characteristics associated with femininity like sensitivity, tenderness, and being overly emotional, she appears as the innocent flower and redirects

suspicion away from herself as these traits do not fit with the idea of a ruthless murderer. However, the possibility remains that she is indeed sincere when calling for help, and that her collapse is a genuine reaction to her realizing the full implications of the murders she is indirectly responsible for. After all, it happens after Macbeth's graphic account of him killing the grooms, actions which were not part of their original plan. Having already established that violence has gained a momentum of its own and that it has become increasingly unpredictable and unmanageable, Lady Macbeth may find herself overwhelmed by that which she has tried to distance herself from. Or as argued by Foakes, "it was Lady Macbeth who had the courage to stab the grooms, but who now faints, perhaps because she in turn is unmanned, and cannot bear to think what she has done" (*Shakespeare* 152). Furthermore, if her collapse is sincere and not a trick, Shakespeare seems to suggest that her excessive use of linguistic violence against her husband is her tragic flaw not only because she slowly starts losing control of the violence she has unleashed, but because her collapse and subsequent silence are the direct results of her mode of expression towards Macbeth. Of course, her request to be escorted out may be an excuse for Shakespeare to remove her as her presence is unnecessary, but as absence equals silence in the world of theatre, her request to exit the stage hints towards her becoming a passive observer. Consequently, though Lady Macbeth's collapse remains ambiguous and dependent on performance, it suggests that her use of linguistic violence is the source of her movement towards silence, though whether she is becoming a passive observer by choice (like Iago) or because she is overwhelmed by guilt is debatable.

Lady Macbeth's movement towards becoming a passive observer is further evident from act III, scene I as Macbeth replaces her as the play's most vocal figure. She enters under the stage direction "*Enter* […] LADY [MACBETH *as Queen*]", signalling that she has been crowned off-stage between act II and act III as the witches' prophecy that Macbeth "shalt be king hereafter" (*Mac.* 1.3.48) has come to fruition. Less than halfway through the play, she has achieved her personal aspirations, largely due to her successfully using linguistic violence against her husband as argued in the previous paragraphs, confirming that her ability to control Macbeth and weaponize socially articulated constructs are the sources of her social advancement. However, unlike her previous scenes where she completely or partly dominated the discourse, she only appears from line 11-45, speaking two and a half lines ("If he had been forgotten, / It has been as a gap in our great feast / And all thing unbecoming" (*Mac.* 3.1.11-13)) before exiting with the other lords and attendants, leaving her husband alone to plot the murders of Banquo and Fleance. Eshreteh and Draweesh have tried to explain this shift in character as Lady Macbeth trying "to be part of the whole, and to give the others the feeling

that she is one of them" (692), suggesting she chooses silence for herself to keep up appearances. According to Braunmuller, however, her silence and early exit illustrate that Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's "respective strengths [have] changed" (Introduction 81). I would thus make the argument that Lady Macbeth's absence can partly be explained by the fact that she has served her narrative purpose as provocateur and facilitator, meaning her presence would be unnecessary from this point on and detrimental to the development of tragedy. As Macbeth has replaced his wife as the driving force behind the play's action and violence, it would make sense for Shakespeare to relegate her to the background in favour for focusing on her husband. By extension, Meron writes that "Shakespeare is at pains to show in his plays how good men yield to pressure" (186), meaning the removal of Lady Macbeth is necessary if the consequences of Macbeth's prolonged exposure to violence are to be enumerated. (The influence of Lady Macbeth upon her husband is further evident from the fact that he starts using linguistic violence when attempting to convince two murderers to kill Banquo and his son. Weaponizing gender and gender expectations by repeatedly questioning their manhood (*Mac.* 3.1.91-107), Macbeth's speech parallels his wife's speech in act I (*Mac.* 1.7.47-59) both in content and in wording, illustrating how he avails himself of the same language that successfully swayed him.) Hence, silence is forced upon her not because she is losing agency or deliberately blending into the background to fit in, but because the structure, focus, and theme of the play hinges on her absence.

The consequences of regicide eventually catch up with Lady Macbeth as she muses on what she and her husband have lost and won, declaring:

> Nought's had, all's spent
> Where our desire is got without content.
> 'Tis safer to be that which we destroy
> Than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy. (*Mac.* 3.2.4-7)

The two rhyming couplets express an uneasiness on her behalf as she acknowledges the precarious situation they find themselves in, noting how their use of illegitimate violence prevents them from resting easily in their new royal positions. It is the first example of a "gnawing moral self-examination" on her behalf (Braunmuller, Introduction 47) (though not the first time she struggles with her conscience if one accepts that her "Help me hence, ho" (*Mac.* 2.3.111) is the result of genuine distress), and her previous inability to anticipate "what it will mean to murder" (Foakes, *Shakespeare* 156) hits her with full force as she finally "falls victim to the psychological pressures that follow on from the crime itself" (Drakakis 10). And yet, though I agree with the critical consensus that Lady Macbeth's character starts to crumble

halfway through the play, her faltering confidence at this point is a direct result of her prolonged use of linguistic violence rather than Duncan's death. Though the word "spent" means to dispose oneself of something ("Spend, v.[1], sense I.1.a") and might therefore refer to her and Macbeth having disposed themselves of those standing in their way, it can also mean to "use up" or "to exhaust" ("Spend, v.[1], sense I.5.a"). That is, the action of manipulating her husband has exhausted her to the point where she has no more to give and has therefore started to stagnate. She also points out that "our desire is got without content" (*Mac.* 3.2.5), though the meaning of this line depends on performance and whether the first or second syllable is emphasized. If the second syllable is stressed and "content" becomes an adjective, Lady Macbeth seems to suggest there is no peaceful happiness in her and Macbeth's victory. However, if the first syllable in "content" is stressed (making it a noun), the line can be interpreted to mean that Lady Macbeth's life has become empty/lifeless once she is proclaimed queen of Scotland. (Though it might also refer to Macbeth distancing himself from his wife by not including her in his machinations following Duncan's murder, and therefore her life is without content considering she has existed for him and his ambitions up until this point.) And yet, regardless of how the lines are performed, Lady Macbeth's uneasiness is evident, foreshadowing her final collapse in the sleepwalking scene and illustrating how she is gradually losing her confidence and agency. In effect, though she is vocal at the beginning of act III, scene II, her moral self-examination suggests she is crumbling under an increasing internal pressure, which in turn forces silence upon her as she is unable to articulate a proper response beyond keeping up appearances.

Her movement towards silence and passivity is further evident from her following conversation with Macbeth (*Mac.* 3.2.8-56) as he speaks a total of 38 full lines and three half-lines compared to her three full lines and three half-lines. Where he discusses the precarity they find themselves in, Lady Macbeth is concerned with having her husband keep up appearances, telling him "Gentle my lord. / Sleek o'er your rugged looks, be bright and jovial / Among your guests tonight" (*Mac.* 3.2.26-28), "You must leave this" (*Mac.* 3.2.35) and "But in them Nature's copy's not eterne" (*Mac.* 3.2.38). This harkens back to Braunmuller's claim that their "respective strengths [have] changed" (Introduction 81) because where Lady Macbeth dominated their conversations in act I, scene V and VII in terms of the number of lines spoken and the control exerted over her husband, their roles are now reversed as Macbeth speaks significantly more than his wife and instructs her what to do ("Let your remembrance / Apply to Banquo, present him eminence / Both with eye and tongue" (*Mac.* 3.2.310-32) and "There's comfort yet, they are assailable; / Then be thou jocund" (*Mac.*

3.2.39-40)). Macbeth has also replaced her as the instigator of violence as he plans to attack Banquo and Fleance, and when his wife inquires "What's to be done?" (*Mac.* 3.2.43), he renders her a passive observer as he replies "Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck, / Till thou applaud the deed" (*Mac.* 3.2.44-45). Consequently, Macbeth appears to silence his wife not only by dominating the conversation, but by actively excluding her from his violent plans, commanding her to be passive until the deed is done.

Though she clearly has silence forced upon her by her husband (in the same way Cornwall silences Edmund in act III, scene VII in *King Lear*), one might nevertheless question why Lady Macbeth fails to respond. Firstly, while it may be read as a moment of her being the obedient wife, it may also signal a loss of control in that she either will not or cannot respond, presumably because she has fallen victim to psychological pressure as suggested by Drakakis in an earlier paragraph. Secondly, she has already set in motion the tragedy, meaning there is no dramaturgical reason for her to speak or act as she did before Duncan's murder as Macbeth has found his independence. Thirdly, it is worth to keep in mind that the role reversal between the antagonist and their main target character is also seen in *King Lear* and *Othello*. Both plays include at least one conversation in the first half between the antagonist and their victim where the antagonist dominates it in terms of number of lines spoken and control exerted. A second conversation is included in the second half of the plays where the roles are reversed and Edgar dominates the conversation between him and Edmund in act V, scene I, and Othello dominates the conversation between him and Iago in act IV, scene I. Hence, the reversal of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's linguistic positions in act III, scene II may be a structural episode repeated throughout Shakespeare's tragedies. Nonetheless, Lady Macbeth moves away from being an organizer of events to becoming a passive observer, though the exact reason for her having silence forced upon her remains open for debate.

Following the banquet scene (act III, scene IV), Lady Macbeth disappears from the stage for the rest of act III and the whole of act IV (a total of five scenes), signalling not only that she has become a passive observer with no agency, but that she is becoming silenced by the play itself. Her absence can be explained by the fact that as she is "the ultimate deciding influence on the action" (qtd. in Braunmuller, Introduction 56), she has already served her narrative purpose as provocateur and facilitator, and therefore Shakespeare has no dramaturgical reasons for having her appear on stage. Another explanation is that act IV concerns itself with Macbeth's perceived enemies and adversaries (the weird sisters being among them by virtue of their impartiality, doubleness and ambiguous answers designed to

create a false sense of security), meaning the inclusion of Lady Macbeth would be misplaced and undermine the topical coherence of the act as she remains Macbeth's closest ally. Or rather, there is no narrative room for Lady Macbeth as Brennan notes that the play's focus shifts "to the actions of the tyrant to the exclusion of any sub-plot activity" (qtd. in Braunmuller, Introduction 28). Her prolonged absence may also be because Shakespeare examines the consequences of violence. Knowing "Macbeth's consciousness has spread outward and infected the world" (Leggatt 187), the murders of Lady Macduff and her sons as well as Malcom and Macduff's conversation in act IV, scene III highlight the horrors of unchecked violence and the ways in which Scotland suffers under Macbeth. (The murder of Macduff's family can be read as "climactic not only in being morally the most abhorrent of his deeds but also in being the only one we are forced to witness" (Barish 106).) Thus, Lady Macbeth is necessarily removed from the action to illustrate the dire consequences of the violence she has unleashed through her husband. Also worth keeping in mind is that Macduff and Malcom explicitly blame "black Macbeth" (*Mac.* 4.3.52) and his tyrannous reign for their and Scotland's grievances. While it is unclear whether they are aware of Lady Macbeth's complicity, it is evident from their conversation that patriarchy has no room for women, especially when it comes to matters of the state. Patriarchy's inability and/or refusal to see women as instigators of violence relegate Lady Macbeth to the background while Macbeth is brought to the forefront, further silencing her in favour for her husband. Common for all these explanations, though, is that Lady Macbeth's silence is a prerequisite for the study and development of tragedy, indicating that unlike Iago and Edmund who deliberately choose silence for themselves, silence is forced upon Lady Macbeth by the demands of narrative.

Lady Macbeth's increasing passivity on stage culminates in the sleepwalking scene, which establishes once and for all that her prolonged use of linguistic violence lays the foundation for her downfall as she is shown to be overwhelmed by the intended and unintended consequences of violence. Referring directly to the crimes, she says "Who knows it, when none can / call our power to account? Yet who would have thought the old / man to have so much blood in him?" (*Mac.* 5.1.32-34), "The Thane of Fife had a wife. Where is she / now?" (*Mac.* 5.1.36-37) and "I tell you yet again, Banquo's buried; he cannot / come out on's grave" (*Mac.* 5.1.53-54). As her only focus throughout the scene are the murders of Duncan, Lady Macduff, and Banquo (crimes of which she is indirectly and directly responsible for), it is evident that the consequences of violence have become unmanageable to the point where moral self-examination is all she is capable of, which ties in with the fact that "Conscience is the dominant element in Macbeth" (Meron 196). Though Edith Evans has described this as an

"usually inexplicable collapse" (qtd. in Braunmuller, Introduction 66) and argued "Shakespeare did not supply the character with a bridge or motivation for the change" (Braunmuller, Introduction 66) as it seems at odds with the banquet scene, it nevertheless completes her movement towards silence. Critics discussing this scene tend to voice support for one of two positions; either she is "driven to madness by her guilt" (Kuiper 69) and is "destroyed by [her conscience]" (Meron 196), or she has become possessed by the supernatural powers and evil spirits that she invited "to nurse at her breast" (Levin 41) during the "unsex me here" speech "(*Mac.* 1.5.36-52). Naturally, her obsessively reflecting on what has passed in front of the doctor and gentlewoman may be a way for Shakespeare to reveal to the characters inside the play her complicity in the crimes (which has been unknown to other characters up until this point), or stress how Lady Macbeth's loss of control is complete as she unconsciously confesses her crimes to outsiders. However, regardless of whether she is overcome with guilt or possessed by supernatural powers, linguistic violence proves to be her tragic flaw as it brings about her downfall.

Apart from focusing on the murdered Duncan, Lady Macduff, and Banquo, Lady Macbeth's guilt is evident from her obsessive cleaning of her hands. Repeatedly referring to her bloody hands, she says "Out, damned spot! Out, I say!" (*Mac.* 5.1.30), "What, will these hands ne'er be clean" (*Mac.* 5.1.36-37), "Here's the smell of blood still; all the per- / fumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand" (*Mac.* 5.1.42-43), and "Wash your hands" (*Mac.* 5.1.52). Apart from being a literal expression of her guilt (like Banquo's ghost is a personification of Macbeth's guilt), her inability to remove the blood (and thus relieve herself of her guilt) indicates that the unintended consequences of violence have become unmanageable to the point where she is rendered passive (or rather, trapped by the repetitive action of cleaning her hands); where Macbeth is preparing for the upcoming battle, Lady Macbeth is unable to move beyond her all-encompassing guilt. Harkening back to their opposite trajectories where Macbeth was the one initially unable to act, their roles are now reversed as Lady Macbeth is rendered passive in her sleep, contrasting with her previous ability to act when deemed necessary. Granted, her absence from the battle preparations is to be expected as she is no warrior like her husband, meaning she must be pacified in one way or another as she has no place within war. Another explanation for her passivity is Shakespeare reinforcing the gender norms Lady Macbeth challenged earlier in the play. As pointed out by Smith, "Her breakdown thus serves ironically as a kind of reassurance about gender norms: a woman cannot really be as diabolical and unfeeling as she attempts to be" (155); Lady Macbeth is rendered passive and attempting to atone for her crimes not because the

consequences of linguistic violence cause her downfall, but because conventional gender norms need to be upheld. And yet, I would make the claim that she has become a passive observer with silence forced upon her partly because she is incapable of moving beyond her guilt, and partly because she is removed from the stage by seeking to return to bed, repeating "To bed, to bed" (*Mac.* 5.1.56) and "To bed, to bed, to bed" (*Mac.* 5.1.58).

Another noteworthy aspect of the sleepwalking scene is how it raises the issue of silence. Though Lady Macbeth is vocal as she comes to terms with her guilt, her gentlewoman points out "She has spoke what she should not, I am sure of / that" (*Mac.* 5.1.40-41). This is later followed by the doctor saying "infected minds / To their deaf pillows will discharge their secrets" (*Mac.* 5.1.62-63). Despite being vocal, Lady Macbeth has silence forced upon her as the character speaking is not the character that has been present until this moment. Rather, what we see is the subconscious version of her, indicating that Lady Macbeth as we know her has been replaced and silenced by a shadow self. While the sleepwalking scene may be read in lieu of Shakespeare's continued interest in sleep as evident in *Henry IV, Part 2* (*2H4* 3.1.1-31) and *Hamlet* (*Ham* 3.1.6-41), sleep is the only way for Lady Macbeth to unburden herself and reveal her emotional state to the audience. After all, "she has no Nurse, no Pandarus, no Emilia" (Leggatt 200) to confide in; "Her only relationship has been with" Macbeth (Leggatt 200), but as he is preparing for war (echoing how he is returning from war in act I, scene V), talking in her sleep is a way for her to absolve herself without needing a confidante. Granted, it may be a didactic moment in which Shakespeare warns against engaging in violence, but it also gives insight into the ravaged mind of Lady Macbeth (which in turn might explain her sudden death). The scene also highlights the play moving towards silence as the gentlewoman and doctor illustrate an inability and unwillingness to name the horrors exposed by Lady Macbeth. When asked what she has observed, the gentlewoman replies "That, sir, which I will not report after her" (*Mac.* 5.1.12) and "Neither to you, nor anyone, having no witness to / confirm my speech" (*Mac.* 5.1.14-15). This sentiment is echoed by the doctor when he says "My mind she has mated, and amazed my sight. / I think, but dare not speak" (*Mac.* 5.1.68-69). Apart from confirming a general inability to name the horrors of the play as evident by the doctor and gentlewoman's refusal to speak, Lady Macbeth herself is silenced in favour for her shadow self speaking.

The silencing of Lady Macbeth is complete as she dies off-stage before the battle, and Seyton reports "The queen, my lord, is dead" (*Mac.* 5.5.16). This can be read as an effective way for Shakespeare to conclude Lady Macbeth's narrative and wrap up the sub-plot, ending it before the play's main climax (the battle at Dunsinane and Macbeth's death) takes place.

Just as the death of Edmund in *King Lear* paves way for the domestic tragedy of Lear and his daughters, Lady Macbeth's (un)timely death redirects the focus of *Macbeth* unto the personal tragedy of Macbeth himself. That said, though it is common for Shakespeare's tragic antagonists to die either on or off stage before the ending of the play, her death is abrupt and ambiguous, which raises the question of whether it is caused by natural causes or suicide. If one favours the former explanation (that she has silence forced upon her by the play's structure), it may be read as a moment of divine justice where Lady Macbeth receives the punishment she deserves. (After all, removing her before the battle is crucial as it would be jarring to have her appear among the victors of the battle with the knowledge that she must receive some form of justice.) Another explanation is that the knowledge of the oncoming forces causes her demise, highlighting how weak she has become. A third possibility is rooted in Macbeth's "She should have died hereafter" speech (*Mac.* 5.1.15-27); she would have died at some point anyway, and that it happened at this exact moment signifies nothing. On the other hand, if one reads her death as a suicide, it stands to reason that she chooses silence for herself. Though it may be a way to escape the oncoming army and justice awaiting her, it is an extension of and embodiment of her guilt. That is, as the sleepwalking scene is meticulous in establishing her all-consuming guilt and growing madness, her death being a suicide reads not only as a continuation of what we see in act V, scene I, but how linguistic violence destroys and silences the vocal character it initially helped establish and sustain. In brief, what paved way for Lady Macbeth's success is shown to be unsustainable as the guilt arising from her actions is what kills her, highlighting how, like in Edmund and Iago's cases, the wheel always comes full circle.

Chapter 3: *Othello*

Chapter 3.1: "Nothing, my lord; or if – I know not what": How Iago Uses Linguistic Violence Against Brabantio, Roderigo, and Othello

The use of linguistic violence by a tragic antagonist and the subsequent movement towards silence also characterises Iago in *Othello*. Where Lady Macbeth's objective was to manipulate her husband into usurping the Scottish throne, Iago's objective is to exert his revenge against Othello. However, rather than directly targeting his commander (in the same way Lady Macbeth directly targets her husband), Iago manipulates Brabantio and Roderigo in preparation for the gulling of Othello, which culminates in what critics have labelled "the temptation scene". Relying on different techniques depending on who he is talking to and adapting to accommodate the outcomes of his manipulation, Iago's use of linguistic violence in different settings reveals him to be a master manipulator who confidently and effectively uses language to his advantage. Unlike in *Macbeth* where physical violence is a central part of the early acts, the violence unleashed by Iago asserts itself towards the end of *Othello,* though he "appears also from the start a master of calumny" (Horton 247).

Using linguistic violence at the opening of the play with the intention of harming Othello, Iago turns to Brabantio, "arousing [him] against Othello" (Horton 247) by whipping him into a fevered frenzy and coercing him into a state of mind that poses a threat to his new son-in-law's happiness and marriage. Mainly, in lines 1.1.77-117, Iago repeats three keywords to generate hysteria and a sense of urgency. Firstly, "thieves" is repeated five times in the space of two and a half lines (*Oth*. 1.1.78-80), challenging Brabantio's sense of security and giving rise to panic by suggesting that he or his property has been assaulted by unanticipated assailants. (Iago does not identify Othello by name, but by referring to him as "thieves", Desdemona's elopement is blamed on Othello while simultaneously depicting their marriage as a form of abduction and rape as Desdemona is stripped of agency.) Iago also repeats the word "now" three times as he says "Even now, now, very now, an old black ram / Is tupping your white ewe" (*Oth*. 1.1.87-88), creating a sense of urgency by emphasizing that this is happening as he speaks. Lastly, he uses the verb "arise" thrice in the space of four lines (*Oth*. 1.1.88-91), not only calling Brabantio to action before it is too late to stop Desdemona and Othello's coupling, but it is a direct command designed to make Brabantio involve himself in Othello's private business. This use of repetition ties in with Mccullen Jr's identification of "two distinctive characteristics of Iago's ability to persuade" (235), one of them being "skilful repetition" (235). However, where Iago insinuates "something different using the same

words" (Christofides) in his conversation with Othello later in the play, Iago's earliest use of repetition is basic and straightforward as there is no subtext; he means what he says, speaking in clear and simple terms to startle Brabantio.

Having secured Brabantio's attention, Iago embarks on his coup de grâce by combining explicit sexual, animalistic, and racist images to distress him, coercing Brabantio into acting against Othello by poisoning his mind with what Honshuku refers to as type II imagery. (Type I images are typically noble, poetic, romantic, exotic, hyperbolic, and "furnish the readers' mind with beautiful pictures" (Honshuku 30), while type II images "have no touch of nobleness. They are based, realistic and material images used in many cases in a pejorative way with contemptuous implications" (Honshuku 30)). Considering "Many of the animal images, diabolic images, and images of bodily functions are classified under this type" (Honshuku 30), instances of type II imagery would include "an old black ram / Is tupping your white ewe!" (*Oth*. 1.1.87-88), "Or else the devil will make a grandsire of you" (*Oth*. 1.1.90), "your daughter covered with a Barbary horse" (*Oth*. 1.1.110) and "your daughter / and the Moor are now making the beast with two backs" (*Oth*. 1.1.114-115). There are different ways of approaching Iago's figurative language, but as the animalistic, racist, and sexual images each serve a purpose of their own, it would be more constructive to identify the workings of each image before looking at the overall effect.

The animalistic images ("ram", "ewe", "[Barbary] horse" and "beast") dehumanize their referents, depicting Othello and Desdemona as animals driven by base urges. Apart from denigrating their union by likening it to that of senseless animals in heat, Othello in particular is made more vulnerable as the lack of reason associated with rams and horses erodes his humanity, leaving him more susceptible to violence. In addition, as "horse" is a way of referring to someone contemptuously and "beast" implies monstrosity, Iago transfers his contempt of Othello onto Brabantio by making the latter see Othello through Iago's own eyes. Lastly, by placing animalistic images within a setting governed by sexual undertones, Brabantio connotes Othello and Desdemona's union with bestiality, further contributing to revolt at its unnaturalness and wrath directed at Othello for initiating such aberrations. Iago also uses racist images, playing on contemporary fears and associations of blackness with vice and demonic forces. Luckyj makes a point of Iago seizing "on the established cultural repertoire of racialised insults to smear his enemy" (18), and Iago emphasizing Othello's skin colour ("black ram", "Barbary horse") within a culture that associates "black with evil and white with 'fair' virtue" (18) becomes an act of vilifying and alienating the general. By contrasting Othello's blackness with Desdemona's whiteness ("black ram / Is tupping your

white ewe!" (*Oth*. 1.1.87-88)), Iago highlights the aberrancy of the union and implies that the pure Desdemona is being literally and figuratively stained by the personification of evil. This would be especially shameful for Brabantio as "female chastity is the cornerstone of patriarchy" (Cohen, *Shakespeare's Culture* 8), meaning Iago's use of racial images not only contributes to vilifying Othello, but Othello despoiling Desdemona becomes a direct challenge to Brabantio's authority.

Iago also refers to the sexual act four times in his conversation with Brabantio ("Is tupping", "grandsire of you", "covered with a Barbary horse" and "making the beast with two backs"). In the same way he appeals to Othello's imagination during the temptation scene by visualizing Desdemona's affair with Cassio (*Oth*. 3.3.400-411), Iago fills Brabantio's mind with explicit images as getting Brabantio to imagine his daughter's sexual exploits is likely to appal him and put him into a frenzy. Rather than focusing on the beauty of two souls uniting in harmony, Iago's incessant focus on the corporal aspects of marriage dirties the union by associating it with degeneracy and baseness, encouraging Brabantio to protest this anomaly. Finally, Iago refers to Othello as "the devil" (*Oth*. 1.1.90). While this connection is deeply racist and speaks of fears related to the mixing and contamination of "pure" bloodlines, the threat that he "will make a grandsire" of Brabantio is disturbing to the latter. Iago reminds him that Desdemona's marriage will not only affect her honour, but that it poses a real peril to Brabantio's legacy as Desdemona's adulterated offspring will become his heirs. Hence, though the animalistic, sexual, and racist images are powerful and suggestive on their own, each element amplifies the others when paired together. Honshuku is therefore right in claiming Iago "uses the technique most suitable to each of his victims in order to push him about in this world of deception" (51), in this case appealing to and weaponizing Brabantio's fears and prejudices to coerce him into breaking apart Othello's marriage.

Iago then turns to Roderigo, engaging him in a conversation with the intention of using him as a weapon against Othello. Expanding on his approach in act I, scene I, he uses several linguistic techniques to alter Roderigo's behaviour. Iago exclusively uses you-language in his opening conversation with Roderigo in act I, scene I, but come act I, scene III, he solely relies on thou-language for as long as they share the stage. In fact, Iago uses pronouns like "thy", "thyself", "thou" and "thee" no less than 26 times over the course of 38 lines (*Oth*. 1.3.335-373). The grammatical shift may be a linguistic element or phonetic phenomenon added by Shakespeare in order to have linguistic variety in his writing, but considering the shift in reference terms mirrors what Edmund and Lady Macbeth do in their respective plays (Edmund shifts to thou-language from 2.1.74 while Lady Macbeth shifts to

you-language from 1.5.58), the repeated pattern points to the tragic antagonists deliberately using it to manipulate their listeners. As "people would also use *thou* when they wanted special intimacy" (Crystal 193), Iago's shift to thou-language creates a new-found (though linguistically constructed) closeness between him and Roderigo where the latter is led to believe Iago cares about his woes as the ensign refers to him on a more intimate level than before. Iago creates a false sense of them belonging to the same alliance not only because "*thou* was also normal when the lower classes talked to each other" (Crystal 193), but they have something in common as both share in the sufferings caused by people of higher classes than themselves (Desdemona and Othello). The extensive use of pronouns is a way for Iago to stress that they are united in their struggles as he uses thou-language to evoke kinship and make Roderigo act according to his advice.

Iago also weaponizes gender, gender expectations and masculinity to alter Roderigo and Othello's inclinations at various points in the play, coercing them into acting in ways that will bring his revenge into fruition. Echoing Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth* 1.7, Iago outright tells Roderigo "Come, be a man!" (*Oth*. 1.3.336). Where Cohen writes that manliness is largely equated with violence in *Macbeth* (*Shakespeare's Culture* 133), Iago plays on contemporary associations by linking manliness with traits such as toughness, courage, independence, and assertiveness. Jacobsen is thus largely correct when writing Iago "exhorts his 'soldiers' […] [by] calling their manhood into question through emotional exclamations and rhetorical questions" (509), but more than that, Iago tells Roderigo which actions to undertake if he is to prove his masculinity. For instance, "drown[ing] cats / and blind puppies" (*Oth*. 1.3.336-337) rather than himself is a way to prove his toughness, and if he remains brave by waiting until Desdemona tires of Othello, he "shalt enjoy her" (*Oth*. 1.3.338). Iago then encourages Roderigo to be independent and assertive by doing something useful (putting money in his purse), spurring him into action by commanding him to undertake otherwise masculine activities. That is, where Lady Macbeth weaponizes gender expectations to make Macbeth engage in violence, Iago uses it to manipulate Roderigo by implying that if he fails to do as Iago commands, he would not be a man. (Iago echoes this when talking to Othello later in the play, telling him "Would you would bear your fortune like a man!" (*Oth*. 4.1.61), "Good sir, be a man" (*Oth*. 4.1.65) and "A passion must unsuiting such a man" (*Oth*. 4.1.78).)

Furthermore, the ensign repeats keywords related to money and moneymaking to alter Roderigo's behaviour and inclinations, coercing him into a state of mind where economic concerns supersede emotional ones. Throughout the "money in thy purse" speech (*Oth*. 1.3.335-373), Iago repeats structurally similar phrases pertaining to earning money, among

them “Put money in thy purse” (*Oth*. 1.3.340), “fill thy purse with money” (*Oth*. 1.3.347) and “provide thy money” (*Oth*. 1.3.372). Duplicating his approach towards Brabantio in act I, scene I, “This repetition has the effect of a refrain included to emphasize a key idea” (Mccullen Jr 253). However, where Brabantio was made to see Desdemona’s marriage as an urgent threat, Roderigo is told to ignore his distress and focus on sufficiently increasing his revenue. Apart from emphasizing the key idea of his speech, the need for moneymaking is reinforced by repetition containing minimal variation on a linguistic level, becoming a hypnotizing chant that by virtue of its regularity steadily erodes Roderigo’s will and replaces it with Iago’s. “Put money in thy purse” is also a direct command containing no subtext. Iago says what he means, which is noteworthy as his straightforwardness and honesty towards Roderigo echoes his initial manipulation of Brabantio, but stands in contrast to his ambiguous and subtle manipulation of Othello. Roderigo is oblivious to the fact that Iago does this so “(1) he might bring about Othello’s demise and (2) have Roderigo on hand as a scapegoat” (Archer and Gillings 8), but the direct command “put money in thy purse” nevertheless becomes an overt form of linguistic violence as Iago successfully substitutes Roderigo’s will with that of his own through direct and calculated use of repetition.

Lastly, Iago relies on promises and offers of exchange as he tells Roderigo he shall have Desdemona provided he does as Iago tells him. Vocalizing his strong beliefs of Desdemona soon tiring of Othello, he deceitfully promises Roderigo “thou shalt enjoy her” (*Oth*. 1.3.358) provided the ensign is successful in his schemes, though this is followed by the caveat “therefore make money” (*Oth*. 1.3.359). Echoing the identical sentiment “Therefore, put money in thy purse” (*Oth*. 1.3.353) a few lines earlier, the implication is twofold; when Desdemona breaks away from Othello, she is sure to have many suitors, meaning Roderigo must find a way that puts him above the rest, which would be achieved through increasing his revenue. More importantly, Iago implicitly implies that women, Desdemona included, can be bought as they are attracted to riches rather than looks and personal virtues, meaning Roderigo’s success in wooing Desdemona hinges on his economic prosperity and generosity. Apart from revealing Iago’s deep concern with female sexuality and eroticism as he deploys “a misogynistic ideological force” (Derrin 368), his way of exploiting Roderigo’s love for Desdemona through offers of exchange and promises becomes an effective way of altering Roderigo’s behaviour and inclinations. By equating Desdemona’s love with revenue, the Venetian is coerced into an action that opposes his actual will (i.e., suicide). Nothing of what Iago tells Roderigo matches with what we come to know about Desdemona, but Roderigo nevertheless believes in the convenient narrative that Desdemona can be bought. Thus, by

promising Desdemona's hand in return for Roderigo's cooperation, the latter becomes another victim of Iago's use of linguistic violence as his will is replaced by that of the ensign. What is therefore evident from the first act of the play is Iago's commandeering way of talking to Roderigo. As pointed out by Honshuku, "He almost lectures to him with definite power and conviction" (55), and he "speaks very much in prose style" (55). He is wordy and direct in his instructions, leaving no room for doubt as he repeats his message multiple times.

Notably, critics disagree about the particulars of Iago's linguistic approach post act I, but when talking about Iago the manipulator, they usually zoom in on act III, scene III as they label it "the turning point of the play" (Van Oort 130). Though he spends parts of act II and III falsely convincing Othello of his loyalty with the aim of making the latter see him as faithful, righteous, and trustworthy, Iago's manipulation of Othello comes to a head during the temptation scene. Here the ensign successfully gaslights his commander into believing he is being cuckolded by Desdemona, planting the seeds of jealousy, rage, and paranoia that will bring about the play's tragedy. However, his linguistic approach markedly differs from earlier in the play because where the language he employed in the presence of Brabantio and Roderigo was largely clear and straightforward, Kelly argues Iago is now at pains to obscure his language. Iago's narrations "evince a mastery of understatement, hinted allegations, suspicion, and innuendo […] [as] nothing is overt; meanings and intentions must be guessed at" (Kelley 58). Throughout the temptation scene, he consistently relies on ambiguity, aposiopesis, fragmented narrative, irony, and equivocation to lure Othello into discovering and believing a fallacious narrative that sets him on the path of murderous revenge. His strategy "relies on successive waves of attack rather than a single knockout blow" (Jacobsen 516), and unlike his confident and domineering presence earlier in the play, "He begins casually and tentatively, effacing the signs of premeditation" (Jacobsen 516).

Upon seeing Cassio taking his leave of Desdemona and Emilia, Iago strikes his first blow:

> IAGO. Ha, I like not that.
> OTHELLO. What dost thou say?
> IAGO. Nothing, my lord; or if – I know not what. (*Oth*. 3.3.34-36)

How to interpret "Ha, I like not that" is largely a matter of performance as an actor's intonation when exclaiming "Ha" may suggest everything from indignation to suspicion, to wonder or even triumph, but common for them all is that it sets the tone for how Iago pretends to feel about seeing Desdemona with Cassio. The meaning of "I like not that" also depends on vocalization and staging, mainly how loudly Iago is speaking and who he is

facing. If he is talking to himself, it might be assumed he is doing so to garner Othello's attention "by appearing to speak a thought aloud almost despite himself" (Corcoran 196), but if he is speaking directly to Othello, Iago is being more overt and purposeful in introducing the "idea that something is purportedly amiss" (Beier 42). Regardless of his initial level of commitment though, Iago fluctuates between knowledge and ignorance, using aposiopesis not only to suggest two competing narratives, but that he struggles to commit to one of them. Indeed, "or if –" suggests there is more to the story than simply "Nothing" (note how this echoes the use of "nothing" in *King Lear*), though not necessarily "a complete narrative" as suggested by O'Keeffe. After all, suggesting another narrative exists, regardless of its complexity, is enough to catch Othello's attention, though not enough to make him "desperate to hear the whole story" (O'Keeffe). Hence, though O'Keeffe overestimates the effect of Iago's use of aposiopesis, the ensign succeeds in directing Othello's attention towards Cassio and Desdemona, priming him to second-guess his wife's entreaties on Cassio's behalf as Iago has introduced the idea that there is something dubious about their relation.

Rather than directly expressing his concerns and thoughts regarding Desdemona and Cassio's relationship, Iago uses the moment to his advantage as he refuses to say what is bothering him though Othello keeps pressing, seemingly protecting the latter from the "monster in [Iago's] thought / Too hideous to be shown" (*Oth*. 3.3.111-112). Having tricked Othello into thinking there is more to the matter, Iago refuses to grant the request "speak to me, as to thy thinkings" (*Oth*. 3.3.134). Rather, he retorts "Utter my thoughts? Why, say they are vile and false?" (*Oth*. 3.3.139), feigning reluctance or even incredulity at the thought of speaking his mind and admitting for the first time that what he is thinking may be abominable (though false). As Othello keeps pressing him to articulate his thoughts, Iago replies:

> - that your wisdom
> From one that so imperfectly conceits
> Would take no notice, nor build yourself a trouble
> Out of his scattering and unsure observance:
> It were not for your quiet nor your good (*Oth*. 3.3.151-155)

Though he attempts to understate his own observations by claiming they are uncertain and possibly the product of a mind whose imaginations are imperfect, he indirectly confirms he may know something deeply troublesome and/or incriminating about Cassio, which further makes Othello project his fears and worries unto Iago's hinted allegations. Iago raises suspicion on Othello's behalf by confirming he beheld something despite the observance being unsure; though he is vague and non-committal as to what he has seen, talking about possibilities rather than facts, Othello's suspicion is awakened as he is fooled into thinking

there is more behind Iago's reluctance. Indeed, the ensign appears to stall for time as Othello demands him to speak his thoughts four times, and while Shakespeare may use this to build tension or highlight how Iago is at pains to obscure his language, delaying his answer makes Othello increasingly frustrated and worried, and thus more susceptible to believe the ensign. Thus, where Iago is direct and talks in absolutes to Roderigo, telling the latter what to think and do, he remains vague towards Othello in the first half of the temptation scene, raising suspicion and gently introducing the idea of infidelity through hinted allegations to prime the latter for his subsequent linguistic attacks.

Iago also relies on narrative during the temptation scene to manipulate Othello into believing Desdemona has been unfaithful, but unlike earlier in the play, his use of narrative is more complex and subtle. Obviously, this is not the first time Iago has used narrative to inflict harm or discredit his enemies. Echoing Edmund discrediting Edgar in *King Lear*, the ensign succeeds in having Cassio demoted by telling Othello a complete and comprehensive narrative of the lieutenant's drunken brawl in act II, scene III. What sets the temptation scene apart though, is the way Iago goes about constructing his narrative of Desdemona and Cassio's affair. Rather than having the different narrative elements co-exist from the outset, Iago deconstructs the narrative of Desdemona's infidelity by introducing each element separately and in relative quick succession, beginning with generalities before moving towards specifics. Firstly, Iago introduces the theme of his narrative, namely jealousy, as he outright tells Othello "O beware, my lord, of jealousy!" (*Oth*. 3.3.168). He then moves on to the traditional plot of the wronged but oblivious lover, saying "That cuckold lives in bliss" (*Oth*. 3.3.169), before turning to the central conflict of jealousy threatening to consume the unsuspecting mind ("Good God, the souls of my tribe defend / From jealousy" (*Oth*. 3.3.177-178)). A break then occurs as Othello muses on Iago's words and asks for proof. Iago then becomes increasingly specific, identifying the central characters of his drama. While Cassio is mentioned by name (*Oth*. 3.3.200), Desdemona is identified as "your wife" (*Oth*. 3.3.200), and though she is unnamed, the reference terms leave no doubt about to whom Iago is referring to. Lastly, Iago refers to Venice as the setting of his narrative as "In Venice they do let God see the pranks / They dare not show their husbands" (*Oth*. 3.3.205-206), and ends with a character description of what Venetian women (Desdemona included) are like ("their best conscience / Is not to leave't undone, but keep't unknown" (*Oth*. 3.3.206-207)).

This way of constructing narrative where "facts must be pieced together in order to construct any narrative at all" (Kelley 58) serves the purpose of building a believable narrative that diminishes Othello's faith in his wife's faithfulness. Where someone like the

gullible Roderigo is ready to accept whatever Iago tells him, Othello requires more proof as Iago simply accusing Desdemona of infidelity would most likely fall on deaf ears. Hence, knowing how to appeal to his listeners, talking about generalities like jealousy, infidelity, and cuckoldry before moving to specifics like Desdemona and Cassio's relationship and the behaviour of Venetian women influence Othello to construct a narrative for himself (from the fragments cleverly provided by Iago) in which these different narrative elements (that lack any real correlation) are combined into a cohesive tale. Consequently, Iago shows narrative's "variable power to build and destroy" (Kelley 47) because in *Othello*, the one controlling the narrative controls the world of the play and "the world of *Othello* belongs to Iago" (Bloom 442), meaning narrative is not only a powerful manipulative tool, but fundamental to how the characters perceive each other.

However, though Iago has cleverly introduced a narrative that brings Desdemona's fidelity into question, he needs Othello to internalize it if it is going to have any effect or consequence. Weaponizing the alternative truth, Iago reverts to using the same influence tactics as seen in his scenes with Brabantio and Roderigo, namely persuasion and repetition. Faking solicitude, Iago says "I see this hath a little dashed your spirits" (*Oth*. 3.3.218), and when Othello denies it, Iago insists "I'faith, I fear it has" (*Oth*. 3.3.219). He then claims, "But I do see you're moved" (*Oth*. 3.3.221), before ending with the similar line "My lord, I see you're moved" (*Oth*. 3.3.228). Unlike earlier in the temptation scene, Iago is more straightforward and overt in his claims. He confidently insists Othello is bothered by what he just heard, leaving no room for ambiguity, innuendo, nor equivocation like before. And yet, Iago's insistence is largely mediated by performance. As pointed out by Jacobsen, "Iago reads Othello's moods closely" (511); if Iago recognizes that Othello does indeed look upset though he denies it, Iago's insistence on him being moved is a way to get the general to accept his grief and rage, and encourage him to give in to these feelings (which would bring Iago's plans into fruition). On the other hand, Jacobsen writes "At particular moments, it is expedient for Iago to mitigate Othello's grief and rage" (511). While this may be true, the opposite is just as relevant as Iago occasionally needs to intensify Othello's grief and rage. Provided Othello is sincere in his insistence that he is "not much moved" (*Oth*. 3.3.228), Iago contending the opposite is a way to get Othello to question his own emotional response. By emphasizing he has ocular proof of Othello's emotional distress (regardless of whether it is true or not), Iago gaslights Othello into questioning his powers of reasoning, making the latter feel grief and rage not because he initially does so, but because Iago says so. Indeed, once Othello muses "And yet how nature, erring from itself-" (*Oth*. 3.3.321), Iago quickly interrupts, saying "Ay,

there's the point" (*Oth*. 3.3.232), confirming to Othello that he is on the right track. Thus, though the purpose behind Iago's use of repetition is dependent on performance, it becomes a form of linguistic violence. The ensign either gets Othello to accept his feelings of rage and grief, or he coerces Othello into thinking these feelings are his own, manipulating him into a dangerous state of mind that wounds him deeply and threatens Desdemona's happiness, safety, and life.

That said, though Iago has up until this point used language and especially narrative to manipulate Othello, I would argue he is aware of the "limitations and slipperiness of language and the tongue's ability to charm" (O'Keeffe). While O'Keeffe connects this point to the unreliability of narrative, Iago weaponizes silence when he reunites with Othello on stage after securing the handkerchief from Emilia. Knowing "The Moor already changes with my poison" (*Oth*. 3.3.328) (note how "poison" is a metaphor for linguistic violence), the necessity for speech has lessened as Othello is whipping himself into a frenzy as he grapples with doubts regarding Desdemona's fidelity. For example, throughout lines 336-376, Iago speaks six lines while Othello speaks 37. Four of Iago's lines are whole lines while the other two are half-lines, but common for them all is that they are noticeably short with "Why, how now, general? No more of that" (*Oth*. 3.3.357) being in iambic pentameter, "How now, my lord?" (*Oth*. 3.3.340), "Is't come to this?" (*Oth*. 3.3.366) and "My noble lord-" (*Oth*. 3.3.370) in iambic dimeter, and "I am sorry to hear this" (*Oth*. 3.3.347) and "Is't possible? my lord?" (*Oth*. 3.3.361) in iambic trimeter (where the former line has a feminine ending). Granted, this is not the first time Iago speaks relatively short, interspersed lines as the same thing can be observed at the beginning of the temptation scene (*Oth*. 3.3.93-119). However, while the structural elements are similar, the content and effect differ; where Iago initially fuels Othello's suspicion by using brief, evasive language and refusing to articulate his thoughts, his aloof and noncommittal phrases in the second half of the temptation scene seem to have no discernible effect besides expressing sympathy and encouraging Othello to continue his musings. This ties in with Evans' claim that "The play is full of contrasts and parallels, with one scene often clearly echoing ones that have come before it" (9); Iago repeats similar techniques throughout the play, but adjusts them according to the demands of the situation. It also connects with Evans' following claim that "Iago is a master manipulator of people because he so masterfully manipulates words" (10), but Evans fails to acknowledge how Iago's success can be traced to his intimate knowledge of "when is the proper time to keep silence and when is the proper time to speak" (Camden 68). (Camden relates this point to what is expected of wives/Emilia, but it reads as a good summary of Iago's abilities.) Indeed,

Iago's relative silence is a clever manipulation tactic; by allowing Othello to believe he has discovered the truth for himself, Iago's silence becomes another form of linguistic violence by virtue of what is left unsaid.

The climax of the temptation scene comes as Iago conjures an image of Desdemona and Cassio being passionate together, and telling Othello he would not have liked to see it. Echoing his approach when talking to Brabantio at the opening of the play, Iago relies on graphic descriptions where he combines animalistic and sexual images, telling Othello:

> It is impossible you should see this
> Were they as prime as goats, as hot as monkeys,
> As salt as wolves in pride, and fool as gross
> As ignorance made drunk. (*Oth*. 3.3.405-408)

Knowing imagining the sexual act can be more upsetting than witnessing it, Iago appeals to Othello's imagination by providing him with the necessary details, forcing him to visualize that which he fears above all else (and thus making it more real). Playing on Othello's paranoia corrodes the latter's belief in Desdemona's fidelity, coercing him into thinking there is some kernel of truth in what Iago says. Iago also uses the same type of animalistic imagery as used in his conversation with Brabantio (type II imagery), expressing contempt at the thought of them being intimate while simultaneously depicting Desdemona as a sexual creature driven by base urges (which conflicts with Othello's idealisation of her). By equating her with goats, monkeys, and wolves, Iago attempts to appal and torment Othello, distressing him by poisoning his mind with unbearable images designed to destroy and dehumanize Desdemona in the eyes of her husband. However, where Brabantio is put into a frenzy, the effect of Iago's use of animalistic and sexualized images is to make Othello demand "Give me a living reason she's disloyal" (*Oth*. 3.3.112). This gives Iago the reason he needs to be more assertive in his claims. Knowing Othello is prepared to accept whatever is presented him, Iago has laid the necessary foundation for his final attack.

The final and most forceful blow comes as Iago provides the fictious narrative of Cassio physically and verbally expressing his love for Desdemona when mistaking Iago for her in his sleep. The moment reads as a parallel to *King Lear* because in addition to mirroring Edmund's narrative of how Edgar attacked him (*Lear* 2.1.64-77) in terms of structure, content and purpose, Iago's speech pattern (like Edmund's speech pattern) becomes rooted in absolute truths characterized by assertions. Unlike earlier in the temptation scene, he moves away from relying on conjecture and implication in favour for a long and eloquent narrative (spanning 13 lines) filled with extensive details and quotations. Telling how "I lay with Cassio lately" (*Oth*.

3.3.416), Iago stresses that Cassio is a man who in his sleep "will mutter / Their affairs" (*Oth*. 3.3.419-420). He then claims he saw and heard Cassio do and say the following:

> 'Sweet Desdemona,
> Let us be wary, let us hide our loves'
> And then, sir, would he gripe and wring my hand,
> Cry 'O sweet creature!' and then kiss me hard
> As if he plucked up kisses by the roots
> That grew upon my life, lay his leg o'er my thigh,
> And sigh, and kiss, and then cry 'Cursed fate
> That gave thee to the Moor!' (*Oth*. 3.3.421-428)

Though the narrative recounted is presumably entirely fictious, it lends authority to Iago's claims not only because he leaves no room for interpretation or doubt, but because it is a comprehensive and believable account of what he supposedly observed first-hand. Iago makes his account appear legitimate by directly "quoting" Cassio (in the same way Edmund "quotes" Edgar); the use of quotation marks signals that what he recounts is verbatim, further lending authority to his claims as this is passed off as a first-hand account where Iago functions as a stand-in mouthpiece for and directly models Cassio. (The use of quotation marks in writing may be the work of an editor, but Iago makes it clear that he is quoting Cassio as he prefaces the speech reports by saying "I heard him say", "And then, sir […] / Cry", and "then cry".) Lastly, the content of the story incriminates Cassio as his actions and words categorically erase any doubt about his attitude towards Desdemona, revealing what he has "hidden" from Othello, and implicating Desdemona in the sordid business. Hence, the climax of the manipulations of Othello and Gloucester are structurally similar in several ways. Besides talking in a similar manner when they are at the height of their power (they move from conjecture and implications to truth claims and bold assertions), Iago and Edmund's final manipulation follows the same structure: they recount personal experiences where they rely on long, detailed narratives infused with quotations that incriminate their subject matters with the intention of achieving full control of Othello and Gloucester, only for this to be directly followed by a move towards silence.

Chapter 3.2: "I never will speak word": Explaining How and Why Iago Chooses Silence for Himself

A significant shift occurs after the temptation scene. Where Iago in the first half of *Othello* dominates the play's discourse, the second half sees him deliberately pulling into the background (both literally and metaphorically) and increasingly relying on silence. That is not

to say Cressler's claim that "The villain appears in the most scenes and speaks the most lines in the play, particularly in its early acts" (76) is incorrect; it is not until the play's last scene he is conspicuously silent. But though Evans is correct in that "Until that point near the very end of the play [where he declares "I never will speak word"], it is Iago who speaks most often and most persuasively to most people" (10), neither of the two note how the ensign chooses silence for himself after the temptation scene and the ways in which he struggles to control aspects of the tragedy he has set in motion. One might thus make the argument that Iago makes his move towards becoming a passive observer as early as act III, scene IV as he barely appears on stage, speaking a total of nine lines (*Oth.* 3.4.108-109, 3.4.133, 3.4.135-140) before exiting to seek out Othello. It is a stark contrast to his conduct throughout the temptation scene, indicating that like Edmund and Lady Macbeth, his success in manipulating his target persons paves way for his movement towards silence. Nevertheless, Iago's absence in act III, scene IV may be the result of structural necessities. Having served his narrative purpose, the presence of the Vice character is no longer needed, meaning it would make sense for Shakespeare to remove him for the time being. Iago appearing in every scene would also hinder the domestic tragedy from developing independently of him, meaning his absence is equally necessary as his presence.

Admittedly, Iago is noticeably vocal in the following scene (act IV, scene I). And yet, though it reads as a parallel to the beginning of the temptation scene, there is a major difference. Where Iago was the one largely controlling the conversation, the ensign and commander now exchange roles, confirming that "the linguistic positions are reversed" (Maguire 162), or have become increasingly blurry. This shows itself on several levels, one of them being on a structural level. This time, Othello echoes Iago (rather than the other way around), replying "Think so, Iago?" (*Oth.* 4.1.1) to Iago's "Will you think so?" (*Oth.* 4.1.1). This repeats itself a few lines later as Iago says "Or to be naked with her friend in bed / An hour or more, not meaning any harm?" (*Oth.* 4.1.3-4), to which Othello answers "Naked in bed, Iago, and not mean harm?" (*Oth.* 4.1.5). The reversal of positions also happens on a verbal level because where Honshuku argues Othello initially uses type I imagery and Iago uses type II, we now see Othello switching to type II imagery. The "noble and poetic atmosphere" (Honshuku 30) has been replaced by diabolic references ("It is hypocrisy against the devil; / […] The devil their virtue tempts" (*Oth.* 4.1.6-8)), animal imagery, talk of diseases ("As doth the raven o'er the infectious house" (*Oth.* 4.1.21)), and sexualized images ("Lie with her? lie on her? We say lie on her / when they belie her! Lie with her" (*Oth.* 4.1.35-36)).

Lastly, though their turn taking mirrors that seen in the beginning of act III, scene III, Othello interrupts Iago four times. Examples include:

> IAGO. But if I give my wife a handkerchief –
> OTHELLO. What then? (*Oth.* 4.1.10-11)

> IAGO. Convinced or supplied them, cannot choose
> But they must blab –
> OTHELLO. Hath he said anything? *(Oth.* 4.1.29-30)

Thus, considering "By reiterating a similar idea in a different key, [Shakespeare] could draw attention to significant shifts in the action" (Luckyj 35), Othello acquiring Iago's linguistic characteristics (seen in the temptation scene) is an effective way of depicting his corruption at the hands of the ensign (and subsequently why the play's tragedy seems inevitable).

While the shift in dynamics illustrates that violence has gained a momentum of its own through Othello, it also exemplifies Iago's retreat into passivity and silence. Judging by the use of hyphens, Iago's unfinished sentences, and Othello's exclamations and questions, it appears as if Othello repeatedly interrupts him, silencing Iago's voice by replacing it with his own. Granted, considering the play consists of multiple parallels and contrasts, the hyphens may also signal Iago deliberately breaking off in the middle of speech (i.e., he reuses the same rhetorical device (aposiopesis) that he used in the beginning of the temptation scene). By pretending to be hesitant to speak (as opposed to being interrupted), he is not necessarily suggesting conflicting narratives like he does when he says "Nothing, my lord; or if – I know not what" (*Oth.* 3.3.36), but it becomes a way to force Othello into filling out the blanks himself, indicating Iago still uses silence in moments where speech is either insufficient or inadequate. Whether Iago chooses silence by trailing off or has silence enforced upon him becomes a matter of performance (it is determined by the length of the pauses between the end of Iago's lines and the beginning of Othello's lines), but common for both interpretations is that Iago moves towards silence.

Iago's retreat into the background and move towards becoming a passive observer is further evident later in the same scene as he gets Cassio to incriminate himself, providing the ocular proof demanded by Othello (*Oth.* 4.1.111-139). Numerous critics, among them Homan and Kolin, liken Iago's approach to that of a director as "he literally stages a play in Act IV when Othello […] supposedly overhears Cassio talking to Iago about Desdemona" (Homan 142). Likening this to the account of Cassio's drunkenness, Kolin claims Iago "skillfully and

fortuitously develops fictions that ensnare his enemies" (28), though at this point in the play, it would be more accurate to describe it as a process of co-authorship as Cassio contributes to the narrative. Setting up what is effectively a comedy of errors, the case of mistaken identity, had it happened in the first half of the play, might have been the source of hilarity. However, as Iago's mention of Bianca (not Desdemona) and clever references to marriage ("She gives it out that you shall marry her" (*Oth.* 4.1.116) and "Faith, the cry goes that you shall marry her" (*Oth.* 4.1.124)) spur Cassio on to talk about her love for him and his disdain for seriously entertaining her, the lieutenant unknowingly incriminates himself in the eyes of Othello. Thus, recognizing the limits and the inadequacy of language (especially his own speech), Iago takes the role of a passive observer once he has orchestrated the beginning of the "play" (he only speaks nine short lines between the beginning of the farce and end of it (*Oth.* 4.1.108-159)), allowing Cassio, Bianca, and Othello to complete the narrative introduced by himself. Iago also appears as a passive observer as he permits the narrative to unfold without protesting or clarifying who the subject matter is. Had he made his objections, the tragedy could have been avoided, indicating that the Vice character's silence at crucial moments is part of his overarching plan.

Iago choosing silence when he considers it convenient is not a new characteristic though. Following Cassio's drunken brawl in the streets of Cyprus, Iago claims "In opposition bloody, I cannot speak / Any beginning to this peevish odds" (*Oth.* 2.3.180-181). Admittedly, the inability or unwillingness to speak is a recurring theme at this point in the play. Cassio ("I cannot speak" (*Oth.* 2.3.185)), Montano ("Your officer Iago can inform you, / While I spare speech" (*Oth.* 2.3.194-195)) and Othello ("Iago, look with care about the town / And silence those" (*Oth.* 2.3.251-252)) all make Iago speak on their behalf. And yet, though it might be read as Shakespeare commenting on the unspeakable consequences of random violence or the way violence silences individuals (as seen with Lady Macbeth), Iago's unwillingness to speak is not necessarily the result of ignorance as he himself suggests. The audience knows Cassio acting out is the working of Iago, meaning Iago's unwillingness to speak is a deliberate ploy to avoid incriminating himself. Having to come up with a convenient lie increases the risk of exposure, highlighting not only the dangers of language, but that Iago's desire to "save my speech" is his preferred response to the deficiency of language (as well as a recurring thematic parallel within the world of *Othello*).

Even so, as the play moves towards its end, Iago's use of linguistic violence begins to threaten his plans and security as violence gains a momentum of its own, and its unintended consequences become increasingly unpredictable, though he handles them for the time being

by improvising a new plan. Cornering Iago as he is alone on stage, the unhappy Roderigo confronts him with the lack of results in his pursuit of Othello's wife, threatening to make "myself known to Desdemona: if she will return me / my jewels I will give over my suit […] / if not, assure yourself I will / seek satisfaction of you" (*Oth.* 4.2.199-202). This shows that violence has gained a momentum of its own as symbolized by Roderigo's new-found independence, agency, and ability to question Iago's manipulation. That is not to say he is without agency in act I, scene III as he tells Iago "I will continently drown myself" (*Oth.* 1.3.306), but what differs is who the recipients of his actions are; where he initially intends to harm himself, his focus is now on Desdemona and Iago. Comparing the two moments, the relatively passive Roderigo has become more active as he in the first act seeks Iago's advice by asking "What should I do?" (*Oth.* 1.3.318), whereas in the fourth act he clearly and unambiguously spells out his intentions. Hence, the unintended consequences of Iago's use of linguistic violence become increasingly unmanageable; just as Edmund and Lady Macbeth deal with the fallout of their use of linguistic violence, as is Iago. However, where Edmund manoeuvres around Goneril and Regan, and Lady Macbeth struggles with her conscience, Iago must deal with Roderigo (or "thorn-in-the-flesh" as Maguire fittingly calls him (42)).

Correspondingly, Roderigo pressing Iago shows that the latter's use of linguistic violence is unsustainable and threatens to cause his downfall. Honshuku writes that Roderigo "is right when he realizes Iago's falsehood, for his words and performances are no kin to each other" (53). Telling Iago "I have heard too much: and your / words and performances are no kin together" (*Oth.* 4.2.184-185), Roderigo is the first and only character to hold "Iago to account linguistically and logically, questioning both his vocabulary and reasoning" (Maguire 40). Recognizing the disparity between promises and actions, Iago is left at his most vulnerable when Roderigo picks apart his use of linguistic violence, meaning it will become the very thing that exposes him and causes his downfall unless he can persuade Roderigo to avoid Desdemona. Iago's loss of control is also evident through Roderigo's use of repetition. When Iago says "Well, go to; very well" (*Oth.* 4.2.193), Roderigo replies "'Very well,' 'go to'! I cannot go to, man, / nor 'tis not very well" (*Oth.* 4.2.194-195). The same thing happens a few lines later as Iago repeats himself saying "Very well" (*Oth.* 4.2.197), to which Roderigo answers "I tell you, 'this not very well!" (*Oth.* 4.2.198). Consequently, where Iago uses repetition to evoke panic, doubt and paranoia, Roderigo uses it to undermine Iago and question his use of language. The moment reads as a parallel to act I, scene III because Roderigo exposing the emptiness of Iago's vocabulary and Iago's initial difficulty of responding highlights how he is slowly losing control and becoming a passive observer who

has silence enforced upon him. Iago's manipulation of Roderigo is thus ironic; had it not been for his initial use of linguistic violence, he would not have found himself in this vulnerable position, indicating that while linguistic violence is what successfully ensnares his enemies, it is also the thing that threatens to expose him, spoil his plans, and bring about his downfall.

And yet, though Roderigo challenges Iago's vocabulary, reasoning, and ability to persuade, Iago's loss of control is momentary, at least when compared to what happens with Lady Macbeth and Edmund. Granted, Iago is closer than ever to losing control as Roderigo bombards him with questions that demand justification. Second-guessing Iago's intentions and reasoning, Roderigo asks "What – what is it? Is it within reason and / compass?" (*Oth.* 4.2.220-221), "Is that true?" (*Oth.* 4.2.224), "How do you mean, removing of him?" (*Oth.* 4.2.230) and "I will hear further reason for this" (*Oth.* 4.2.245). But though Roderigo is on the fence regarding Iago's (empty) promises, the latter turns the situation to his advantage by "[supressing] prospects of narration in all others" (Kelley 64). Recognizing the flaws in his narrative as Roderigo repeats "'tis not very well" (which reads as an inversion of Julian of Norwich's "All shall be well" (Julian 70)), Iago silences him by imposing a new narrative of his own, saying "I will / show you such a necessity in [Cassio's] death that you shall / think yourself bound to put it on him" (*Oth.* 4.2.241-243). Consequently, where Lady Macbeth has silence enforced upon her once the narrative of Duncan's death becomes too overpowering and Edmund moves between silence and speech as Goneril and Cornwall attempt to dominate him, Iago's response to a potential loss of control is to supress narrative, indicating his control of language remains firm enough for him to also manipulate silence (something Edmund does to a certain extent, but Lady Macbeth is incapable of doing).

Kelley's preceding argument that Iago supresses narration in others is especially notable in lieu of him silencing other characters with the aim of preventing narratives that may challenge or subvert his own from emerging. According to Maguire, "As Iago gains narrative power, he moves from story-telling to staging" (63), and while this is an apt description, his final victory lies in moving other people towards silence. Literally silencing Roderigo by murdering him, Iago melodramatically discovers his dead body, declaring "He, he, 'tis he" (*Oth.* 5.1.108). Besides supressing Roderigo's voice by eliminating him, the ensign presents Cassio, Lodovico and Gratiano with a believable narrative where guilt is redirected onto Roderigo as he is revealed to be the villain referred to when Iago says "here's Cassio hurt by villains" (*Oth.* 5.1.69) (a clever move as Roderigo's death prevents him from defending himself and thus challenging Iago's claims). Iago also suppresses any competing narratives that may come from Cassio as he forces him into silence by commanding that he be

brought off stage ("O, bear him out o'th' air" (*Oth.* 5.1.104)). Lastly, Iago's final victory in this scene is his silencing of Bianca as he declares:

> What, look you pale? […]
> - Stay you, gentlemen. – Look you pale, mistress?
> - Do you perceive the gastness of her eye?
> - Nay, if you stare we shall hear more anon.
> - Behold her well, I pray you, look upon her:
> Do you see gentlemen? nay, guiltiness will speak
> Though tongues were out of use. (*Oth.* 5.1.103-110)

Forthwith, his movement from observing characteristics that are associated with guilt to directly accusing her of "guiltiness" and charging her to go with him (*Oth.* 5.1.120) is a way of redirecting suspicion regarding his own guilt while also silencing others who might reveal something about his manipulation of Othello. (Though whether he is sincere or not in his observations regarding the gastness of her eye depends on the performance of the actress playing Bianca.) That is, by imposing an incorrect narrative onto Bianca, he redirects suspicions from himself and undermines whatever incriminating narrative Bianca has to offer by claiming she has something to hide. Consequently, Iago not only chooses silence for himself, but supresses the prospects of narration in others with the intention of controlling the tragedy (which is beyond the reach of Edmund and Lady Macbeth in the second halves of their respective plays).

Nevertheless, come the final scene of *Othello* (act V, scene III), linguistic violence unequivocally proves to be the cause of the antagonist's downfall as his villainy is exposed by his wife (and later confirmed by Othello and the letters carried by Roderigo). Realizing what her husband has done, Emilia threatens to expose his villainy, which in turn makes Iago lose control and become an increasingly passive observer. The communication between husband and wife mirrors a tug of war where Iago attempts to silence her ("Go to, charm your tongue" (*Oth.* 5.3.179)), but Emilia declares "I will not charm my tongue, I am bound to speak" (*Oth.* 5.3.180). This pattern of speech defying silence characterizes their interaction until line 235 as the conversational structure and content remains the same (i.e., Iago telling Emilia to keep quiet, which is met with stubborn refusal): Iago's "What, are you mad? I charge you, get you home" (*Oth.* 5.2.191) is answered with "Good gentlemen, let me have leave to speak" (*Oth.* 5.2.192), "Zounds, hold your peace!" (*Oth.* 5.2.216) is answered with "'Twill out, 'twill out! I peace? / No I will speak as liberal as the north. / […] All, all cry shame against me, yet I'll speak" (*Oth.* 5.2.217-220), and "Be wise, and get you home" (*Oth.* 5.2.221) is answered with "I will not" (*Oth.* 5.2.222). The issue of Emilia in the final scene of *Othello* has been widely

discussed among critics. Latching onto her final act of defiance, critical discourse has focused on its connection to feminism (Zender 335, Sandhu 165-166), heterosexual marriage (Camden 68-70), violence within tragedy (Grennan 283-284), words as poison (O'Keeffe), female speech (Hamamra, "Silence, Speech" 8-9) and structural parallels (Corcoran 213). However, where Camden is correct in writing that the conversation is a study of "when is the proper time to keep silence and when is the proper time to speak" (68), it also highlights the threat Emilia poses unless Iago can supress narrative one last time. In fact, Iago and Emilia's marital fight symbolizes the climax of the tension between silence and speech which has existed within the play from the first act. Though the women have generally represented silence by virtue of their obedience and refusal to confront their husbands, the attack upon Desdemona's body reverses the roles, and though Emilia's refusal to accept Iago's authority is an early example of female rage, it is a symbol of oppression erupting and drowning out the silence that previously governed it. Grennan is therefore correct in claiming that "it is Emilia's speech and her silence that serve as direct catalysts to the tragic action" (284) because though Emilia's compliance and silence earlier in the play give Iago the tools needed to ensnare Othello, it is her speech that exposes him.

Iago's move towards silence is also evident on a structural level. Zender points out that "From the moment he acknowledges his deception of Othello to when he stabs Emilia, Iago speaks six speeches, none longer than a line" (335). This stands in contrast to the rest of the play as Iago is the character with most lines and because the audience has become used to his articulateness. While this relative silence is structurally reminiscent of Lady Macbeth's silence as she sleepwalks, Iago's silence is deliberate; where Lady Macbeth's speeches are unconscious utterances expressing her guilt, Iago's attempts at silencing Emilia by either removing her from the stage or telling her to "hold your peace!" (*Oth.* 5.2.216) spring from him recognizing "that his 'players' cannot be allowed to compare notes" (Cressler 90). Iago's plan hinges on silence not only for himself to avoid exposure, but for those around him as speech threatens to expose his doings. It is ironic that the one supposed to be under his power is the one who exposes him and renders him a passive observer, though his passivity can also be understood in a different light; Iago chooses to become a passive observer partly because his plan has succeeded and there is thus nothing more for him to say, and partly because silence is an antidote to the narrative that threatens to burst forth from Emilia. And yet, though Iago's silence can be explained in view of psychological and dramaturgical reasons, Cressler points out that "Many of the structural components of revenge tragedy are accelerated and compressed in *Othello*" (90) as "Shakespeare circumvents the traditional delay required by

most revengers" (90). Iago's silence in *Othello*'s final act may therefore be the result of Shakespeare exploring and challenging formal conventions. Considering the play moves towards its end and Iago has been the catalyst for most of the action and violence, his silence is not necessarily a conscious choice, but necessary for the wrapping up of tragedy.

The question of Iago's agency at this point is especially relevant when looking at his premature exit and fatal wounding of Emilia as it remains unclear whether him leaving the stage is a way of choosing silence for himself, or if his escape is him losing his nerve and fleeing Othello's wrath in a panic. While Iago's state of mind at this point largely hinges on an actor's performance, it is nevertheless open to different interpretations. As Othello realizes he has been tricked and manipulated, Iago finds himself in mortal danger as the stage direction denotes "[*Othello runs at Iago*]" (*Oth.* 5.2.232). While this attack upon his body echoes the duel between Edmund and Edgar in *King Lear* (the victim turning his sword at his victimizer with the intention of revenging himself), Iago exiting without accepting nor acknowledging Othello's challenge may denote him losing control, unwillingly becoming a passive observer unable to defend himself against Othello. However, looking back at his desire for supressing narrative coupled with his two attempts at stabbing Emilia to silence her (the second being successful as he fatally wounds her ("[*Iago stabs his wife*.]" (*Oth.* 5.2.223)), one might argue his premature exit is an extension of him supressing the possibility of narrative in all others, including himself. Apart from killing "Emilia for what he views as talking too much" (Kelley 64), Iago leaving the stage is a way of literally silencing himself as absence equals silence within the world of theatre.

The idea of the ensign choosing silence for himself in this moment is further supported by his declaration "Demand me nothing. What you know, you know. / From this time forth I never will speak word" (*Oth.* 5.2.300-301). When confronted with his villainy, he chooses to keep quiet and adheres to it for the rest of the play. Iago's state of mind hinges on performance, but whether it is a moment of triumph, resignation, or spite, the declaration that he will not speak points to a character who deliberately chooses silence for himself, though his motivation for doing so remains ambiguous. In addition to being an act of defiance, Iago's choice to remain quiet may be a dramatic substitute for either death, suicide, or the wrapping up of tragedy. Unlike most of Shakespeare's tragic villains who are either killed or die by suicide, Iago survives the play, challenging generic conventions and audience's expectations. By choosing silence, however, Iago metaphorically silences himself in the same way death literally silences other characters. Though he survives, the choice of silence might be read as a metaphorical death or suicide (echoing one of the violent episodes mentioned by Barish in his

survey of Shakesperean violence) as Iago choosing silence is his way of removing himself from the action and denying others an explanation. Moreover, where Othello, Desdemona, and Emilia die but Iago survives, story conventions demand an ending, meaning Iago choosing silence for himself is an example of Shakespeare following the classic structure of tragedy, but on a symbolic level rather than a literal one as seen in *Macbeth* and *King Lear*.

Chapter 4: *King Lear*

Chapter 4.1: "Nothing like the image and horror of it": Edmund Using Linguistic Violence to the Detriment of His Brother and Father

The use of linguistic violence is also characteristic of Edmund in *King Lear* as he, like Lady Macbeth and Iago, uses it to manipulate the people closest to him with the aim of achieving the recognition and status he believes has been denied him at birth. Edmund's view of his own social position has been a popular topic among critics who have written about the bastard's second scene in the play with Restivo focusing on the problem of bastardy (166), Cooley discussing the trope of the younger brother (341), and Craig examining Edmund's relationship with nature and the laws of men (148). However, I will focus on the ways Edmund is a trickster who "distorts and misleads from the very beginning" (Habinek 1054) as he relies on coercive language to gain compliance from his target persons. More specifically, Edmund initiates a trick using a forged letter to garner Gloucester's attention before engaging him in a conversation where he combines action with negation to awaken his father's interest. The stage direction notes that he "*[Pockets the letter.]*" (*Lear* 1.2.27), but only after Gloucester asks "Edmund, how now, what news?" (*Lear* 1.2.26), indicating that the latter already (incorrectly) believes the letter carries significance. Edmund then denies there is news, but Gloucester inquires "Why so earnestly seek you to put up that / letter" (*Lear* 1.2.28-29), to which Edmund replies "I know no news, my lord" (*Lear* 1.2.30) and "Nothing, my lord" (*Lear* 1.2.32). The effect of this is twofold. Firstly, staging his behaviour in such a way that Gloucester cannot ignore the letter, Edmund knows his calculated action will awaken his father's curiosity, tricking him into attaching significance onto something insignificant. Secondly, Edmund's language at this point features words that point towards deception, mainly "Increases in the use of negation" (Archer and Gillings 12). Throughout lines 27-39, Edmund uses the words "none", "no", and "nothing" once, while the word "not" is used twice. While this denial seemingly intends to be a way to deter Gloucester from prying, the effect is to make him more susceptible to the trick, something Edmund succeeds in as Gloucester eventually comes to perceive "the letter as the ocular proof of Edgar's villainy" (Hamamra, "Here I Disclaim" 219).

Apart from using the letter to arouse Gloucester's interest and suspicions, Edmund juxtaposes truth and fiction, using the letter and negation to invent a story intended to alter his father's behaviour towards Edgar. Knowing there is no treachery or conflict between his father and brother, Edmund creates a convenient narrative set to replace the truth (which

echoes Iago's method of inventing false narratives to manipulate Othello). This is achieved by relying on negation as the words "none", "no" and "Nothing" allow Edmund to (literally) create something out of nothing. Though he keeps denying there is news (and thus telling the truth), the insistent denial coupled with the letter has the opposite effect as the already confused and paranoid Gloucester attributes his own meaning to the words, coming to view the letter as "that terrible dispatch" (*Lear* 1.2.32). However, where critics like Habinek chalks up Edmund's use of negation to him attempting to ensure "his own innocence in the situation" (1054), it is nevertheless worth keeping in mind that Edmund echoes "Cordelia's response to Lear" (Habinek 1054). The repetition of words relating to negation may be read as repetition of linguistic themes, but Heilman writes that "While he is being made to see things as Edmund wishes Gloucester feels that he is detecting the truth" (172). By juxtaposing truth and fiction and inventing a story out of nothing, Edmund creates distrust, uncertainty, and anger by making his father feel as if he is discovering the truth, though the word "nothing" signifies just that. That is, the word "nothing" offers an empty space in which Gloucester is free to invent whatever story he fears, indicating that Edmund's consistent denial is a form of linguistic violence as Gloucester is coerced into an increasingly paranoid state of mind.

Having tricked Gloucester into thinking that the letter is indeed something, Edmund weaponizes the recent social upheaval to exercise power over his father and manipulate him into suspecting Edgar of treason. The "gulling of Gloucester is psychologically prepared for in the first scene of the play" (Ellis 275), set in motion by the forged letter, and finally brought to a head as Edmund uses his father's fears regarding social instability and "the subjugation of parents to children" (Ellis 281) as the starting point for his verbal attack. Mainly, Edmund tells Gloucester:

> But I have heard him oft
> maintain it to be fit that, sons at perfect age and fathers
> declined, the father should be as ward to the son and
> the son manage his revenue. (*Lear* 1.2.71-75)

Apart from expressing what "Gloucester would judge […] an especially dangerous idea because of what has just happened to his king" (Ellis 283), Edmund "fathers on Edgar an opinion similar to that in the letter, which to Gloucester sounds monstrous" (Ellis 283). This is achieved by framing the sentiment by saying "But I have heard him oft / maintain it to be fit"; as Edgar is the subject of their conversation, the use of the pronoun "him" refers directly to Gloucester's legitimate son, making him the speaker of the words that follow. In addition, Edmund weaponizes the recent social upheaval to exercise power over his father by relying

on grammar. He initially uses the plural nouns “sons” and “fathers”, seemingly talking about general matters. He then uses the singular “the father” and “the son”. The effect of this is twofold; firstly, Edmund has moved the conversation from the general to the specific, and secondly, he makes Gloucester believe he is the subject matter. That is, by using the singular though unspecific “father” and “son”, Gloucester is persuaded to insert himself and Edgar into these roles, thus having his inclinations further restricted as Edmund forces a false narrative upon him.

Edmund also refers to and exploits familial and social hierarchies to overcome Gloucester’s resistance and enforce a change in his father’s behaviour. Apart from being “deceived by a letter from his son” where Edmund claims “Edgar has turned against his father” (Maillet 15), Edmund exploits his father’s paranoia and weaponizes the reversal of social roles that otherwise uphold the family. As argued in the previous paragraph, Edmund’s statement “the father should be as ward to the son and / the son manage his revenue” (*Lear* 1.2.73-74) is framed in such a way that Gloucester sees himself and Edgar as the subject matters of the sentence. But the idea expressed also plays directly into what Gloucester fears the most: the inversion of familial hierarchies. Hence, “Edmund cleverly strikes his father at his weakest point, his conservative patriarchal views, including the fear of parricide […] and the paranoid […] terror of political chaos and of revolution supplanting the ‘natural’ order” (Sadowski 5). This is achieved through the suggestion “should be as ward to the son”; the word “should” opens for a possible event and communicates that this event is desirable and prudent. In addition, as the “son” and “father” are established to be Edgar and Gloucester, the idea carries extra weight as “This time it is directed not aganst Lear but aganst himself” (Ellis 281). Knowing his father fears parricide, the noun “ward” becomes especially potent. Apart from “Edgar” suggesting the need for a revision of roles within the family hierarchy where the oldest son and father ought to switch places, the infantilizing of Gloucester belittles him to the point where he is convinced Edgar has no regard for him whatsoever. Indeed, by claiming Gloucester is best suited to be a ward, “Edgar” not only implies that his father has become unfit to carry out his duties, but that it has become necessary to supplant the natural order because of Gloucester’s decline, which is what Gloucester fears above all else. As this conversation takes place in the wake of Lear having willingly divided his kingdom between Goneril, Regan, and his sons-in-law, Gloucester’s failure to recognize his own (supposed) decline and duties belittles him further. Where Lear understood his duty as king and father, Gloucester is put in a precarious situation because he seemingly fails to play the role of patriarch and is unable to see his duty as Lear did. Hence, by weaponizing his father’s fear of

parricide and upheaval of the natural order by suggesting Edgar is plotting to do these things, Edmund indirectly belittles his father and fully infiltrates his mind (in the same way as Iago infiltrates Othello's mind) as this is what finally convinces Gloucester of Edgar's villainy.

Having successfully gained compliance from his father, Edmund turns his attention towards Edgar, acting as a choreographer of tragedy by exercising power over and enforcing a change in his brother's behaviour using keywords and alliteration. Weaponizing the general faith in astrology to contextualize and make his claims more credible, Edmund recounts a prophecy he allegedly read to persuade Edgar that they find themselves in a climate of distrust. Here he lists multiple keywords associated with social upheaval, including but not limited to "death, dearth, dissolutions" (*Lear* 2.1.145), "divisions" (*Lear* 1.2.146), "differences" (*Lear* 1.2.147), "banishment" (*Lear* 1.2.148), "dissipation" (*Lear* 1.2.148) and "breaches" (*Lear* 1.2.149). The intention is twofold as the keywords not only serve to make Edgar hyperaware of topics relating to dissolution and distrust (contrasting with how Iago repeats keywords to generate hysteria), but the emphasis on relationships falling apart reads as Edmund attempting to coerce Edgar into a state of mind where he considers himself susceptible to experiencing these events. Furthermore, Edmund relies heavily on alliteration. Examples include "unhappily, as of unnaturalness" (*Lear* 1.2.144), "death, dearth, dissolutions" (*Lear* 1.2.145), "ancient / amities" (*Lear* 1.2.145-146), "menaces and maledictions" (*Lear* 1.2.146) and "nobles, needless" (*Lear* 1.2.147). Besides giving his speech a sense of cohesiveness and rhythm, Edmund emphasizes the idea of social dissolution; by using alliteration to make his words more memorable, the effect is to seize Edgar's attention, manipulating him into questioning his relationship with Gloucester. Thus, where critics are correct in saying Edmund "ridicules his father's credulous reliance on astrology" (Parr 125) and "provides a sardonic choral commentary on this 'excellent foppery of the world'" (Ellis 284), Edmund uses the widespread faith in astrology as the basis for the narrative in which he employs carefully selected keywords and alliteration to coerce Edgar into thinking that distrust and dissolution threaten his family, or will do so in the near future.

However, where Iago is successful in his use of keywords and repetition, Edmund's initial use of alliteration and keywords fails to serve its intended purpose; "When Edgar again fails to respond properly […], Edmund abruptly switches his approach" (Ellis 286). Like Iago, he improvises according to circumstances, but Edmund does not simply put "the fear of a strangely enraged father in Edgar" as he "advises him to go armed" as pointed out by Ellis (286). Intending to create doubt on Edgar's part and manipulate him into questioning the solidity of his familial relationships (in the same way Othello is made to question his marriage

before Iago can manoeuvre him like a puppet), Edmund first implies Gloucester is unhappy with Edgar by asking the latter suggestive questions like “Parted you in good terms? Found you no / displeasure in him, by word nor countenance?” (*Lear* 1.2.155-156). The interrogative sentences (signalled by the use of question marks in writing and intonation in performance) force Edgar to reconsider his previous conversation with Gloucester, and he must seriously entertain the possibility that his father is angry with him. In addition, the way the questions are phrased subtly pressures Edgar to provide the answer Edmund desires, mainly an affirmative answer. Rather than asking “Was he displeased?”, framing his question as “Found you no / displeasure in him” is more suggestive and subtly pressures Edgar to answer “yes”. However, though “Edgar’s credulity and too-ready compliance also combine to propel him, like his father, into accepting the manipulations of his brother” (Halio 17), Edgar initially resists Edmund’s suggestions as he answers “None at all” (*Lear* 1.2.157). Edmund is thus yet again forced to revise his tactics by relying on stronger persuasion techniques, mainly the use of commands and distortion of memory. This is evident as he says “Bethink yourself wherein you may have offended / him” (*Lear* 1.2.158-159). The word “Bethink” is a direct command, and a less subtle way to distort Edgar’s memory as Edmund enforces a revision of his brother’s recollections that will ideally complement Edmund’s alternative narrative. Hence, Edmund first subtly tries to coerce Edgar into a specific state of mind (making him think Gloucester is unhappy) by asking suggestive questions, but when that fails, he relies on stronger manipulative techniques like indirect statements and distortion of memory that say something specific (though not necessarily true) about Gloucester’s state of mind.

Edmund also behaves in a disingenuous manner as he relies on narratives where he exploits lies, half-truths, and insinuation to further enforce a change in his brother’s behaviour and state of mind. Chiefly, Edmund directly and indirectly suggests Gloucester is angry with his heir, and though this is technically true, the deliberate lack of sincerity and transparency on Edmund’s behalf functions as a form of coercion. He initially emphasises Gloucester’s anger by recounting that which he has “seen and heard” (*Lear* 1.2.171) with his own eyes and ears (the first-hand account granting legitimacy to his claims), mainly “the heat of his displeasure; / which at this instant rageth in him” (*Lear* 1.2.160-161), which in turn leads him to recommend Edgar to stay away “until the speed of his rage goes slower” (*Lear* 1.2.165). Besides confirming Gloucester’s anger by referencing his rage twice, Edmund tells his brother “I have told you what I have seen and heard - but / faintly; nothing like the image and horror of it” (*Lear* 1.2.172-173). Apart from insinuating that things are becoming ugly, Edmund’s refusal to disclose details forces Edgar to fill in the gaps himself (like Othello needs to fill in

the gaps in Iago's incomplete narratives). The suggestive clause ("image and horror of it") appeals directly to his imagination and creativity, which in turn might conjure more horrendous and effective images than Edmund would have been able to create through language alone. (That is, where Iago relies on silence in moments where language is inadequate, Edmund favours suggestions and implication.) Thus, Edmund provides the necessary framework for his manipulations by recounting incomplete narratives where details are only hinted at. This, in turn, influences the oblivious and blind Edgar into completing said narratives and, by extension, think that whatever his imagination produces matches the truth, which in turn enforces an undue change of his state of mind. (I.e., what Edmund leaves out is just as detrimental as that which he says, indicating that like Iago and Lady Macbeth, Edmund uses silence to his advantage even when he is at his most vocal.)

Another key aspect of the conversation between Edmund and Edgar is the way the former weaponizes group identification and reference terms (which words are used when referring to a specific character) to create distance and disruption within the family to sever the bonds which might otherwise keep them together. In his bid to alter Edgar's natural inclinations regarding the family unit, Edmund relies on the persuasion technique of forming alliances to coerce Edgar into a state of mind where he sees Edmund as a loyal friend and his father as a potential threat. For instance, Edmund refers to Gloucester either by using the third personal singular objective "him" (*Lear* 1.2.156, 1.2.159, 1.2.161), or as "my father" (*Lear* 1.2.151) and "my lord" (*Lear* 1.2.167). On the other hand, Edmund refers to Edgar either by the second singular pronoun "you" (*Lear* 1.2.158, 1.2.164, 1.2.170) or the noun "brother" (*Lear* 1.2.170). As reference "terms constitute par excellence a communicative resource for managing impressions and positioning of self and others" (Chaemsaithong 92), the use of "my father" and "my lord" is notable because one would expect Edmund to say "our father" and "our lord" as he is speaking to Edgar. But knowing that Edmund "has no intention of bringing [Edgar and Gloucester] together" (Ellis 284), the substitution of "our" for "my" not only serves to create linguistic distance between Edgar and Gloucester, but it creates a unit consisting of Gloucester and Edmund from which Edgar is excluded. As "Each type of label can carry connotations and evaluative stance toward the referent" (Chaemsaithong 92), Edgar is made to feel alienated and removed from his father (who he is otherwise close to), further restricting his behaviour and inclinations towards Gloucester.

Also worth mentioning regarding the use of reference terms and the forming of alliances is Edmund referring to Edgar as "Brother" (*Lear* 1.2.170) rather than "half-brother" (which would be the accurate reference term). Granted, Edgar calls Edmund "brother" in the

preceding line (*Lear* 1.2.169), and Edmund's repetition of the noun may simply be a way for him to fit in and avoid raising suspicions regarding his actual stance. The following lines also share structural similarities with two lines from *Hamlet*:

> EDGAR. Armed brother?
> EDMUND. Brother, I advise you the best, go armed. (*Lear* 1.2.169-170)

> HAMLET. Murther!
> GHOST. Murther most foul, as in the best it is; (*Ham.* 1.5.26-27)

This means the repetition of "brother" may be an aesthetic/structural feature used by Shakespeare in his writing, or a pleasing auditory feature pertaining to the ear. Another possibility is that Edmund deliberately uses the reference term "brother" to create an artificial alliance. As pointed out by Chaemsaithong, "seemingly-neutral terms (including age or relationship terms) can still be considered to constitute part of linguistic violence" (91) because Edmund allows Edgar to believe there is a closeness and trust between them, effectively manipulating him into thinking that they are allies. Indeed, by confirming that he sees Edgar as a brother rather than a half-brother, Edmund depicts himself as loyal and trustworthy, which in turn is designed to coerce Edgar into a state of mind where he is manipulated into displacing or disregarding whatever suspicions he might harbour regarding his brother's guilt. Consequently, despite the need for improvisation due to the failure of his initial approach, Edmund (and his language) becomes increasingly confident and specific in his manipulation of Edgar as he moves from using keywords and suggestive questions to producing an increasingly specific narrative riddled with shrewd reference terms that coerce Edgar into accepting Edmund's lies, and making him act accordingly.

Recognizing he has nearly depleted the trust between Edgar and Gloucester through using linguistic violence, Edmund makes a final push towards severing the bond once and for all by initiating a final trick where he pretends to fight with Edgar before cutting his own arm. Commenting on this act of instrumental violence, Edmund points out "Some blood drawn on me would beget opinion / of my more fierce endeavour" (*Lear* 2.1.34-35), before yelling "Father, father! / Stop, stop, no help?" (*Lear* 2.1.36-37). While the trick is a way to garner attention, McNulty points out that "The situation of a character stage-managing a theatrical experience to influence another character's consciousness is a staple of Shakespearean playwriting" (18) (as seen with Lady Macbeth "fainting" upon hearing of Duncan's death and Iago acting as a theatre director in act IV of *Othello*). This aligns with Edmund using the wound (and the action of the wounding) to strengthen his case and support his narrative

regarding Edgar's villainous nature. In fact, "Edmund here proves that the letter or the word cannot stand on its own: it must take with it a messenger, like a sword, to make it true" (Habinek 1057) as the self-sacrificial act becomes a tangible and undisputable proof of Edgar's wickedness, especially as Edmund tells Edgar to flee in order to deny the latter the possibility of defending himself (mirroring Iago's attempts at eliminating Emilia to avoid exposure). The wound is all Edgar leaves behind, but when Gloucester fails to notice it, Edmund says "Look, sir, I bleed" (*Lear* 2.1.41) to make sure his father understands its implications (it is visual confirmation that Edmund's narrative regarding Edgar's villainy is true). However, Gloucester fails to acknowledge it, instead asking "Where is the villain, Edmund?" (*Lear* 2.1.41), interrupting his son as Edmund tries to explain what happened. Whether the wounding is necessary or not thus remains up for debate as Gloucester's conviction of Edgar's villainy seems to exist independently of Edmund's theatrical performance, but the point nevertheless remains that the bastard continues to rely on tricks (as he does in the first act with the letter) with the intention of manipulating Gloucester.

Edmund also relies on narrative and literary conventions associated with epic poetry as he recounts what supposedly happened between himself and Edgar to coerce Gloucester into a state of mind where his natural inclinations towards his oldest son are altered for the worse and Edgar's reputation is rendered irredeemable. The following thirteen verse lines in iambic pentameter narrate the attack:

> Persuade me to the murder of your lordship,
> But that I told him the revenging gods
> 'Gainst parricides did all their thunders bend,
> Spoke with how manifold and strong a bond
> The child was bound to the father. Sir, in fine,
> Seeing how loathly opposite I stood
> To his unnatural purpose, in fell motion,
> With his prepared sword, he charges home
> My unprovided body, latched mine arm;
> But when he saw my best alarumed spirits,
> Bold in the quarrel's right, roused to th'encounter,
> Or whether ghasted by the noise I made,
> Full suddenly he fled. (*Lear* 2.1.44-56)

Mirroring Iago's linguistic patterns around Roderigo in the early acts of *Othello*, Edmund is increasingly wordy around Gloucester, providing detailed narratives that leave no room for interpretation. Like Iago, Edmund increasingly relies on narrative to manipulate his listeners (though where Iago adjusts his narratives according to whomever he is speaking to, Edmund's narrative follows a typical story structure with an opener (*Lear* 2.1.44), incident (*Lear* 2.1.45-48),

crisis (*Lear* 2.1.49-50), climax (*Lear* 2.1.51-52) and ending (*Lear* 2.1.53-56)). Of course, the shift from prose to verse may be part of how the play works on a structural level, but considering metrical structure can "be used to capture the dynamism of an interaction" (Crystal 219) and "be determinedly manipulative" (Corcoran 102), the grand style of the poetry serves to elevate the trivial squabble between the brothers into a significant and serious encounter. The grandeur and formality of the language grant legitimacy to the event, and the elaborate stylized syntax provides an intensity and gravitas to Edmund's words that would otherwise be lacking had he relied on prose. In addition, apart from beginning his narrative in medias res where he supposedly told Edgar of "the revenging gods" who "'Gainst parricides did all their thunders bend", the invocation of the gods allows Edmund to situate the current events in the grander scheme of things. By claiming the gods take an interest in and abominate Edgar's consideration of parricide, Edmund exposes the true horror of Edgar's beliefs while absolving himself of any guilt/suspicion by positioning himself on the side of the righteous gods by advocating against Edgar's plans. Besides recounting the attack in poetic terms, Edmund presents it as a battle (though "mock-battle" would be a more accurate description) where Edgar "To his unnatural purpose stood, in fell motion, / With his prepared sword, he charges home". Though the action does not involve extraordinary deeds in battle as typical of epic poetry, Edmund's stand nevertheless vindicates him not only because he has become victimized by his brother, but because the mock-battle underscores Edmund's heroic stance against malicious forces. This ties in with what Pertile writes about the wound which is "to 'beget opinion', yet not, […] opinion of Edgar's guilt but rather of Edmund's own valorous effort" (332). Though Pertile correctly points out that "That effort seems quite ancillary to the wound's primary strategic purpose" (332), Edmund is more concerned with his own defence as it depicts him as a sympathetic hero who has stood firm against the forces of evil. Given these points, Edmund's reliance on epic poetry makes his story more impactful and memorable, and the very action of exaggerating and elevating it functions as a form of linguistic violence as it is designed to coerce Gloucester into accepting an alarming (though false) narrative while simultaneously altering his behaviour towards his sons.

Correspondingly, as Edmund nears the height of his power, he abandons his earlier tactics of using conjecture and suggestive questions in favour for speech patterns rooted in assertions and absolute truths. Having confirmed that Gloucester is on his side as he calls for Edgar's demise ("That he which finds him shall serve our thanks, / Bringing the murderous coward to the stake: / He that conceals him, death!" (*Lear* 2.1.61-63)), Edmund makes a final push towards sealing his family's fate by coercing his father into disinheriting Edgar and "of my land, / Loyal and natural boy, I'll work the means / To make [Edmund] capable" (*Lear*

2.1.83-85). Relying on narrative and claim making once more, “a complex narrative surrounding the wound emerges” where “Edmund wants his wound to tell a whole story” (Pertile 332), mainly a story that categorically erases any doubt regarding Edgar’s villainy. This is achieved by Edmund reciting eleven lines that Edgar supposedly said upon their last meeting:

> I threatened to discover him. He replied
> ‘Thou unpossessing bastard, dost thou think,
> If I would stand against thee, would the reposal
> Of any trust, virtue or worth in thee
> Make thy words faithed? No, what I should deny,
> As this I would, ay, though thou didst produce
> My very character, I’d turn it all
> To thy suggestion, plot and damned practice;
> And thou must make a dullard of the world
> If they not thought the profits of my death
> Were very pregnant and potential spurs
> To make thee seek it.’. (*Lear* 2.1.66-77)

While the quotation marks would only appear on the printed page, Edmund points out that he is quoting Edgar verbatim (“He replied, / ‘Thou unposessing bastard”). Besides abandoning his earlier tactic of using implication and suggestions in favour of bold truth claims that leave no room for interpretation, doubt, nor uncertainty, the use of citation legitimises Edmund’s words because it is presented as a first-hand account where the quotations promise to be an accurate representation of what has been said. By extension, the use of quotation makes it easy for Edmund to attribute false characteristics, opinions, and sentiments to his brother because though he presents a false narrative, his oral modelling of Edgar makes it easier to pass off the untruthful narrative as authentic.

Lastly, Edmund emphasises that if confronted with the contents of his speech or proof of his behaviour, Edgar would instantly deny it. Besides being a way for Edmund to prevent conflicting reports from co-existing and thus allay his authority and credibility, “Edmund attributes to Edgar what is true of himself” (Foakes, KING LEAR 221nn70-7) throughout the quoted speech. This doubling is a secure way of eliminating Edgar as a threat while simultaneously convincing those around him of his own innocence. Knowing “the characters are repeatedly forced to choose between suffering persecution or inflicting it” (Anderson 94), “The wound, then, does not merely confirm Edgar’s guilt. It also paints a picture in which Edmund and Edgar appear to exchange personalities” (Pertile 333). That is, by exchanging personalities and characteristics, Edmund gives his listeners a reason to persecute Edgar while protecting himself from any attack brought on by a vengeful Edgar as Edgar’s credibility has

been reduced to nothing. By prophesising that Edgar is likely to deny Edmund's words ("I'd turn it all / To thy suggestion, plot, and damned practice;" (*Lear* 2.1.72-73)), any protestations by the former will be interpreted as insincere as they are incompatible with what he has privately "confessed" to his younger brother. In addition, seeing the situation for what it is, Edmund seems conscious of the fact that he has motive to go against Edgar, which, if taken into consideration by other characters like Gloucester, may raise suspicion and subsequently give Edgar the benefit of the doubt. However, Edmund turns this to his advantage; identifying that which might work against him, Edmund weaponizes it by claiming Edgar said:

> And thou must make a dullard of the world
> If they not thought the profits of my death
> Were very pregnant and potential spurs
> To make thee seek it. (*Lear* 2.1.74-77)

Being conscious of the fact that he has motive to eliminate Edgar, Edmund renders this fact harmless by modelling "Edgar" taunting him about it, thus circumventing any demurring. As such, besides using the quoted speech "to build up his case against Edgar" (Leggatt 157), Edmund uses discourse to disrupt an already fragile family dynamic with the intention of altering Gloucester's behaviour and inclinations, whipping him into a state of frenzy characterised by blindness, paranoia, and hate (mirroring what Iago does to Brabantio).

Chapter 4.2: "Edmund farewell": How Edmund Moves Between Silence and Speech, and Its Consequences

Having relied on linguistic violence throughout the first act and the opening of the second act, Edmund thus finds himself at the height of his power: Edgar has been banished, Gloucester brainwashed, and Edmund is the sole heir to his father's lands and title. "Like the older sisters, Edmund understands exactly how to manipulate his audience" (Maillet 28), though his method has evolved in accordance with his success. What started off as vague, roundabout language develops into leading questions, insinuations, and half-truths, before culminating in speech patterns rooted in absolute truths and assertions, characterised by long, eloquent, and detailed speeches spanning numerous lines. Edmund's stage time increases alongside his eloquence, and while "No one can deny Edmund's quick mind and cleverness since his language is very witty, ambiguous and deceptive" (Laleh 335), his true power lies in his ability to use language to successfully alter the behaviour and inclinations of his father and brother, coercing them into a state of mind characterised by paranoia, hate, and vulnerability.

And yet, as with Lady Macbeth and Iago, it is when Edmund achieves what he desires a drastic shift occurs. Following act II, scene I, he retreats into the background as his stage presence is drastically decreased, and the few lines spoken by him are unremarkable, adding little to the action. Often commanded around by his superiors Goneril, Regan and Cornwall, he gives up his autonomy and accepts their orders in silence, moving away from being an organizer of events to a passive observer as violence gains a momentum of its own, and its intended and unintended consequences become increasingly unmanageable and unpredictable. However, something interesting happens to Edmund during the last act as he seemingly reverts to his old tendencies of using language to his advantage, but silence is ever looming as he moves between choosing silence for himself and having silence forced upon him.

Returning to the end of act II, scene I, the move towards silence is immediately obvious. Edmund dominates the first half of the act, but as he is pronounced Gloucester's heir, he retreats into the background, becoming a silent and passive observer. He only speaks two and a half lines throughout the rest of the act: "Yes, madam, he was of that consort" (*Lear* 2.1.97), "It was my duty, sir" (*Lear* 2.1.106) and "I shall serve you, sir, truly, however else" (*Lear* 2.1.118). It stands in contrast with what has recently passed not only because of the linguistic shift where Edmund abandons long speeches in favour for single lines and half-lines, but because his contributions add little to the action. He simply nods in agreement to the questions and statements presented by Regan and Cornwall, "opportunistically [playing] along with Regan's lie about Lear's knights being riotous" (Tambling 42). Nevertheless, it is worth questioning whether Edmund is indeed using silence to his advantage as suggested by Tambling, if he has served his narrative purpose, or whether his silence in the rest of the act is the first sign of a loss of autonomy. Edmund's lies take on a life of their own as Gloucester, Regan, and Cornwall add to a narrative that supports Edmund's lies and commends his actions with Cornwall saying "I hear you have shown your father / A child-like office" (*Lear* 2.1.105-106) and "For you, Edmund, / Whose virtue and obedience doth this instant / So much commend itself, you shall be ours" (*Lear* 2.1.113-115). Not only do the other characters embellish Edmund's story, but they wholeheartedly believe him. Hence, Edmund has no need for speech partly because he has achieved his aims, and partly because his lies are embellished by his immediate listeners with Cornwall replacing him as the character with most spoken lines. And yet, Edmund's silence may be the first sign that he has become a passive observer because where he has served himself up until this point, he now pledges allegiance to more powerful characters, telling Cornwall "I shall serve you, sir, truly, however else" (*Lear* 2.1.118). Though it may be a delusive move necessitated by circumstances, it

signals that the consequences of linguistic violence have become unpredictable as Edmund serving someone else threatens his autonomy and individuality; where he has acted as a stage-manager, "[handling] his father and brother as puppets" (Laleh 335), he now finds himself at the mercy of someone else. This raises the question of to what degree Edmund is in control of the situation; though he may be using silence to his advantage, it may also be enforced upon him by outside forces situating themselves within the Edmund-Edgar-Gloucester subplot.

Edmund's peculiar silence is also noticeable throughout act II, scene II where he remains on stage for about 100 lines, but speaks only once, further highlighting his retreat into the background. Hearing the commotion between Oswald and Kent, Edmund runs in with his rapier drawn, yelling "How now, what's the matter? Part!" (*Lear* 2.2.43). Granted, Edmund's silence could be explained by the plot itself as the disturbance caused by Kent is of no concern to Edmund, meaning he has no reason to get involved. Indeed, as he has broken the bond between Edgar and Gloucester and thus served his narrative purpose, it would make sense for Shakespeare to decrease his role in the same way Lady Macbeth's role is decreased once Macbeth murders Duncan. And yet, he breaks decorum and "rushes in ahead of others who outrank him" (Foakes, KING LEAR 228n42.1), and Foakes explains Edmund's actions as him "taking the opportunity to show how well he serves Cornwall" (KING LEAR 228n42.1). Edmund makes good on his earlier promise ("I shall serve you, sir, truly"), but the question remains: to what extent is this a deceptive move designed to convince Cornwall of his loyalty, and to what extent is Edmund simply responding to the action? According to Clemen, "in Shakespeare's tragedies appearance and reality often merge into each other" (175), meaning in his attempt to appear loyal to those who outrank him, Edmund has come to internalize this hierarchy, and the deceptive nature he has put on has become self-deceptive to the point where serving Cornwall has become more important than serving himself. Though Edmund appears to be in control as he rushes on stage, it might be proof of the opposite happening; either his use of linguistic violence has become unmanageable to the point where his publicly declared support to Cornwall leaves him no choice but to keep up appearances, or because appearance and reality has merged to the point where Edmund has unpredictably adopted the role of vassal. Though Edmund seems to be in control, him rushing on stage may be one of the first signs of him losing control (like Lady Macbeth), acting mindlessly in the interests of others rather than according to his own plans and motives.

Like Lady Macbeth, Edmund disappears from the stage for several scenes at a time, and when he does appear, he is either silent or comments briefly on the action. After being absent for four scenes, Edmund returns on stage in two short ones (act III, scene II and act III,

scene V). Both are primarily expository in the sense that Edmund turns to the audience in asides, explaining his intentions and actions. He then returns on stage for act III, scene VII, but remains silent and is told to leave by Cornwall after twelve lines as the latter demands "Leave him to my displeasure. Edmund, keep / you our sister company; the revenges we are bound to / take upon your traitorous father are not fit for your / beholding" (*Lear* 3.7.6-9). McNeir is right in that Cornwall "overestimates the tenderness of Edmund's feelings" (193), and the latter's silence and passive behaviour can be explained in light of recent events: everything has gone according to plan or developed in such a way that Edmund stands to benefit from it, meaning there is no need for speech or action. In addition, keeping his distance suits his purposes as it allows him to engage in "physically distant violence" (Littman and Paluck 91) and frees him from taking responsibility.

On the other hand, rather than mirroring Iago in choosing silence for himself (especially when it is convenient), one might argue that the development of Edmund's character mirrors that of Lady Macbeth as he has silence forced upon him. Looking at it from a dramaturgical point of view, Edmund's narrative purpose is partly to set in motion the tragedy of Edgar and Gloucester, meaning having him appear in unrelated scenes would be unnecessary or even disruptive to the action. Just as the domestic tragedy in *Othello* needs to develop independently of Iago, the domestic tragedies of Lear and Gloucester need to develop independently of Edmund, meaning Edmund's absence is a prerequisite for the development of the plot. Another explanation for Edmund's absence is that though he has improved his position within the current hierarchical structure, so has Cornwall; the latter has taken control and situated himself as the de facto leader by reason of Cordelia's banishment, Lear's madness, and his marriage to Regan. He is the one to assume authority (regardless of its legitimacy), and Edmund has little choice but to obey orders. Thus, Edmund is reduced to a passive observer not by choice, but because social decorum demands it. Indeed, Cornwall dismisses him twice ("farewell, my lord of Gloucester" (*Lear* 3.7.12) and "Edmund, farewell" (*Lear* 3.7.22)), controlling Edmund's movements while simultaneously silencing him as the word "farewell" literally indicates separatism.

This ties in with the scene between Goneril and Edmund because though act IV, scene II develops the love triangle and the political rivalry between Goneril and Regan, it is also a continuation of the movement towards silence. Edmund appears on stage for 25 lines, speaking only once as he is sent away by Goneril, telling her "Yours in the ranks of death" (*Lear* 4.2.25). Goneril, on the other hand, dominates the conversation and silences Edmund in a similar fashion to Cornwall (in 3.7) as she tells him to "Spare speech" (*Lear* 4.2.21).

According to Muir, Edmund's involvement with the sisters is "not presented in detail, and we are left to piece it together from hints and guesses" (qtd. in McNeir 193), but I would argue his silencing is intertwined with and feeds off the women's power struggle. Critics present two opposing views regarding Edmund's silence at this moment: Hoover argues Edmund is the one controlling the situation and uses silence to his advantage, while Hamamra argues Edmund is being controlled and has silence enforced upon him by the sisters (primarily Goneril).

If we accept Hoover's claim that Edmund relies on a "rational, and pragmatic use of sexual passion" (94) throughout this scene, it stands to reason Edmund has retained his agency. His compliance is not motivated by chance or necessity; his submissiveness is a deliberate ruse, and though Goneril seems to be the one in charge, Edmund is pulling the strings as he encourages her to continue articulating her fantasies by not protesting that which she says. Furthermore, while Goneril's destructive carnality is used to show how Edmund "creates and controls the world he lives in, and how Goneril and Regan become dupes of his political goals" (Hoover 94), "Edmund's sexual exploitation of women" (Hoover 95) speaks of a character in charge of the situation. That is, Edmund lets Goneril create a romantic/sexual fantasy as he does not protest her calling herself "mistress" (*Lear* 4.2.21) (a word that might refer to her as a lover), kissing him, and telling him to "Decline your head. This kiss, if it durst speak, / Would stretch thy spirits up into the air" (*Lear* 4.2.23-24). By allowing her narrative to go unchallenged, Edmund exploits her passion by creating an artificial alliance as she is led to believe in the possibility of their union. More than that, he stands to benefit from her actions as she is not only spurred on to deal with Albany, but should the latter be eliminated, Edmund is sure to be the one replacing him. Consequently, though Edmund might appear as a passive observer, his silent compliance is a way for him to exploit Goneril, using her lust to build a powerful alliance for himself with the intention of eventually sharing "the throne of united Britain and the bed" (Sadowski 6) of a queen.

On the other hand, Hamamra argues that Edmund has been silenced by the sisters as "Goneril and Regan consolidate their power by castrating opposing voices" ("The Dialectics" 35) (echoing Iago silencing opposing voices in *Othello*). Goneril says "Spare speech" (*Lear* 4.2.21), telling Edmund in no uncertain terms to remain silent, though her reasons for doing so may range from "Edmund's voice and silence [being] appealing to [her]" (Hamamra, "The Dialectics" 36), to demonstrating her "need for a powerful masculine accomplice to secure [her] authority" (Hamamra, "The Dialectics" 36). Nevertheless, the idea of Goneril castrating Edmund's voice is worth considering as she dominates the conversation, speaking 18 lines

against Edmund's single half-line. She is also the one to give commands like "Back, Edmund, to my brother; / Hasten his musters and conduct his powers" (*Lear* 4.2.15-16) and "Decline your head" (*Lear* 4.2.22), subsequently taking control and organizing the action. Thus, Edmund can be described as a passive observer not only by virtue of remaining silent, but because he quietly carries out Goneril's commands. This ties in with their unequal power relation as Goneril is queen of Britain while Edmund is Lord of Gloucester, meaning Goneril's lust for Edmund leaves him in an awkward position as refusal might be viewed as disloyalty to the ruling powers. And yet, though Edmund may be using Goneril's lust to his advantage, there is nevertheless a sense of aversion because once Goneril says "Conceive, and fare thee well -" (*Lear* 4.2.24), Edmund cuts her off mid-line, telling her "Yours in the ranks of death" (*Lear* 4.2.25) and exiting the stage before Goneril finishes the next line, "- my most dear Gloucester" (*Lear* 4.2.25). Edmund's hurry to get away is curious, but it only happens after Goneril makes it possible, indicating that Edmund has been silenced and passive up until this point because he is losing control to the other political schemers in the play. Another way of explaining Edmund's silence has to do with the plot itself. Considering act IV, scene II and V revolve around the brewing conflict between Goneril and Regan, it would make sense for Shakespeare to focus on the women and their feelings rather than the feelings of Edmund. Hence, Edmund's silence may not necessarily be connected to Goneril's actions, but is a result of the play shifting its focus onto the tragedy of Lear and his daughters.

Come the final scene of the play, though, Edmund's use of linguistic violence proves to be the source of his downfall as violence has gained a momentum of its own, bringing with it unintended and unexpected consequences that threaten to silence Edmund once and for all. The bastard believes himself secure in his position, never predicting the possibility of the wheel coming full circle, nor imagining Edgar seeking revenge. Unforeseen by Edmund, Edgar allies himself with Albany, and as he enters the stage with proof of his brother's treacherous behaviour, Edmund is hard pressed to answer the accusations. Though Habinek believes "it is directly *because* of certain letters that very real violence is done to a number of bodies in the play" (1048), it would be more accurate to claim that linguistic violence is what harms Edmund in the end. In the final scene of the play, Edgar can be viewed as both victim of Edmund's violence and a symbol of retribution as he has come to seek justice for the wrongs inflicted upon himself and Gloucester. Hence, as Edgar's vengeance and thus Edmund's downfall is predicated upon Edmund's earlier use of linguistic violence against his brother and father, linguistic violence is necessarily the source of his undoing (which is an ironic metaphor for the wheel coming full circle).

But as the consequences of his prolonged use of linguistic violence threaten to become his tragic flaw, Edmund moves between choosing silence for himself and having silence forced upon him by the narrative and other characters. As Albany confronts him with the letter, telling him "read thine own evil" (*Lear* 5.3.145), Edmund replies "Ask me not what I know" (*Lear* 5.2.158). Mirroring Iago's "Demand me nothing: what you know, you know: / From this time forth I never will speak word" (*Oth.* 5.2.300-301), it is an unambiguous and undeniable rejection of speech as the wounded Edmund tells his listeners not to demand further comments on the letter's contents. He has no intentions of clarifying the truth known to Albany and Edgar, and like Iago, silence seems to be his only defence to this dramatic setback. However, where Iago's silence is final, Sadowski suggests Edmund "bides his time, waiting for further developments" (7) because "assuming that his wound is not mortal, Edmund might still win in his political game" (7). And yet, this hardly seems likely as Edmund readily (and unprompted) speaks two lines later, admitting "What you have charged me with, that have I done, / And more, much more; the time will bring it out" (*Lear* 5.3.160-161). On the surface, it is a curious and sudden change of heart because "In the space of one line, however, Edmund performs an about-face" (Timmis 129), but where Timmis claims "The conversion is internal but immediately communicated" (129), it is worth questioning to what extent Edmund's conversion is genuine, and more importantly, to what extent he follows Iago's example of choosing silence. Though he admits there is more to the letter, he never specifies what beyond the vague words "more". Indeed, despite promising "the time will bring it out" (*Lear* 5.3.161), Edmund refrains from saying what he knows, indirectly lapsing into silence by virtue of withholding crucial information (as opposed to Iago who takes a firm and permanent stance).

The issue of Edmund's silence is further complicated by his response to Edgar's tale of his and Gloucester's sufferings as Edmund's intentions remain ambiguous. Hearing of Gloucester's death, Edmund replies "This speech of yours hath moved me, / And shall perchance do good; but speak you on, / You look as you had something more to say" (*Lear* 5.3.198-200). Edmund tells Edgar to continue speaking by first commanding him ("but speak you on"), before offering encouragement, motivating Edgar to re-energize his narrative by appealing to his need for making sense of the senseless tragedy that has befallen him. Edmund's encouragement may thus be an example of him deliberately choosing silence for himself as making Edgar continue his narrative becomes a way to avoid confrontation and pressure from Albany, while simultaneously hiding that which he knows by distracting inquiring voices. However, Edmund's reasons for distracting enemy voices are somewhat

ambiguous because while some critics claim he undergoes a genuine moral reformation, others argue "Edmund's delayed decision to call off the execution is coldly calculated in self-interest, both to play for time and to mollify his captors" (Sadowski 1). That is, Edmund choosing silence by encouraging Edgar to speak may be a distraction designed to bide his time in the hopes of doing as much harm to Cordelia and Lear as possible, or him having silence forced upon him because of the moral conversion he undergoes.

Conversely, one might argue silence is forced upon Edmund as him encouraging Edgar is not so much a deliberate ploy to stall for time, but an example of "the deficiencies of the verbal medium" (Zitner 6) in response to emotional duress. If we accept his claims that "This speech of yours hath moved me" and "shall perchance do some good", Edmund's silence mirrors that of Lady Macbeth as she succumbs to guilt; when faced with the direct and indirect consequences of their use of linguistic violence, the antagonists show an inability to articulate a proper response, lapsing into a form of silence. However, while Lady Macbeth's silence has to do with the consequences of regicide, Edmund's silence can either be because he is too overwhelmed by emotion to respond (an interpretation which hinges on performance), there is a genuine desire for redemption that can only be achieved through listening to Edgar, or because language is insufficient and inadequate in the face of true violence. After all, the roles between Edmund and Edgar are reversed because where in act II, scene I Edmund dominated the scene with long, eloquent speeches and Edgar only speaking a few half-lines, Edgar now dominates the scene with long eloquent speeches, while Edmund makes relatively short comments in response to his brother. The roles are also reversed as the perpetrator has become the victim, and the victim the perpetrator, creating an interesting parallel as "Edmund and Edgar appear to exchange personalities, shedding and swapping them almost as if they were costumes" (Pertile 333). This mirrors what happens with Iago and Othello, and Lady Macbeth and Macbeth. While the reversal of roles and strengths is a common structure in the tragedies as the antagonists and their victims follow opposite trajectories (i.e., the antagonists are vocal in the first half of the plays but silent in the second half, while the victims are silent in the first half, but vocal in the second), Edmund being overshadowed by his brother may indicate language is insufficient when confronted with the consequences of violence as he can produce no adequate response.

That said, Edmund's silence regarding the matter of the execution might be a convenient plot device included to bring about the play's tragic climax. As the tragedy hinges on the untimely death of Cordelia and Lear's subsequent response, the structural integrity of

King Lear demands that the following information is not revealed too early (nor too late as Lear must survive to carry his daughter on stage):

> He hath commission from thy wife and me
> To hang Cordelia in the prison and
> To lay the blame upon her own despair,
> That she fordid herself. (*Lear* 5.3.250-253)

Thus, Edmund's silence has dramaturgical value because it is necessary for the wrapping up of tragedy. Following the belated confession, the wounded Edmund is then literally silenced by Albany who demands "Bear him hence awhile" (*Lear* 5.3.254). Edmund is given no saying in the matter, and like Lady Macbeth, he dies off-stage. Though in exactly what manner he dies is unclear (presumably from his wounds, though suicide remains a possibility), a messenger later reports "Edmund is dead, my lord" (*Lear* 5.3.294) to which the only reply given is "That's but a trifle here" (*Lear* 5.3.294). The bastard is thus involuntarily silenced by the action and the staging (a moment which mirrors Iago running off stage as Othello lunges at him) as absence equals silence within the world of theatre. Moreover, apart from being silenced by a specific character, Edmund has served his narrative purpose, and as Shakespeare's tragedies are characterised by their movement towards death, Edmund would necessarily have to meet his demise in one way or another. Another explanation for Edmund's demise happening off-stage has to do with the staging. Following Lear's death, Kent, Edgar, and Albany exit the stage, leaving the bodies of Lear and his daughters behind. Besides being a grotesque image, it emphasizes that *King Lear* is a domestic tragedy, which is why Edmund's death is but a trifle at this point. As the dead or dying Vice character does not thematically belong among Lear and his daughters, Shakespeare would be dependent on removing him before Lear's howl-speech, indicating Edmund's silence is not a choice but a structural necessity needed if the play is to retain its thematic coherence.

Chapter 5: Conclusion: Tracing My Steps and Mapping Out Present Concerns

This study has explored and analysed how violence and silence are key parts of the dialogue and action in three of Shakespeare's tragedies. Using linguistic violence as the basis for a character study of the tragic antagonists Lady Macbeth, Iago, and Edmund identifies how a dramatic pattern appears across *Macbeth, Othello*, and *King Lear*. By analysing the characters' use of language through the lens of linguistic violence, Lady Macbeth, Iago, and Edmund's changing use of language and subsequent character development are shown to be intertwined with the ways in which they act as linguistic manipulators and their success in doing so. In addition, by identifying and discussing changes happening on a psychological, verbal, and structural level, the thesis lays out how the antagonists voluntarily or involuntarily move towards silence. Driven by personal aspirations and motivated by social control, the three antagonists rely on coercive language to gain compliance from their target characters, primarily Macbeth, Othello, Edgar, and Gloucester. These trickster types often initiate a trick to garner attention, before engaging in a conversation with whomever they need to manipulate. Here they weaponize the expectations of others, while simultaneously using different persuasion techniques expressed through language like offers of exchange, forming alliances, modelling, and threats. These cunning influence tactics are often improvised as a response to the outcome(s) of their scheming, but relying on linguistic violence nevertheless makes Lady Macbeth, Iago, and Edmund increasingly vocal figures as their ability to weaponize language is the source of their initial success and increased prominence on stage. However, a shift occurs about halfway through the tragedies as the characters move towards silence. Violence gains a momentum of its own and its consequences become increasingly unmanageable and unpredictable to the point where the antagonists' use of linguistic violence causes their downfall. This is characterized by a loss of control and silencing as they move from being organizers of events to passive observers where Lady Macbeth has silence forced upon her, Iago chooses silence for himself, and Edmund moves between the two opposites, showing how availing oneself of linguistic violence is unsustainable as it destroys and silences the vocal characters it helped create.

Having provided a definition of linguistic violence and reviewed the critical field with attention to Shakespeare's use and understanding of violence throughout his career, the thesis has followed each play in succession while pointing out parallels and contrasts. First establishing revenge, power, and status as the antagonists' motivations, the thesis recounts

how they engage in manipulative conversations with Macbeth, Brabantio, Roderigo, Othello, Gloucester, and Edgar. Here the thesis has traced how the antagonists act and evolve as linguistic manipulators by paying attention to staging and performance, analysing their use of language (speech patterns, word choice, grammar, proverbs, visual images, figures of speech, quotation, repetition, equivocation, and narrative), persuasion techniques (threats, promises, persuasion, modelling, and forming alliances), which expectations they weaponize (manhood, cowardice, bravery, fidelity, social upheaval, and familial/social hierarchies), and their use of silence. The second half of the thesis focuses on the second halves of the plays and how the antagonists retreat into the background, becoming increasingly passive and silent. Relevant scenes are examined and compared to earlier ones by discussing and analysing staging, the psychological development of the characters, structure, and the demands of narrative, highlighting how and why the antagonists spend less time on stage, speak less compared to earlier, and undergo a form of silencing as they structurally reverse roles with Macbeth, Othello, and Edgar.

As Shakespeare remains popular among critics and audiences alike, many of the scenes looked at in this thesis have already been scrutinized in great detail (and with intriguing results) using different literary methods and theories. Having said that, though the language of the antagonists has been the focal point of literary and linguistic studies, linguistic violence is and remains a largely unexplored field, as is the question of silence. In addition, few studies have compared these three plays and particularly these three characters. That is not to say such studies do not exist; considering the popularity and longevity of Shakespeare, it is natural to assume comparisons of the plays and characters exist though they do not appear in select databases. But despite the thoroughness of critics, there appear to be minor gaps in the research as topics like linguistic violence and silence have received limited attention, especially in relation to Lady Macbeth, Iago, and Edmund. Moreover, as sustained comparisons focusing on three or more characters and/or plays are few and far between, I would suggest this is a valuable entryway for future work.

Another topic worth examining is linguistic violence. It is a broad concept that is hard to define, especially as there is no official or generally agreed upon definition. While its subsequent malleability and flexibility brings with it freedom, it also brings with it certain challenges, particularly the tendency that one might overstretch the definition and apply it to moments that have little to do with linguistic violence. Thus, providing a definition and assessing what it looks like in different settings is a field of study worth considering. A final critical aspect worth pointing out is that these tragedies were made to be performed on stage.

Though the thesis has looked at how meaning is created and mediated by performance in specific instances, various theatrical productions and performance traditions have not been considered as this thesis is more concerned with the plays as literary texts. However, as no official editions of *Macbeth, Othello*, and *King Lear* were published during Shakespeare's lifetime, what the thesis has attributed to Shakespeare may in fact be the work of one or several editors, printers, and/or compositors. What I have taken as Shakespeare's writing may be misreadings, typological errors, punctuation marks added during the editorial process, changes made to the lineation, etc. that have appeared during printing. Finally, as certain words have changed meaning and/or pronunciation, some words may have been interpreted in the modern sense as opposed to their original one.

That said, the sustained focus on linguistic violence is relevant not only because it builds on and adds to the existing and well-established violence discourse, but shows how violence is an intrinsic part of spoken language in Shakespeare's tragedies. Focusing on the period of Shakespeare's career that has been given the least attention in terms of research into violence establishes that linguistic violence is a concern of his come the middle period of his career, succeeding his superficial delight in the grotesque, but preceding his focus on violence within the natural world. The dramatic pattern identified across these three tragedies also suggests something about Shakespeare's working methods during this four-year period; the tragedies, or more specifically the plots concerned with the antagonists follow a similar composition as Shakespeare repeats the same structures (with some variation). The same thing can be said about the antagonists as these characters follow a similar linguistic and structural pattern, indicating that drawing parallels between Lady Macbeth, Iago, and Edmund discloses something about their character development, speech patterns and silencing that individual character studies cannot. Looking at linguistic violence has also offered a different gateway into understanding power dynamics in Shakespeare's plays, and how they are mediated by a specific form of language. These findings are relevant because they illustrate how Shakespeare's texts have still much to yield, and show how the relatively new concept of linguistic violence appears in literature as early as the beginning of the 17th century. Apart from suggesting language can have a hidden or obvious agenda, the tragedies provide examples of how it may look, offering useful reference points when discussing linguistic violence in other contexts.

Linguistic violence can also be productively applied to non-Shakesperean contexts. As it is a useful entryway into literary analysis, applying it to other literary works like novels, short-stories, plays, poems, song lyrics, or letters may provide new readings or expand upon

already existing interpretations. Linguistic violence (or verbal violence as it has been called) is also an emerging concept within different fields of study that is becoming increasingly relevant. Ranging from violence research with a particular focus on cultural and symbolic violence to the justice system, to what is happening in the workplace, there is a growing academic focus on how language can be used to harm others in vastly different settings. Apart from being an emerging concept in academia, there is an increased focus on how language can be harmful in person and online. As pointed out in the introduction, hate-speech, online harassment, and cancel culture are on the rise. Hence, as online users often are partly or entirely anonymous, the threshold for using language with the intention of harming, bullying, or manipulating is lower than before, highlighting how verbal violence is an increasing problem online.

Linguistic violence is often used in unequal power situations with the powerless using it against the powerful, or the powerful using it against the powerless. For instance, multiple celebrities have left social media and/or closed their comment sections (temporarily or permanently) due to online hate and criticism, which can arguably be labelled a collective form of linguistic violence. Cases include Justin Bieber who in 2016 stepped back from social media to "avoid hurtful comments that were being shared on his Instagram account" (Habbouchi), and quite recently, Justin Timberlake has turned off Instagram comments due to "the 'hateful, disgusting things people were saying'" (Ryan and Reslen). On the other hand, the deliberate spread of misinformation, false allegations, insinuations, and unproven suggestions have created dangerous situations, among them the January 6 United States Capitol attack in 2021 as mentioned in the introduction. According to the Jan. 6 committee vice chair Liz Cheney, "Former President Donald Trump had a 'sophisticated seven-point plan' to overturn the 2020 presidential election" (Bash et al.). This plan included Trump engaging "in a massive effort to spread false and fraudulent information" (Bash et al.), pressuring Mike Pence, state election officials, and Republicans in multiple states to change election results and refuse to count certified electoral votes (among other things) (Bash et al.), and ignoring "multiple pleas for assistance and failed to take immediate action to stop the violence" (Bash et al.) happening at the Capitol. By combining the spread of false information intended to manipulate his supporters with pressuring election officials (potentially threatening them), and using silence to his advantage by not stopping the Capitol attacks, I would argue Trump's scheme is a clear case of linguistic violence. Indeed, Donald Trump is one of the most prolific users of linguistic violence, utilizing it to his advantage not only to discredit his political opponents (among them Hillary Clinton and Joe Biden), but to

undermine the American democracy. Consequently, linguistic violence is relevant as it can be and is used in a vast array of settings where users have a specific and often destructive agenda. By bringing attention to the concept of and workings of linguistic violence in Shakespeare, and providing the necessary vocabulary to talk about it in literary and real-world settings, it becomes easier to recognize what is happening in certain situations and subsequently formulate an appropriate response or analysis.

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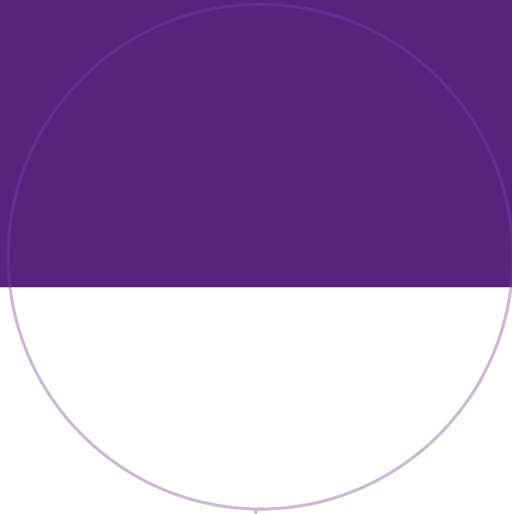

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