

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

THE LOVE THAT PASSETH UNDERSTANDING: LANGUAGES
AND DOCTRINES OF LOVE IN SHAKESPEARE'S *KING LEAR*

by
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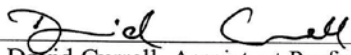
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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Gacia Danaoghlian for Master of Arts
Major: English Literature

Title: The Love That Passeth Understanding: Languages and Doctrines of Love in Shakespeare's *King Lear*.

This thesis discusses this painful and decisive event that occurs at the beginning of the play in *King Lear*, when Lear divides his kingdom among his daughters after making all three of them undergo a love test. Specifically, the interaction, language, conversation and communication between Lear and Cordelia throughout the beginning of the first scene will be the focus. The notion of love *King Lear* asks from his daughters and the surprising response he receives from his favorite daughter, Cordelia.

King Lear and Cordelia have different definitions and concepts of love, and these incompatible languages of love create a failure of communication that sets the whole tragedy in motion. While some earlier scholars have argued for such a conceptual distinction around "love" as determining this scene, I aim to bring forward specific theological dimensions in the characters' language and discourse of love by arguing that Shakespeare has consciously or unconsciously alluded to John 21:15-18 and that with this allusion comes interestingly different notions of possible criticism of doctrines based on socio-political and religious events in Early Modern England.

The first chapter will include the discussion of different scholars who have explored the theme of love in *King Lear*, and explained the misunderstanding from their own perspectives, mostly political and economic. This chapter nevertheless also aims to relate such arguments to the religious dimension that will be the focus of the third and last chapter. The second chapter will discuss the multi-confessional background which Shakespeare and other dramatists of early modern English stage mediated in various ways. This will help enhance my argument when it comes to analyzing Act 1, Scene 1 in *King Lear*. Finally, the third chapter will delve into the analysis of the new allusion and serves as the heart of the thesis to analyze the misunderstanding of the scene through a more theological lens, arguing that the drama subtly supports tenets of the Protestant doctrine, using the previous two chapters as building blocks and supporting pillars.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Sometimes a misinterpreted reply can be enough to destroy strong bonds, terminate relationships, break up families or disown children. The archetype of family feuds has existed across time, space and place and has occupied the pages of many authors. Shakespeare's *King Lear* is well-known for its ominous opening event that unleashes chaos: a king who overreacts, two ungrateful and manipulative daughters, a disowned innocent child and a kingdom unequally and unwisely divided. This escalation of events is due to "nothing" (1.1.89), a question asked and a response misunderstood. This thesis discusses this painful and decisive event that occurs at the beginning of the play, when King Lear divides his kingdom among his daughters after making all three of them undergo a love test. By reading this play within the wide context of early modern religious change, and this scene within the context of complex Biblical allusiveness, I open questions about the theme of love in *Lear*, its theological ramifications, and Shakespearean intertextuality. The kind of love King Lear asks from his daughters and the surprising response he receives from his favorite daughter, Cordelia, is analyzed. King Lear and Cordelia have different definitions and concepts of love, and these incompatible languages of love create a failure of communication that sets the whole tragedy in motion.

While some earlier scholars have argued for such a conceptual distinction related to “love” as determining this scene, I aim to bring forward specific theological dimensions in the characters’ language and discourse of love. Some scholars have discussed political and economic notions underlying this discourse but have sidelined important theological implications underlying the scene. Nevertheless, I also aim to use the new theological interpretation as a complement to the political/economic/ethical. Furthermore, while scholars have suggested a great many Biblical allusions within *King Lear*, mostly focusing on the Book of Job, I will venture a novel potential intertext to the New Testament, namely John 21:15-18, in the opening scene of *King Lear*. The love trial that Lear’s daughters undergo, specifically the discourse that occurs between Lear and Cordelia, greatly resembles the “love trial” Peter undergoes in John’s Gospel: the misunderstanding, the flow of the discourse, and the different languages of love existing within the discourse. This new theological interpretation of the first scene extends throughout the play and foregrounds a new reading of *Lear*.

Shakespeare lived in a world of competing theological doctrines, one in which religion determined both institutional politics and daily life. Although critics have reached no consensus regarding Shakespeare’s religious preference, Shakespeare tended to criticize some of these doctrines regardless of whether he supported them or not. Moreover, Shakespeare’s literary milieu and sources were similarly diverse. Scholars have identified classical literature, Sidneian romance, medieval chronicles, and treatises

on demonology as sources for *King Lear*. Many literary archetypes could (and have been) suggested as relevant to the construction of a play often seen as the pinnacle of Shakespearean art. I draw on this work but retain throughout a close focus on the stakes and events of Act 1, Scene 1, namely the division of the kingdom and the Biblical allusion. While the internal evidence for a specific doctrinal allegiance is inconclusive (as the history of scholarly argument suggests), I argue that the tendency of Shakespeare's allusion involves a criticism of certain Catholic doctrines, with some minor criticism of Protestant court culture, without suggesting that the play is "anti-Catholic" in any reductive sense.

This thesis consists of three chapters. The first chapter will include the discussion of the analyses by different scholars who have explored the theme of love in *King Lear* and explained the misunderstanding from their own perspectives, mostly political and economic. This chapter nevertheless also aims to relate such arguments to the religious dimension that will be the focus of the third and last chapter. The second chapter will discuss the multi-confessional background which Shakespeare and other dramatists of early modern English stage mediated in various ways. This will help enhance my argument when it comes to analyzing Act 1, Scene 1 in *King Lear*. Finally, the third chapter will delve into the analysis of the new allusion and serves as the heart of the thesis with the purpose of analyzing the misunderstanding of the scene through a more

theological lens, arguing that the drama subtly supports tenets of the Protestant doctrine, using the previous two chapters as building blocks and supporting pillars.

This new possible allusion to John 21:15-18 supersedes all significant Biblical allusions. It serves as an important contribution and creates its own relationship with other possible allusions discussed by scholars. There is a complex Biblical intertextuality that deeply affects the interpretation of *King Lear* and its relationship to its own culture. The method of paralleling the Biblical verse with dialogue in *King Lear* opens up new possibilities to analyze the play. The study of the play brings out the important two dimensions stressed above, namely the religious issues and their connection to the early modern religious history of England and the extensiveness and richness of Shakespeare's allusive poetics in this play.

Shakespearean and Biblical Love Tests

From the opening of Act 1 Scene 1, in the private conversation between Gloucester and Kent, rumors of a planned division of the kingdom are already circulating and being discussed by courtiers.

KENT. I thought the King had more affected the Duke of Albany than Cornwall.

GLOUCESTER. It did always seem so to us: but now, in the *division of the*

Kingdom, it appears not which of the dukes he values most,

for qualities are so weighed that curiosity in neither can make choice

of either's moiety. (1.1.1-6)

Kent's opening line tells the audience that the court expects King Lear to show favoritism even though Kent's specific idea that Lear "had more affected the Duke of Albany than Cornwall" (1.1.2) is proved false. Quickly, the rumor of the division as well as the favoritism is vindicated. King Lear enters and announces that "we have divided/ In three our kingdom" (1.1.36-7). He then makes his three daughters, Goneril, Regan and Cordelia, undergo a love test "Which of you shall we say doth love us most" (1.1.51). Here, the bias towards one of the daughters is discovered when the king asks Cordelia "what can you say to draw/ A third *more opulent* [italics mine] than your sisters?" (1.1.85-6).

The question asked is reminiscent of a similar inquiry asked by Jesus to Peter "Simon, son of Jonah, Lovest me more than these?" (John 21:15). Jesus assumes that Peter loves him more than his other disciples, just as Lear expects his daughter Cordelia to love him more than his other daughters.

Despite being the King's favorite daughter, Cordelia replies to her father's question by saying "nothing" (1.1.89). The king gives her three chances to articulate, yet the replies she gives do not satisfy the king, which leads to her banishment. In the quarto, Cordelia answers "nothing, my lord" (1.1.87) the first time, "Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave/ My heart into my mouth. I love your majesty/According to my bond, no

more no less” (1.1.91-3) the second time and finally, when King Lear asks her to” mend [her] speech a little” (1.1.94), Cordelia goes so far as to say:

CORDELIA. You have begot me, bred me, loved me. I

Return those duties back as are right fit

Obey you, love you and most honour you.

Why have my sisters husbands, if they say

They love you all? Haply when I shall wed,

That lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry

Half my love with him, half my care and duty

Sure I shall never marry like my sister

To love my father all.

Once again, this passage invites a parallel with Jesus and Peter’s encounter. Jesus asks Peter the same question three times, just as Lear asks Cordelia to express her love to him three times. According to John’s version, Peter’s response to the question does not seem to satisfy Jesus until the third time he asks the question to which Jesus finally replies: “Feed my sheep” (John 21:17). Although Peter does not choose to say “nothing”, Jesus needs to repeat his question three times just as Lear “asks” his daughter to express her love three times.

Despite the articulation of “nothing”, and the dissatisfaction of King Lear with her stance, we see Cordelia already in a state of confusion and worry from the

beginning of the test: “What shall Cordelia speak? Love, and be silent” (1.1.62) and “Then poor Cordelia And yet not so, since I am sure my love’s More ponderous than my tongue” (1.1.77-9). Thus, one can see that Cordelia finds it difficult to express her love (this difficulty is also reflected and made manifest at the end). Why doesn’t Cordelia eloquently and directly speak of her love? Why does she hide it? Furthermore, why does King Lear banish Cordelia instead of trying to apprehend what Cordelia is trying to say, especially since she is his favorite? How does the Biblical allusion fit in this entire scenario between Lear and Cordelia? Does Cordelia’s refusal also recall the better-known Biblical narrative of Peter’s denial of Christ? How is the similarity in the conversation between Peter and Jesus a key contribution to understanding the confusion the beginning scene has created? The unnecessary but infinitely consequential decision could have been avoided if only King Lear and Cordelia understood each other’s language of love. However, while the consequences of the dialogue are disastrous, the ending is not completely tragic. Like Jesus and Peter, Cordelia and Lear get their chance to express their love “correctly”, and that final expression of love in the play recalls Christian ideals.

CHAPTER 2

SPEAKING DIFFERENT LANGUAGES OF LOVE

One productive approach to the source of misunderstanding in *King Lear* has been to analyze Lear and Cordelia as operating in separate and conflicting discursive registers, including the public and the private and the material and the immaterial. These binary oppositions, public/private and material/immaterial, have been extensively discussed by academics as being the central reasons for the misperception. Some critics even have combined both binaries to suggest a public-material vs private-immaterial discourse. Not only will an account of these approaches serve to provide a summary of what previous scholars have discussed about Lear's and Cordelia's discourse related to misunderstanding, but they also function as a bridge towards the intertext discussed in Chapter 3; John 21: 15-18 also highlights a notion of public/private and material/immaterial binaries when Jesus asks Peter to "feed [his] sheep," a material request that holds an immaterial proposition not to mention a private request ("lovest thou me more than these?") ascended towards a public good ("feed my sheep"). Therefore, the arguments of these scholars complement, provide a base, and enrich the theological interpretation that will be discussed in Chapter 3.

A. Public Law Versus Private Love

Firstly, the distinction between the public and the private in the opening scene highlights the different political propositions (political public vs personal private). Scholars such as Stanley Cavell, Kenneth Graham, Susan Heinzleman, Alba Sanchez, R.A Foakes, and Paul Kahn, argue collectively that the disparateness between Lear and Cordelia's utterances is due to the fact that two unrelated separate spheres have been jumbled into the same discourse, space, and place. The problem rests with the fusion of the spheres (Graham; Heinzelman), the drawing of private matters into public space (Cavell; Graham; Sanchez) for different reasons, love as a performance (Cavell), or an encompassment of all the aforementioned ideas (Foakes).

In the first part of his chapter "The Avoidance of Love: A Reading of *King Lear*," Stanley Cavell discusses Lear's request: a public expression of love, a false love (61) as an initiator for the tragedy. Lear is aware that his third daughter is "offering the real thing," and will provide her as a result with the better portion of the kingdom, but Cordelia ends up shocking him by "putting a claim upon him he cannot face." Cordelia refuses to partake in a public exposition of false love. Cavell states the following: "But to pretend publicly to love, where you do not love, is easy; to pretend to love, where you really do love, is not obviously possible" (62). In other words, he claims that love cannot enter the public sphere, for its language is private. He continues to argue that even if Cordelia speaks of her love, it will make her love seem less than it is, and, therefore, to ask for her devotion is torture and to speak about it in public is a betrayal

of some sort. Lear wants to “falsify her love” publicly; if Lear forces Cordelia to express her love in public, her love will not be what it is because it takes place in the public sphere (63).

The opening scene of *King Lear* requires three daughters to articulate their love for their father in return for which they will receive grants of land. Goneril and Regan each offer their marvelous speech about how their love is “dearer than eyesight, space and liberty/beyond what can be valued rich or rare” (Goneril 1.1.56-57) and a love “which the most precious square of sense possesses” (Regan 1.1. 74-75), words that end up empty as both sisters dismiss their father into emptiness. Their expansive speeches and the love they profess prove to be false, untrue and wretched. The sisters’ speeches, as Cavell discusses, are addressed to the court, not to King Lear; they do not face him as a father but face the court as a public audience (64). The court is public, and a public space accepts everything that is false, impure and corrupt. The concept of a corrupt public and its conflict with the private is highly relevant to the hostile discourses leveled by Catholic and Protestant institutions against each other and against aspects of the institutions by those within them. The Lutheran Reformation fought against the

corruption of the Catholic Church in the form of simony and indulgence.¹ Additionally, many scholars criticize the Protestant court as a public space susceptible to corruption.²

However, Cordelia faces a dilemma; she possesses “real” love, a love that is pure, and a love that “cannot be heaved into the mouth”. Cordelia’s reply to “What can you say to draw/a third more opulent than your sisters?” (1.1.85-86) highlights a corrupt space where “pure love” cannot be articulated: “Nothing” (1.1.87). Cordelia is confused and cannot speak her intimacy. Cavell summarizes her internal state at this point as: “Don’t force me, I don’t know what you want, there is nothing I can say, to speak what you want I must not speak” (64). It is evident that the heart does not belong to the public. Cavell asserts that Cordelia is punished because she has not followed the convention: “he hates me because I would not flatter him.” (65). However, while Cavell questions whether Cordelia cannot flatter or does not flatter (65), I would want to state that flattering, a public notion that Lear asks of his daughter Cordelia, is an impossibility for her because flattering is “to praise or compliment unduly or

¹ The concept of indulgence will be explained in Chapter 3, but basically Catholic Church priests often abused laymen and convinced them that in order to ensure a land in heaven, one must pay to the church. The Catholic Church also charged people for everything: a certain amount to be paid every week to Church as duty, marriages, funerals, holy communions, baptism etc.

² Refer to Court life in Chapter 2 where I discuss how court life, a public space, was criticized by many scholars to be a space of manipulation and competition between court advisors and people competing for a role.

insincerely” and therefore what she would have said would have been a distortion of a truth, a distortion of what is real.³ One can say it is somehow torture to make Cordelia go through this love test, for falsity exists in the public, and purity cannot exist in such space.

According to Kenneth Graham, legality is mixed with the “essence of love” in a definitional way (442). Like Cavell, Graham argues that Cordelia is not able to put her sincerity into words because the love she possesses cannot be put into a context of a public corrupt law, where performance prevails rather than genuineness (Graham 443-444). While Cavell suggests a court as a separate entity to that of Lear as a person (or judge), Graham states that Lear approaches the problem as a judge in order to distribute justice by a certain ritual, a formal performance in which his daughters are given the “right” to a portion of the kingdom according to the love that entitles them (442). Here, Lear, the “judge”, bases his judgment on who gets which land (daughters and quality of land), and how they get it (how much they articulate their love to their father). This procedure is strange and uncomfortable to Cordelia. However, by remaining silent to King Lear, she “offends the law” as well as justice (443). In other words, Lear apparently believes that addressing private issues such as love publicly is the most

³ See *OED flatter* v. 1,3

appropriate way to resolve inheritance issues. Acting as a judge (public figure) and a father (private figure) at the same time, his verdict is easily distorted and problematic as the “judge” overshadows the father. Lear sees Cordelia’s utterance in the eyes of a judge rather than a father; he fails to see the inaptness of the situation. Here, it is interesting to explore how and why the lack of expression of love would offend justice and why authentic love cannot be fully expressed or represented within the public sphere, a point that I believe is theologically central. What does the public sphere entail that bars the entry of genuineness and in particular sincere expressions of love? I believe that Shakespeare is critical of public spaces and how such spaces impinge upon and corrupt other spaces and often confuse them. These issues will be discussed historically and theologically in coming chapters.

Graham’s use of the expression ‘true love’ recalls Cavell’s discussion of ‘real love’, but Graham attempts a more detailed definition of what ‘true love means in Cordelia’s case:

True love obliterates the distinction between form (seen as contrived, conscious, artful) and essence (spontaneous, genuine, natural) because it is artless or formless, an essential reality unaltered by time and the changing forms of history and human justice Hence, it also renders meaningless the distinction between word or deed, since such a distinction assumes a greater authenticity of actions... (444)

Cordelia’s elevated actions are seen as being artless and formless with respect to time and history... but what does Graham mean when he refers to this as justice?

Graham describes Cordelia's actions as spontaneous, plain-spoken, genuine and natural because they are "artless and formless, an essential reality unaltered by time and the changing forms of history and human justice" (444). Cordelia possesses a type of love that is never-changing, unlike her sisters, whose love is based on circumstances and context, a phenomenon suitable for a public space.

As a result, Lear's ignorance of the meaning of Cordelia's "public plainness" leads to the corruption of Lear's public world, a disruption of a certain "order" which is both political and rhetorical (448-449). Another term of disruption of order will be explained later on in a more feminist perspective in which critics point out how Cordelia's response or lack of response serves as a disruption of patriarchal order. Therefore, Graham concludes that the public forms of justice, in this case the articulation of love, demand a public language that is ineffective in a private context (452) due to the corrupt and skeptical surroundings of the public (461). Only when King Lear loses his public and legal power does he realize the private plainness of Cordelia. Graham claims that Lear is not able to understand her love until he lets go of his "vestiges of royal authority" (460). Even before his daughters banish him to the unknown storm, Lear finds himself feeling regret –"I did her wrong" (1.5.24) – and expresses his remorse when father and daughter reunite in a private space: "Methinks I should know you and know this man/ yet I am doubtful; for I am mainly ignorant" (4.7.65-66). Consequently, Graham's interpretation involves the misunderstanding

between a public and corrupt system and a private and pure one. Furthermore, Graham's research allows closer analysis into in the idea of spontaneity and genuineness and their relation with the "artless" and the "formless".

In her article, "When Law and Love are Not Enough: *King Lear* and the Spectacle of Terror", Susan Heinzelman echoes Graham's claim regarding the permeation of the public language of the law into the sphere of the private; Lear acts both as father to his daughters and lawmaker to his subjects. However, Heinzelman adds to the fact that Lear is not able to distinguish between the claims of law and those of love by claiming that "he collapses the two different realms into one" (754); he merges an identity produced by law and one dependent on the claims of love and, as a result, renounces the duties of a king and disposes the affections of a father (755). Therefore, Lear's willingness to divide his kingdom based on protestations of love shows his unwillingness to distinguish between the claims of law and a claim of love (756). Lear believes that once he sheds his public identity, he will be obtaining the familial one (756). It is important to point out that Lear might not have done this in his full consciousness; he might have been blinded by the stubbornness and ignorance that had overcome him—a point of analogy with the situation between Jesus and Peter when Jesus asks Peter a question and is stunned by a reply, but unlike Lear, he chooses to acknowledge the misunderstanding and the context in which it is occurring.

Heinzelman declares, however, that what happens is that the love trial, which is supposed to be familiar, is inverted into politics. Therefore, while Regan and Goneril are able to manipulate the line between the political and the familial, making it seem that the political is the familial, Cordelia's possession of an elevated love is not able to enter the political sphere. Lear is not able to apprehend the familial language Cordelia employs ("according to my bond") and her inability to participate in the political love games (756) and, hence, he banishes her from the kingdom.⁴ Heinzelman claims that Lear's reaction to Cordelia's response is with "too much law and not enough love" (758). The intent in Lear is clear; he expects Goneril and Regan to fail the "trial of law" (759) while he expects his daughter Cordelia to "pass it with flying colors" (760). However, his expectations take the best of him as the outcome takes a totally different course. Heinzelman states that the whole scenario had a predetermined outcome (759). This tragic outcome is overshadowed by Lear's insincere question: "Which of you shall say doth love us most?"

Similarly, Alba Sanchez distinguishes a public sphere and a private sphere but places shame as a central idea rather than judgment and justice. Instead of arguing, like

⁴ Heinzelman also points out the patriarchal family structure which will also be discussed later on in the chapter.

former scholars, that Lear is acting as a judge and father at the same time, or that he requires a public address of something that must be kept private, Sanchez asserts that the main motive of such an unreasonable decision is shame. She believes that King Lear performs his love test out of shame; he can no longer function well as a king since he has become too old. Therefore, after fulfilling his duty as a king, Lear feels unable to keep the title. This makes him undergo an identity crisis, and his pride is automatically changed into shame; therefore he resorts to love to retain his title (29). Lear wants to make sure that he will have the love of his daughters after he resigns from public life and wants to enjoy the love of his daughters. However, he asks for their private love during a public event. Here Lear confuses his identity; he is not acting as a judge nor is he negligently asking the wrong question; he does not know who he is or his position amongst his daughters.

His first two daughters, aware of his insecurity, abuse this sentiment while Cordelia, knowing that “true love cannot do the political job... refuses to let her love be corrupted” (85). Sanchez believes that the mistake that King Lear makes is ignorantly mixing the private and the public sphere, love being at the private and intimate level (84). By loving truly and openly, one is leaving him/herself naked and defenseless (86). Therefore, here, one can say that Cordelia refuses to be “naked” in her love in public, for the language of the private does not belong to that of the public, and Lear, hiding in his shame and looking for comfort, fails to see the difference between the two. Sanchez

states that in both the beginning scene and the reunion scene, Cordelia confronts Lear and offers perfect unambiguous love in the private sphere because she is “inept for politics, for the public sphere of abstract recognition and power” (89). As a result, her love is exceptional, pure, unconditional, pure and ideal (90) while her sisters’ love is dishonest, political and greedy. However, a reader of Sanchez might question how and why Lear feels shame at being old and how shame and love are interconnected, but Sanchez’s overall argument is simple: Lear believes that his love comes from power, and therefore losing it means losing the love that supposedly comes with it, and this is partly true: Lear will be losing the “political love,” but will not lose the uncorrupted one possessed by Cordelia.

Furthermore, in his book *Law and Love*, Paul Kahn labels this event as a trial, a trial for love. His arguments are similar to that of Heizelman and Graham who explain Lear’s actions as falsely integrating politics into private matters. Kahn’s contribution states that “Law cannot command love” (6) and therefore a private experience cannot be transit to public because it is very dangerous (7). Kahn asserts that Lear wants a visible expression of his love for his daughters through property and their love for him in form of public expression (8). Therefore, he created the public law so they are forced to express the love that is of the soul (8). However, he claims that “before law can express love, love must express itself to law” (8). That is, the language of love does not exist in a law enforcement context; it cannot be enforced. The love remains hidden (9). What

Kahn interestingly points out is that although Goneril and Regan abuse the opportunity that this trial creates, their speech hints that love cannot be articulated when Goneril tells the court that “love is beyond speech” while Regan tells us “that the words of speech have an indeterminate relationship to the object named”, and the spoken word is therefore incapable of articulating or “seeing the ‘true heart’” (11). As a result, Paul draws out that the tools of law are incapable of discovering, creating or managing love (13).

Finally, R.A. Foakes captures many of these strands of argument in the introduction to his Arden edition of the play. Similar to Cavell and Graham, Foakes states that Cordelia refuses to play her part by making a public statement of her love for Lear while her sisters, Goneril and Regan, are able to do so because they have adapted to the court and its conventions (37). He asserts that Lear views Cordelia as “obstinate and self-willed in her response” because he wants to enjoy the performance his daughters put on (38). Similar to Sanchez, Foakes elaborates that while Goneril and Regan take advantage of the situation (the public context fit for malevolence and deceit) for personal gain, Cordelia rejects the dishonesty as well as the context in which this public ceremony is occurring (61). Like Graham and Heinzelman, Foakes also claims that Cordelia’s refusal to adhere to political-personal interference shows her rebelliousness against the injustice (62).

Reading through the public/private distinction, then, it is clear that the critical tradition tends to represent Cordelia's chosen discourse of love as pure and therefore unable to enter into the corrupt public. A reader of the play can clearly see that Cordelia is not put in a fair position and should never have been forced to undergo a trial in the first place. As for Lear, perhaps one of the reasons he chooses this method is because, since he is giving up his rights as a king, he now wants to feel secure entering the private sphere knowing that he is going to be welcomed and accepted by his daughters. To ensure that his daughters will show him the same love and respect even after he retires, he asks his daughters to speak of their love even though he does not realize that his method of "demanding" love is a problematic way to actually gain the love and respect of his daughters. However, he apparently considers the love test as the only way to insure the success of his rite of passage. This political discourse is a window to provide my thesis with the same concept and discourse variety from a religious perspective. Lear expects a love purer than one that is political or public, but makes one of two mistakes: he either demands the former in the wrong context, or demands the latter, a love that Cordelia does not have. A broader discussion on context will also be discussed in Chapter 2, especially when it comes to the importance of privacy in the Protestant family as well as court culture.

B. Material Versus Immaterial

Another discourse in the scholarly tradition turns on a distinction between an economic and an ethical perspective. This distinction is based on scholars who have observed a more fiscal and monetary valence in the discourse. Critics have mostly focused on Lear's material demand and Cordelia's immaterial response (Lawrence; Cavell) and have even extended to include economic jargon to describe the scene (Freeman). Some scholars have also associated the material with limited intelligence and the immaterial with maturity (Nuttall). This discourse provides a more solid connection to Chapter 3, where the discourses of theology and economy will meet.

1. Etymology

The etymology of the English word 'love' is highly relevant to the material/immaterial binary that has proved so important to critical discussion of the first scene of *King Lear*. According to Terry Hawkes, there is a connection between love and land (Hawkes). This fascinating connection is due to the fact that the Old English definition of love has two meanings: one is *lofian* which means "to appraise, estimate of state the price or value of" and *lufian* "which was a homophone of the previous, which

is the meaning we know of (178). Hawkes states that although the word developed in the sixteenth-century as *loave*, the word is used interchangeably with both meanings (*lofian* and *lufian*)⁵. He states that the Old English word *lofian* is used when Judas Iscariot is asked how much he loves Jesus Christ (179)⁶. In his chapter “On Homonymics”, John Orr discusses a double meaning that was also found in Old French between the words *esmer* which means to ‘reckon, calculate’ and *aimer* which means ‘to love’ (qtd. in Hawkes 179). A way to capture this etymologically embedded distinction is to see Lear as understanding love as *lofian* and Cordelia as *lufian*. Hawkes states that Cordelia rejects the idea of expressing love as “value” and believes that love is beyond that and cannot be conceived of as an ‘estimate or state the value of’ in any terms (180).⁷

⁵ Based on the timeline, Shakespeare most probably used the Early Modern English word *love* but was aware of its double meanings.

⁶ Hawkes also discusses the Pun used by Pilate to indicate the usage of the word as he asks Judas: “Now, Judas, sen he shalbe sold, how lowfes thou hym? Belyfe let se” when Judas replies” “ffor thretty pennys truly told or els may not that bargan be.” (xx.238 ff.)

⁷ The etymology of the word can also be retrieved to Greek origins, especially in the language of the New Testament, and this will be discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 3.

2. *The Analysis*

Apart from the political interpretation, Cavell also discusses love in *King Lear* as a bargain in the second part of his chapter. Cavell makes an interesting introduction to the issue:

A parent is bribing love out of his children; two of them [Goneril and Regan] accept the bribe, and despise him for it; the third [Cordelia] shrinks from the attempt, as though from violation. Only this is a king; this bribe is the last he will be able to offer; everything in his life, and in the life of his state, depends on its success (60).

From the lines above, one can see that Cordelia does not want to succumb to bribery. She wants nothing in return for her love while Lear appears not to believe that he can accept the fact that he is loved because there is no reason why he should be loved (Cavell 61). Cavell argues that using property as a means of bribery to gain love and bargaining makes love debased (61). Therefore, Lear ends up giving up his lands as a sort of a bribe, something which Cordelia refuses to accept (Cavell 61). While offering Cordelia the “more opulent third of the kingdom” (1.1.85), Lear expects this “bribe” offered to her to be the best of all, and thus expects the most in return (Cavell 62).

A.D. Nuttall discusses the mystery of Cordelia’s response to Lear’s questionable method of giving out the inheritances in *Why Does Tragedy Give Pleasure?* and in his later book *Shakespeare the Thinker*. In both texts, he argues that Cordelia is a “truth-teller”: she refuses to lie. While the answer to the question “Which of you doth say love

us the most?" is clearly "Cordelia," Nuttall explains that if Cordelia were to speak warmly of her love knowing that she will receive a huge reward as a result of her response, "her declaration will be infected by a presumption of mercenary intent," and her tone would give a misleading impression of how she really feels towards her father, who in turn lacks the ability to look into his own heart and discover what he lacks (*Tragedy* 304).

Lear's inability to judge or understand what he lacks or what Cordelia is trying to communicate is more thoroughly discussed in Nuttall's *Shakespeare the Thinker*. Nuttall refers to Wittgenstein's philosophy of "game" to explain the "language game" that occurs in Act 1, Scene I (83). Nuttall explains that this 'language game' creates "a sense of irresponsible attachment, a feeling that what had been seen as a contradiction will now melt into a mere confusion of grammar or of "convention" (83). Therefore, language becomes not a game but a "very serious business" (83).⁸

Firstly, Nuttall accuses Lear of having a low "IQ" (83); he is "unreflective" (89). The opening scene clearly highlights that because of his failure to understand Cordelia's "truth-telling," he does not go beyond her "nothing" to realize what she is trying to say.

⁸ The word business here that is inserted is intentional as I will be continuing to explain how the language game becomes form of doing business for King Lear.

On the other hand, Cordelia possesses what Nuttall calls “intensified intelligence” (89). She is aware that her father’s trial is nothing but a mercenary game, carrying a huge material reward, and therefore will not be able to articulate any simplistic answer to an obvious question. Nuttall points out that Cordelia is highly aware of the human context that makes language curtailed (89). Nuttall explains that “to express love warmly would in this situation create a presumption of continuity with the flattery offered by her sisters; a wholly honorable *amour-propre* comes into play and inhibits her speech” (89). In other words, Cordelia is aware of the defective situation she is put in, and her worth and respect means that she would refrain from participating in such a “game.” Obviously, it is difficult to make Lear understand the etiquette of *amour-propre*, a difference between game-playing and serious action. Nuttall notes that had Cordelia been younger, it would have been more appropriate and easy to express her simplistic and pure love by perhaps expressing how much she loves Lear and “climb on his knee” (89-90). Instead, Cordelia tries to convey a message to her father without insulting him by pointing out that “[she] is not a little girl now, [she] will be getting married” (90). Nuttall also discusses the importance of Cordelia’s ethics. Her “truth-telling” remains persistence throughout, and while her answer is morally superior, it is a deeply loving

one (90). The king's infuriation manifests how willful, unthinking and unconscious he is towards his children's affections (90). Cordelia's love and virtue stands against the whole world (94-95), while Lear stands in denial against this love (98)⁹.

The game, as Nuttall emphasizes, has made readers aware that Lear does not respect the space he is in and fails to understand the rules of language and reflect on the trial he is forcing upon his daughters. Lear uses his limited capabilities to ensure the love of his daughters by an exchange of inheritance. While such a transaction might not have been his intent, he fails to realize the ominous mistake and decision he is committing and the consequences of his actions.

Lear's impulsive actions can be interpreted in the light of contemporary (but also longstanding) discourses and doctrines concerning the relationship between faith and reason. In both Catholic and Protestant discourse, faith and reason were seen as oppositional concepts, and various efforts to reconcile them or keep them apart were attempted. One's faith can be strengthened by reason and vice-versa. Lear has too much faith but no reason while Cordelia possesses a perfect balance between them. Lear's

⁹ This concept will be more thoroughly discussed in Chapter 3 when I discuss the Biblical rendering of Peter's denial of Jesus or denial that he knows Jesus and how this Biblical version fits vis-à-vis Lear's denial to Cordelia's love and virtue.

irrational behavior is also very similar to Peter's; he is impulsive and behaves erratically. His irrational behavior, questions and lack of understanding Jesus's instructions have always been a source of discussion among theologians. For example, the book of John is the only Gospel that mentions Peter as the one who performed the impulsive action to cut off the right ear of Malchus, the high priest's slave as Jesus was being taken away, in which Jesus told him to put the sword back, and reminded him that he had to drink from the cup of suffering the Father had given him (John 18:10-11). This action of course seems a clear example of Peter's irrational behavior and can be more easily linked to Lear's irrational behavior of impulsive action. Both have their own love "performed" in different ways. Here, Jesus must constantly remind him of how his behavior does not "fit." The conversation in John 21:15-18 also highlight this similarity: Peter, like Lear, does not understand what Jesus is telling him, and Jesus needs to understand that Peter is limited in his understanding of love and what he can offer. Here Cordelia's maturity resembles that of Jesus: she knows that what Lear asks of her is inappropriate in such a context, but does not possess the ability to alter her language to suit her father's desire without ruining her own beliefs. On the other hand, Jesus succeeds in humbling himself to Peter's language of love.

Freeman, in his article "According to my bond: *King Lear* and Recognition," constructs a metaphor for the event. He states that Lear reduces his children to financial assets, and familial links are debased and considered as interests (4). In the first scene,

Lear seems to have a trial, yet the trial acts without an “offence, a judge, advocates, juries and opposing parties” (5). This does not seem to be in harmony with the previous section since, as other scholars point out, Lear is the one setting the scenario of the whole trial, acting as a judge, prosecutor and defendant himself. Freeman, however, sets the scenario as some sort of general accounting in which Lear’s daughters are the equivalent of wealth, real property, assets and debts, expected to provide capital to return to their father (5). As a result, the love becomes a means of investment for more parental love, or capital investment (6). As Freeman explains it, it seems that the scene has become a space for business presentations. Each daughter speaks while Lear audits, challenges and grants them merit. Furthermore, Freeman discusses the schema of balance; Lear puts his “bounty” against the love of his daughters while Cordelia puts more weight on the spiritual and is more ponderous and valuable than literal expression, so Cordelia rejects the fact that a paternal gift is ‘drawn’ as salary (7). Cordelia tries to accommodate to his “financial audit scenario” by giving him the filial devotion but remaining “true to her spiritual notion of love,” and all she can say is “nothing” because feelings do not fit in financial audits (7). She understands “bonds” to be filial and physical relationships rather than financial (8). Freeman provides a very interesting, if jargon-heavy analysis of *King Lear’s* Act 1, Scene 1 by establishing a whole new perspective on a Renaissance tragedy, by applying a theory of cognitive metaphor of balance and links, and applying them in a post-apocalyptic context.

In his dissertation, “Alterity, the Divine and Ethics in *King Lear*”, Sean Lawrence summarizes the encounter as a mere business or political contract. Lawrence states that Lear sees his daughters as his flesh, and therefore regards his daughters as “objects to be manipulated, worked over and controlled” (43); they are things to be consumed (58). To Lear, the whole thing is a gambit, an act that helps gain advantage (85). Lear will bargain land in return for love, a procedure with possible overtones of Catholic practice, which will be discussed in Chapter 3. A pure gift cannot be purchased by love, which is how Lawrence explains Lear’s insistence that “nothing will come of nothing” (1.1.89) (112). Lear is substituting generous human relations with economic relations; he “conflates items of exchange-power, land, revenues with items that are not purchasable and cannot be earned, like love, respect, or Grace (115). However, Cordelia does not want to participate in this exchange game, because as we will come to see, love, respect and Grace surpass material benefit in quantity and intensity.

Furthermore, Lawrence continues to describe and distinguish between the material and the immaterial aspect of the exchange. Lear is concerned with purchasing love through gift-giving (land) (120). One can therefore say that he materializes the immaterial, which is love. By doing so, he is reducing a perfect and elevated concept into a mere economic enterprise. This, of course, results in failure. By buying love, the concept becomes lost in essence. By buying love, the essential concept of love is lost. Lawrence points this failure out later on in Regan’s and Goneril’s bribing Edmund for

his love (123). The idea of valuing in the very first lines of the text also appears: “...which of the Dukes he *values* most (1.1.5) (126). Lear improperly equates the material with that of the immaterial. While Cordelia holds on to the concept of immaterial love, Lear forces her to materialize it. Lawrence argues that while all the others reduce their love to material terms, Cordelia’s response of “nothing” only reflects the coldness of Lear’s love test (128).

In the previous section, we concluded that King Lear wasn’t able to harmonize the public and the private. King Lear wrongly associated the material with the immaterial. While Cordelia holds on to the concept of immaterial love, Lear forces her to materialize it. Lawrence argues that while all the others have reduced their love to material terms, Cordelia’s response of “nothing” only reflects the coldness of Lear’s love test (128). Therefore, Lawrence concludes the following:

Both characters are unable to acknowledge a gift that they are unable to repay in kind, the logic of love as a series of reciprocal exchange is carried through to its necessary and logical conclusion, reducing the interpersonal surplus until the truly human relations disappear into increasingly mechanical changes (78).

For Lear, love is also wealth and expressible as patronage. Cordelia refuses to enter such discourse and does not view love as an investment or exchange of wealth. It seems that her love surpasses that of economic exchange, and cannot be demeaned into mere space of land. Cordelia fails to express herself in ways comprehensible to the totalizing economic mentality. We see Cordelia not being able to articulate her love, for it is

outside of the language of economy. As a result, she refuses to make her love a part of “quid pro quo economy, exchangeable for territories and titles” (135).

In brief, these scholars emphasize the material side of Lear’s love and the immaterial side of Cordelia’s love while analyzing Act 1, Scene 1. The analyses they provide offers new perspectives to the language contrast between Lear and Cordelia and allow readers to experience the ingenious possibilities of rhetoric and context. The concept of love and its link to materiality are traced to social and family issues during the Renaissance related to marriage and starting a family. The intentions of love, marriage and family were always subject to manipulation by either party. A holy union between a man and his wife on the basis of either monetary value or business deal was a destruction of the sanctity of marriage. The relationships between husbands and wives and between parents and children were often susceptible to conflicts and treachery as materialistic issues (land, money, inheritance) often got in the way.

C. Public-Material Versus Private-Immaterial

Some scholars, like Stanley Cavell and David Schalkwyk, fuse the public/private distinction with the material and immaterial. As stated, while Cavell divides this distinction, he paves the way for more synthetic or ambitious critics, notably David Schalkwyk. Schalkwyk combines the two sets of binaries in his enriching book, *Shakespeare, Love and Service*.

In his book, Schalkwyk mainly aims to differentiate between the concepts of love and service in Shakespeare's different plays. In his introduction, he states that love is not the same as service, and service cannot also be seen as love (2). He states that families sometimes mix these two concepts (love and service) and practice them differently, but these concepts may also be used and abused (3). Love is a critical concept, but Schalkwyk argues that love has always been manipulated to be synonymous with "desire," "political power" and "economic power" (6). Therefore, love has always permeated the concepts of the public and the private, or the personal and the structural (7). Therefore, love is not merely a "value within an abstract system of differences, but is constituted of its changing, lived relations with other concepts" both positive and negative (8).

Schalkwyk argues that in the opening scene of *King Lear* a conflict between service and love is highlighted (214). Lear's understanding of love is immediately questioned as the events of the first scene unfold. The trial of love is a central concept in the negotiation of the public and personal relations as well as a shift from the 'affect' to the 'value' (217-218). Apart from the context where the whole trial is taking place, a

New metaphor of evaluation and calculation in the context of a kingdom that is about to be divided indicates a double sense of 'affect' and 'love': the personal, emotional investment in a particular person, which is always to some degree inexplicable, if not irrational, on the one hand, and the publicly available qualities that are open to calculation (218).

In other words, a love trial is taking place in a public context instead of a personal level and such love is being evaluated or calculated in terms of value; the personal love is being valued in a public place.

Lear demands declarations of love from his daughters before investing them with his political power (219). Schalkwyk argues that Lear is asking for two different but related things, which he confuses: he is asking for a political allegiance and blind loyalty susceptible to calculation, scruple and questions (219). Moreover, as Lear confuses the ties of merit, he also requires a personal devotion to him as father. While Goneril and Regan understand what is asked of them, they skillfully respond with answers that fulfill both challenges but only respond to the former (219). Cordelia disappoints her father by “responding instead to a public aspect of Lear’s call for love, speaking to him in the civil language of calculable bonds rather than in the affective discourse of personal devotion” (220). This, of course, leaves Cordelia in a more difficult situation than her sisters who are able to monopolize language and meet the challenge. This scene, therefore, consists of two concepts of love: a personal affective love not prone to calculations; the other is more imbricated with reciprocity: ‘deserving’ and open to calculation, greatly reliant on materiality of power and authority (221, 231).

Schalkwyk states that “the love that Cordelia bears for Lear has deep structural and personal affinities with non-instrumental service. It is unconditioned and depends on no contingency and computation” (234). This love that Cordelia bears becomes more

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evident towards the end of the play as Cordelia meets her father, who expected to be hated by her, but Cordelia loves her father unconditionally. Her love becomes incompatible with everyday political words (235). This level of love highlights the fact that Lear has confused love and service. Lear chooses to treat his daughter as a subject rather than a daughter and merges family bonds with political ones. Lear's love is therefore a token of a political business and material exchange through a personal relation of love. Schalkwyk categorizes this transaction as service, a devotion to a master, a phenomenon known in social life during the Renaissance, but Cordelia is not a servant, but a daughter who loves him but is not devoted to him; she does not belong to him. "According to my bond" shows, as Nuttall also points out, that she will be married soon, and while she unconditionally loves her father in her pure manner, she is not indebted to him.

As seen in these three sections, a mixture between the language of private and public sphere and Lear's failed confusion between material and immaterial discourse manifests a common idea: the idea of love in both readings to be pure, honest, perfect and not suited to a language of corrupt politics and economics, concepts that will be further discussed in Chapters two when discussing some of the socio-historical background of England and three when discussing some religious and theological aspects.

CHAPTER 3

SHAKESPEARE'S RELIGIOUS WORLDS

Early Modern England witnessed an extraordinary series of religious and political upheavals. Immediately before Shakespeare's own lifetime but during the lifetime of his parents, a chain of rulers, each with their own religious convictions, strived to make their people followers of their religion, be it Catholic or Protestant. People who did not comply or agree to these changes were punished. Naturally, these fluctuations of events had a huge effect on the course of England politics and society. The English population experienced changes in many areas including but not limited to family and social life. From Henry VIII's separation from the Catholic Church and the beginning of the reformation with its continuation with Edward VI's rule, Queen Mary's efforts to revive Catholicism, to Elizabeth's return to Protestantism, along with rise of Puritans, created conditions for religious perplexity and conflict.

Academics and theologians also had their different theories and opinions regarding this religious instability. Some scholars at the time were supportive of the changes; some were against while others were caught in between. Academic writings about the religious and doctrinal change that took place received mixed reactions depending on the king or queen that ruled and the doctrine he or she supported. Finally, literature played a major role in displaying the confounding situation in sixteenth-

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century England. Major and prominent authors used their poetry and drama to criticize and exhibit these religious conflicts. Amongst these famous writers was Shakespeare, whose works are known to be full of connotations indicating, referring, or criticizing the numerous events, the social and political life, and the religious doctrines.

While Europe was dividing itself between “Catholic” and “Protestant” states in this period, a spectrum of practices and political settlements existed under these global terms (e.g. Edward VI’s Protestantism worked differently in practice from Elizabeth I’s). When it comes to Shakespeare’s personal confessional identity-whether he was a Catholic, a Protestant, a Catholic with Protestant sympathies, a Protestant with Catholic sympathies, a Puritan, or an atheist, critics have found it challenging to pinpoint his true religious identity. While some modern critics emphasize his Catholic identity and inclination, the truth remains that his own religious affiliation remains inaccessible on the basis of the documentary record. What is clear, and what sensitive criticism continues to unearth is the complexity of Shakespeare’s treatment of religious issues and religious feelings across his dramatic and poetic works. Rather than doctrinal partisanship or autobiography, Shakespeare’s texts tend to represent the religious currents and tensions of his period in a way that avoids endorsing the more aggressive or extreme positions.

This chapter will provide an overview of the political, religious, and social history of Renaissance and early seventeenth-century England and its possible impact on

Shakespeare's attitudes towards religion and the way these ideas are portrayed in his plays. This task is methodologically complicated by the persistence of partisanship and bias (on all sides) within the scholarship itself – a fact which itself illustrates the fundamental character and historical consequences of the sixteenth-century upheavals. Some of these representations and their critical reception, particularly in respect to *King Lear*, will be considered in preparation for the full exploration of specific and concrete Biblical allusion in the next chapter.

A. A Century of Intense Events

In this section, I aim to provide a general and synthetic account of the history of Early Modern England. Other accounts, such as Lucy Wooding's *Rethinking Catholicism in Protestant England* or Velma Bourgeois Richmond's *Shakespeare, Catholicism and Romance*, are considered as some of the current revisionist movements against an old triumphalist Protestant account of the period. For example, both accounts discuss a more tolerant Queen Mary and a more zealous and unmerciful Queen Elizabeth. They also discuss reformation doctrines as being partly Catholic. However, I will be synthesizing a more collective narration of history to recount the events of the century and will be using Wooding and Richmond's arguments for other purposes in this and other sections. Wooding and Richmond provide us with the necessary tools to view the events of the Renaissance in different perspectives as it was for different people at the time.

A Common History of Religious Conflicts

The intense and life-changing events that began in the beginning of the sixteenth century (preceding Shakespeare) and through the seventeenth century (following Shakespeare) had rippling effects on the political, religious, and social life in England. The sparks of England Reformation appeared as early as fourteenth century when John Wycliffe and his followers tried to challenge the Catholic Church practices but were ultimately deemed heretical and suppressed. The root of England Reformation was mostly established when German monk and professor Martin Luther began what seemed to be a peaceful academic disputation about Church practices in 1517 but was escalated into a bitter bloody revolt as the Church accused Luther of being heretical, and he was charged with corruption and Satanism (Greenblatt and Logan 537-538). Luther's views on Christianity, widely accessible through his "95 Theses" and his commentaries, were influential locally and globally. The Reformation eventually began spreading throughout Western Europe (France and Switzerland), and disputations towards a reformed church began.

When the idea of reformation reached England, it was for different reasons to Henry VIII. His personal and political reasons, such as the desire to annul a marriage and take Anne Boleyn as a second wife to get an heir to the throne, was the most immediate motivation to give up his Catholic faith and turn against Pope Leo X. He amended divorce laws, was excommunicated by Pope Clement VII, made it treasonous

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to refuse the oath of royal supremacy, beheaded those who refused the oath, seized church wealth, and distributed it to his followers. While Henry introduced all these amendments to reform churches, to Wooding, however, it was possible to please Henry both as a Catholic or Protestant as long as this Catholicism or Protestantism fitted his politics. Although he was known to be the first monarch to encourage reformation, he was notorious for his inconsistency when it came to his religious affiliations: he executed both papal supporters and reformers (10) and had written work against Luther's definition of a Christian belief, but after his break from Rome, adapted some of his doctrines (55). He adopted doctrines that suited and praised princely power but eventually had to accept the whole package that came with Reformation ideology (44). This was the beginning of a perplexing time in Renaissance England, as people who had adopted Protestantism and those who remained devoted Catholics both feared their lives.

After Henry's death, Edward ascended the throne with Protestant supporters who strove to transform the English Church accordingly. However, Edward's rule did not last long, and he died in 1553, only six years after his crowning. Ironically, Mary, daughter of Henry's first wife, Catherine, and raised devoutly Catholic, succeeded the throne. Her aim was to restore England to Catholicism and reaffirm the authority of the Pope and end rebellion. However, her intolerance towards Protestants ended in numerous prosecutions. Hundreds of Protestants were condemned as heretics and

burned while hundred others escaped to Calvin's Geneva. In this era, Catholics breathed a sigh of relief; among whom we can presumably count Shakespeare's father, John Shakespeare, who notably achieved the status of gentleman and served as a mayor in Stratford in 1568.

The tables turned again when Elizabeth ascended the throne and proclaimed England's return to Protestantism. English authorities under Elizabeth's rule began a steady procedure towards ensuring a commitment to Protestant settlement (Collinson 13). Elizabeth fined those who did not attend Protestant sermons, forced to-be priests to swear an oath on royal supremacy, sent commissioners to supervise and confirm that the religious services were being held accordingly, and refused further reformation ideas. Catholics were compelled to be present during Protestant sermons and services to keep their lands, their families and their lives (Miola 40; Richmond 94). The idea of complying with certain practices and being obliged to certain authorities' beliefs is reflected in *Lear*, Act 1 Scene 1, as his daughters are obliged to comply with their father's demand to perform a formal public ceremony of love in order to keep their lands (father's distributed lands), families (get married and have their husbands receive dowries) and their lives (Cordelia does not directly die when she disobeys, but gets rejected and banished). The church encouraged engagement with the Bible in the vernacular, and asked attendees to listen to sermons and take notes (Collinson 55). The papacy was identified with Antichrist, and Roman Church as "Babel" or "Babylon"

(Collinson 13). As for Protestants who were in exile, they returned and strove to take the Reformation further, feeding into the more radical strands of Protestant thought and feeling that came to be labeled ‘Puritanism’, whose adherents went to extreme measures when it came to church rituals, smashing statues, crucifixes and any altar pieces. To Collinson, these extreme measures showed that eventually, even Protestants were divided and even ministers preached different doctrines or applied them differently (56-57). Even after her ascension, attempts to conspire, rebel against, or even assassinate Protestants, including the queen herself, took place in the kingdom. As a result, Protestant England reacted by performing excommunications, imprisonments, and beheadings. These reactions entitled even more fear among Catholics, who were prone to be accused of treason or for plotting against the queen.

In *The Reformation of Emotions in the Age of Shakespeare*, Steven Mullaney writes with imaginative sympathy about how parents or grandparents of those who lived during the Elizabethan age had lived through “upheavals and martyrdoms” for the previous thirty years (13). This of course includes Shakespeare’s own parents and grandparents who lived through this entire period of religious trauma. Shakespeare was a direct witness to his father’s bankruptcy and constant struggle with finances after his application for a coat of arms was refused in 1570, quite likely on the account of suspected or actual recusancy. Shakespeare also experienced the execution of some of his extended family for treason, such as his cousin Edward. His family had to remain

low during Elizabethan times. Matters in the Shakespeare family only got better after William Shakespeare's rise in the Elizabethan social order.

These events mark the turbulence of sixteenth-century and early seventeenth-century England, which was highlighted by religious and political conflicts that would remain engraved in the mind of both Catholics and Protestants throughout. And despite the different interpretations and reviews of such histories, no historian or critic can ignore the complexity of the events that had occurred in England as its population underwent constant changes back and forth in religious ideologies as well as being exposed to different monarchs who each had their own ideology and system of implementing these ideologies. It is not difficult to imagine the confusion and the constant anxiety the people of England had to go through, especially a young generation from under King Henry's reign, who would witness the rise and fall of different monarchs with their doctrines and be greatly affected by them. Some chose to reform and become Protestants; some remained loyal to their Catholic roots; some were caught in between; others perhaps remained loyal to the monarch in power, and the rest perhaps, like any country that might be involved in highly conflicting politics, preferred to have a more critical view towards the different sides. It is very common that those who criticize would find these religious upheavals to be highly unnecessary and destructive for political and religious peace in England.

These issues, in one way or another, are mirrored in *Lear*. The attitudes and decisions taken by different monarchs that led the people into confusion and fear is a mood that is set the first scene. Shakespeare most probably was aware of the issues that were brought with the constant rise and fall of different religious regimes.

Shakespeare's parents are amongst those generations who were able to witness at least the ruling of three monarchs – Protestant, Catholic, Protestant – and trying to survive in such overwhelming ambiances. He and others like him, whether they were Catholics or Protestants, had their share of worry, conflict, confusion, and flexibility. While Shakespeare's religious beliefs seem to be opaque, his biography suggests how he was able to effectively operate in both worlds. He was born into a Catholic family and witnessed his parents' struggles. As Mullaney noted, Catholic parents or grandparents were most likely to be marginalized by neighbors and acquaintances under Protestant reigns due to their religious identities and might have kept a low profile in order not to show their signs of worship (13). The inter-generational disinheritance and non-recognition in the first scene of *King Lear* mirrors the social reality in Elizabethan England, and as Mullaney stresses, the Reformation encouraged the disinheritance or non-recognition of *older* Catholics by *younger* Protestant generations (14). However, Shakespeare revived his parent's status after climbing the social ladder in Elizabethan society. While the issue in *Lear* is not directly due to religious differences, the Biblical sources and doctrinal languages that Shakespeare might have considered when writing

Act 1, Scene 1, particularly when exploring issues such as a public court and issues that involve a material reward in return of something immaterial. The latter is similar to the Catholic practice of simony and Cordelia's refusal to engage in such practice ends up being banished, making her a potential symbol of grace, as I will later argue. Does this mean Shakespeare and/or his family accepted the Protestant doctrine? The question has no direct answer, but his plays help scholars lay out some of the possibilities, mostly examining the sources to which Shakespeare refers and how they fit into the socio-economic and religious background.

B. Doctrines in Conflict

As Elizabeth undertook a "mission" towards a more Protestant England, many changes took place during her reign, some being immediate while others slow. Some of these direct changes included changes in policy making in political and religious areas. These included changes in Church structure and function and laws mandating the people to follow the new procedures. Other changes gradually permeated social and other areas, involving but not restricted to family life, as well as other public areas such as drama and court life.

1. Direct Historical and Religious Changes

The Reformation encompassed a first yet crucial step towards a division between Catholic and Protestant Doctrine. Taken as a whole the changes were radical, but they

were sometimes gradual and sometimes bloody. The early boom of Reformation England first brought with it the importance of the Scripture, available to the public in vernacular English. The *Book of Common Prayer* and Elizabethan *Homilies* replaced every Sunday's reading (Richmond 53). Prayers mostly included focus on Passion and everyday problems (55). Regarding translation, Catholics believed that Protestant translations corrupted the essence of the Bible, and even when interpreted, Catholics preferred referring to Latin translation while Protestants sought to explore Bible exegesis through the original languages of the Bible: Hebrew for the Old Testament and Greek for the New Testament (Crown 334). I will suggest in the following chapter how Shakespeare may have made use of aspects of the original language in creating a complex allusion.

The changes elaborated above are some of the essential changes required to convert England into Protestantism, especially during Elizabethan England. While Henry was responsible for initiating the first step, with Edward taking the matter further, Protestantism reached its peak of stability during the Elizabethan reign. Shakespeare himself was highly aware of these changes as he attended Stratford grammar school where he was exposed to English, Latin and Greek languages, and despite leaving school at the age of 13 due to his father's financial problems, there is evidence that he continued pursuing his education elsewhere- at King Edward's New School (Richmond 85), where his readings and education level prospered. Furthermore,

Shakespeare and others were forced to attend sermons and be familiar with other religious books such as *Homilies* and *The Book of Common Prayer*, and theologians and ministers relied more often and more explicitly on the original Greek New Testament when conducting sermons, writing commentaries and/or performing exegesis.

Moreover, Protestantism combined gospel law with secular law because they argued that “secular law came through God-given authority of secular princes”; for example, significantly, Henry and Elizabeth believed that they were God’s representatives on earth (Wooding 61). To Catholics, the supremacy of papacy was a key; his role as a mediator between God and man and as an encourager of faith was essential (Wooding 198). The question of authority is a major issue in *Lear*, especially when the issues of public versus private and material versus immaterial are set as problematic in the first scene. Moreover, the corruption of the court will be discussed more thoroughly throughout this chapter and in the third chapter. Should religion and politics coincide? As the discussion in Chapter One brought out, critics have criticized *Lear* for carelessly mixing the private and public context. What should be private is set in a public context. Love is a private matter not to be discussed in courts or even abused for that matter. Is Shakespeare suggesting that there is a flaw in both systems?

While Catholics still embraced papal authority, especially in the matters of interpretation of scripture and achievement of salvation, Protestants asserted the principle of *sola scriptura* and *sola fide* adopted from Lutheran principles as basic but

did not necessarily discourage the act of good works (Wooding 86; Lake 257). Justification by faith through grace was and remains an essential doctrine to Protestants (93-96). This is a key concept when exploring *King Lear*. The “good works” of Lear in giving his daughters his lands in return for their love at the beginning scene does not guarantee a peaceful and loving life for Lear. His cheap exchange of land for love is similar to the practice of indulgences in Medieval Catholic Church: God’s love and redemption in return for land in heaven. Ironically, Lear receives his redemption through his third daughter, to whom he does not offer any land because she refused to articulate her love for him. There are grounds for perceiving a subtle criticism of contemporary Catholic practice and doctrine in Shakespeare’s construction of this scene.

In addition, Protestants did not regard faith as being in opposition to reason; reason can be used in harmony with faith to unlock meaning, a concept highly criticized by Catholics (Wooding 155). This concept is congruent with Cordelia’s character as Bloom describes: a person with great faith and with great reason. While Cordelia remains faithful and loyal to her father until the very end of the play, her love towards her father is not governed by blindness but by reason. With her “intensified intelligence” (Nuttall 89), Cordelia tries to help her father understand the ridiculousness of his love trial. The great love and grace she holds towards her father is complemented by reason.

Since Protestants negated the role of the pope, the saints and Virgin Mary, their approach to God was direct, through scripture, without the interference of the aforementioned. This belief meant that Mass was no longer an important part of Church Culture, and an individual's faith was solely nourished through reading the vernacular Bible and listening to sermons (Richmond 49). Protestants were committed to a vernacular worship; an act highly disapproved by Catholics and considered it "ungodly" (Wooding 186). Catholics considered mass a sacrament, sacrifice, and a basis of understanding faith (83). The Seven Sacraments remained sacred and their practice continued (212). Protestant religious figures were encouraged to remain humble in their sermons, churches, clothing etc. as opposed to the lavishness of Masses, priests in golden robes and crosses. *King Lear* draws a steady line between the flattery and extravagant speeches of Regan and Goneril and Cordelia's humble character. She specifically refuses an elaborate and ritualized form of speech in favor of bare simplicity, which is analogous to the "values" of Protestantism.

2. *Family Life*

The changes in Early Modern England affected the country in terms of political, religious, and social life not only as a whole but also on a domestic level. Family life suffered from the lack of privacy. The top down policy of Protestant political life continued making the family a public institution. Family internal affairs were of legitimate interest to others such as neighbors, the parish and even the state.

Outsiders were free to express disapproval when it came to domestic violence and marriage between people with gross differences in age. Intervention took place in forms of mocking rhymes, songs or passing comments. Families exposed to such humiliations often had songs written about them, were given nicknames, and were frequently the objects of gossip. However, official or state interventions only took place in case of fornication or adultery (Collinson 61). However, many Protestants were unhappy with the social situation and with time, sought to fight against outside interferences. Families began appreciating and demanding privacy away from gossip. Eventually, “privacy became an obsession and gossiping and unwarranted spying” became serious offenses (qtd. in Collinson 62). The appreciation of privacy and private life is presented in Act 1, Scene 1 in *King Lear*. Lear is a king, a ruler of a country, yet he is also a father to three daughters, the head of a family. His duty and life as a King and his business in court differ from his duty and life as a father. Lear decides to wrongly fuse his role as a King and father, which ends in a disaster. Only Cordelia is able to understand the consequences of such a conflation. Her love for her father is a private matter, not fit to be addressed in court.

The Protestant family became a microcosm of the Protestant town and nation. If Reformation consolidated monarchy, it engrossed home patriarchy (Collinson 62). However, Collinson argues that the emotional quality of family life was deepened with Protestantism and aroused both political self-consciousness and familial self-

consciousness (63). He also warns, however, that although the intention of having a family with strong bonds did not manifest itself directly as an expression of interests, it favored capitalism and economic development and turned marriage into “a free market choice within the couples themselves, the currency in this market being attraction and love, which were themselves commodities” (63). Love was considered the most non-rational impulse in humans, but became rationalized in the capital system, and marriages became social and economic arrangements (64). This ideology on love is problematic and incorporated in *King Lear* as he commits the same mistake as a father towards his daughters, treating their love as commodities. The idea of treating love as commodity is also very parallel with critics who discussed the material versus immaterial aspects when it comes to Act 1, Scene 1 in *Lear*. Cordelia was to be wed to one of the two suitors, the Duke of Burgundy or the King of France, in return for a generous dowry offered by the father of the bride. The concept of the dowry remained an incentive for young gentlemen to marry. In accordance to this mentality, the Prince of Burgundy refuses to wed Cordelia once Lear disowns her. To him, Cordelia is no longer of value in the market. The King of France, however, is impressed by her self-possession and sees through to her heart; his love is not based on commodity.

However, many fought against both arranged and commoditized marriage and sought to make marriage an act of love and devotion based on mutual love and choice. Feminists have even pointed out some challenges within the patriarchal hierarchy of the

Protestant household. For example, apart from the traditional “obey your husband” commandment, Thomas Becon’s catechism on “duty of Husbands to their Wives” and “Of the Duty of Wives to Husband” in equal weight, which were deemed revolutionary in terms of encouraging partnership and companionship rather having the mother/the wife as a subordinate to the husband (qtd. in Collinson 70; 88).¹⁰ Furthermore, the importance of showing love and affection towards children was also emphasized contrary to their inferior treatment. Despite the presence of conduct books, respect for their personal autonomy and “balanced framework of mutual obligation” was encouraged (Collinson 70). These issues were an important issue in the Renaissance and was subject to a lot of debates, especially by the Puritans, who believed that children are inferior and should be punished for their actions. In *King Lear*, Shakespeare revolutionizes the concept by portraying a “stupid” father and an “intelligent” daughter. Lear is portrayed as being reckless and careless, taking decisions about his daughters without being aware of the consequences while his daughter shows a maturity a parent should have.

¹⁰ The King of France is not mentioned at a later stage in the play, and Cordelia takes her own decisions and arrives in England without the accompaniment of her husband. Cordelia’s independence and leadership of the army is one of the changes Shakespeare has incorporated from earlier accounts of the story, such as Geoffrey of Monmouth.

However, these changes had mixed reactions, even among Protestants themselves. Some authors such as Gouge, a hater of women, supported wife beating, believing it is the husband's job to discipline the wife, who was "the prime origin or locus of evil" (Lake 267), or else she would fall in the sin of gossip while other authors condemned it such as Henry Smith's famous line "her cheeks are made for thy lips, and not for thy fists" (qtd. in Collinson 72). Luther himself even showed a great deal of respect and devotion to his wife Katie, evident in his letters when speaking about the importance of marriage (73). The changes towards a more companionate approach to marriage and family arrangement were seen as a threat to patriarchy (81). The Protestant family was a representative of the national authority and includes a lot of radical changes that one might find difficult to digest. These changes in family structure and function are highly evident in Lear's irrational fury as he believes his authority is being threatened by Cordelia, the perfect daughter who is challenging his hierarchal position as a king and a father.

The radical changes in family structure are probably why a highly compelling and significant discussion in *Lear* is the dimension of gender. This gender difference is consequential for a reading of the play that hopes to connect the dramatization of Lear and Cordelia's misunderstanding over love to the situation between Jesus and Peter after the resurrection as portrayed in the Book of John. While both have hierarchal contexts in the dialogue, Lear and Jesus being at a higher "rank", and despite the fact

that both Cordelia and Peter show discomfort for their own reasons, as we will observe in detail in Chapter 3, one can grasp a greater sense of discomfort in Lear and Cordelia's dialogue. The discomfort leans towards both Lear and Cordelia while the discomfort in Jesus and Peter's encounter leans towards Peter only. The gender factor adds to the complication of the encounter between Lear and Cordelia in addition to the hierarchy issue mentioned in the previous section. How does gender role interfere with and/or add to the allusion complication? How do feminists explain the hierarchy between Lear and Cordelia and how does the difference in gender affect that hierarchy in comparison to Jesus and Peter? Does *King Lear* reinforce or undermine patriarchal ideology and how does that further complicate the allusion?¹¹ Do Cordelia's and Lear's behaviors conform to or work against their assigned genders?

An obvious difference between the Lear-Cordelia and Jesus-Peter encounter is a difference in gender in the lower rank (a male Peter and a female Cordelia). Having a male subordinate has different implications than a female subordinate. Another difference that was discussed earlier is the fact that Jesus and Peter's conversation had a more peaceful outcome compared to Lear's and Cordelia's. These are noteworthy

¹¹ The patriarchal ideology that I will be discussing here is related to both misogynistic implications within the conversations as well as the manipulation of using women as money making tools.

reasons to consider when analyzing and comparing these two encounters with feminist lenses. Feminists have highlighted *King Lear* to portray misogynistic implications while the play presents connections between sexual insubordination and anarchy (McLuskie 35). In the first scene, Lear (the higher power) uses his authority by expecting his daughters to comply with his love test, but Jesus does not expect or demand that Peter comply with his own love trial. The genders of those who are being questioned play an important role in the analysis. While the natures of those in power have an effect on the outcome of the conversation, misogynistic propositions still affect the conversation between Lear and Cordelia. Lear abuses his power and tries to force his younger daughter to submit to his test and reply with a desirable response despite the faulty approach. This power struggle is almost fully absent in Jesus's and Peter's encounter.

Even if the nature of the daughters is not yet clearly revealed in the beginning scene, it becomes clear that Regan and Goneril are "evil" while Cordelia is "good". McLuskie suggests or asserts that Shakespeare is known to represent patriarchal misogyny by dividing his female characters into "good" and "bad", where the "good" is "abused, neglected, devalued or exiled" (26-27). This concept of Shakespeare's is not an unfamiliar concept when comparing Cordelia's suffering to Jesus's, who was also at least abused, neglected and devalued. A further complication of Lear and Cordelia's encounter, as explained by Kaiter, is that heterosexuality consists of a relation of an exchange, whereby male masculinity is confirmed by its other, the feminine, Cordelia's

expected submissiveness, but this system is somehow reversed as Lear is feminized and his daughters masculinized (Kaiter 287); in other words, Lear's manhood is to be proved or affirmed when his daughters submit to his test. Lear's manhood is shaken when his youngest daughter refuses to submit, which, according to Kaiter, is when Lear believes his masculinity is shaken. Ironically, the roles are reversed. Lear unconsciously wants his femininity to be affirmed (through love) and as a result, submitting to this trial shows masculinization in Regan's and Goneril's case. Lear's femininity only affirms Regan's and Goneril's masculinity that turns into "destruction" while the "other" (Cordelia), who refused to affirm her father's femininity, takes a more heroic and savior-like approach as she sets out to save her father and restore his throne and masculinity. However, in the course, she also masculinizes herself once in the beginning scene as she refuses to submit to male authority but also towards the end as she seeks to save her father without the accompaniment of her husband. Her heroism can be seen with different lenses when compared to Jesus. Her perfect balance between being feminine and masculine fits the description given by many theologians and even feminists. Feminists who classify Jesus as both masculine (the Father) and feminine (the Caring Mother) argue that while God had created man and woman, he created them in his own image (Genesis 1:27).

Finally, the exchange of marriage through dowry is also a patriarchal concept, a system highly critical in Elizabeth England, as previously mentioned. Kaiter points out

that Lear abuses his authority over Cordelia as he threatens her “chances” of marriage (Kaiter 289). While feminists believe that daughters owning property was a revolutionary act in Early Modern England, the idea of having a dowry still put women in the position of being property. Lear distributes his property to his daughters; a phenomenon most probably frowned upon during the Renaissance, although documents about female inheritance were existent. The ownership of property is equivalent to power, and Lear loses that power when he distributes his property to the wrong hands. His daughters end up “shaking his manhood” (Adelman 110). All three daughters seem to suck his manhood, each in their own way. By giving up his property, he allows his daughters control over his extended body. Due to the absence of mother in the play, Lear wants to make them his mother and puts himself in an “infantile position” (116). While the property is often shared by in-laws (which had its own complications), the legacy that Lear was trying to establish is similar to the phrase “feed my sheep” used by Jesus to Peter. The question of “succession” in the Book of John matches up with Lear’s concern to distribute land described partly in terms of good pasture and the question of “succession”- to both deserved daughters and their husbands. This phenomenon is not complicated when Jesus gives Peter the responsibility, but issues arise as Lear is faced with multiple decisions ranging from giving the property to the rightful daughter and dealing with dowry and marriage settlements.

When Lear attempts to distribute his property, his hopes rest on Cordelia. Adelman argues that Cordelia cannot meet Lear's need of her; the love that he demands will only lead to annihilating mothers who seek his death (in the case of Goneril and Regan) (117). Cordelia is a stubborn and self-righteous daughter, devoted equally to her own harsh truth and to her father (119-120) and therefore refuses to take part in the ridiculous test of her father's. Her refusal to respond or act in the love test can be seen as a rebellion against patriarchy. She ends up challenging Lear to forego his reckless behavior (Kaiter 287). She is assertive in the sense that she maintains her personal autonomy of her individual will by remaining true to her loyal and pure love. According to Rudynstky, Cordelia's two suitors reflect that through the conflict between Burgundy and France, a representation of Lear's confusion between property and love respectively (306). Furthermore, McLuskie explains the dispute between Lear and his daughters as concerned with love and filial gratitude, but she also points out the tense relationship between the bonds and the material circumstances that govern the discourse (42). In John 21, the disciples of Jesus, including Peter, have gone back to worrying about material life: ownership of boats, nets and catching fish to set food on the table for their families. Lear is trying to publish his daughter's dowries, but Cordelia interferes because she introduces a notion of love which is more absolute, "incompatible both with public declaration and computation... for her notion of love gained precedence in modern ideology" (42). Jesus once again interrupts the style of life his disciples are used

to and reminds them, specifically Peter, of the love he possesses and asks Peter to continue his legacy of “feeding his sheep.”

3. The Early Modern English Court

The Elizabethan court had established a culture of its own and has been subjected to criticism by many during and after its time. According to Smuts, English politics during 1590s up to 1630s was centered on the court (21). Greenblatt and Logan argue that the royal court had concentrated in itself much of the nation’s power, and consequently, culture and power in the Elizabethan court were not separable (533). The court held pageants, masques, revels etc., and those who aspired for national or international affairs had to resort to the court to advance. Poets and playwrights sought to impress the court in hopes of being rewarded with patronage.

However, the moral force of the court was being questioned. Smuts describes court culture in the following way:

Councilors who disagreed with each other divided the court into rival interests. This of course meant that policy debates and political rivalries were also shaped by the demands of lesser courtiers and provincial landowners seeking patronage, and by the flow of ideas and information provided by diplomats, spies and policy advisers employed by the crown and its great servants. Understanding court politics requires the attention not only to the policies of the crown, but to rivalries within the royal entourage and efforts by people beyond the ruling group to gain access and influence (23).

Tension within the court is noticeable in this section; if an early modern courtier needs to pave their way to a certain position in the court, they must ensure that they get on the “right side” of their patron. Shakespeare’s own success at the periphery of court life – in contrast to many other writers of the time – suggests his understanding of court politics and the value of courtly connections, mainly influenced by Tacitus. Tacitus was a historian of Imperial Rome.

In the late Elizabethan period, he became fashionable and some people sought to give a “Tacitean” analysis of court and national politics based on his precedent. Tacitus believed that such politics exposed the ruthlessness of politics and filled the imperial court with dissimulation, lies and flattery (qtd. in Smuts 25). In order to receive a place in court, one had to resort to manipulation rather than honest competition. Therefore, competition for entry was solely based on corruption and treachery, and as the pressures on war finance increased, opportunities were constricted which had had a drastic and intense effect on court level. Members used one another for political gains, by using each other’s ambitions and weaknesses to violate bonds of marriage, love, friendship and kinship to achieve what they desired. Court life was highly ridiculed by many scholars since scandals were often revealed and became the gossip of people. Court life is interestingly connected to some of the treatments of the public and private spheres discussed in Chapter One. The trial of love in the first scene takes place in a court where Lear’s daughters are aware of how to manipulate their father to get their personal

desires. Like any court member was able to do, Regan and Goneril abuse their father's weakness for love through flattery. Their fancy and eloquent speeches and use of fancy rhetoric are the correct ingredients in which they allow their vulnerable father to fall into the trap of believing their love.

4. *Drama*

Drama in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century was also subjected to debate between Catholics, Protestants, and Puritans. In his book, *Shakespearean Negotiations*, specifically the first chapter, "The Circulation of Social Energy", Stephen Greenblatt discusses the issues of theater in Elizabethan England. He states that the playhouse could be seen as a holy place; the audience as a community of believers; the actors and the roles they played as the symbolic actions they mimed; and finally the spectacle demanded from the audience as the institution that staged the show (Greenblatt 15). In a later section of the chapter, Greenblatt discusses modes of representational exchanges such as appropriation, purchase, symbolic acquisition, acquisition through simulation, metaphorical acquisition and acquisition through synecdoche or metonymy. These modes of representation were used because the theater was active in a time of extreme censorship and could not truly express what it wanted to because of the people in power. Greenblatt describes it as an institutionalization. So this institutionalization was what fueled this transfer of social energy from the stage to the audience that watched the plays since under King James I, using the word "God,"

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“Jesus,” “Holy Ghost,” “Trinity” or any explicit religious idea on stage meant being fined (Greenblatt 10).

Medieval plays were characterized as having moral lessons and were regarded as a part of Biblical education to lay population. This made Protestants skeptical about the theater because its characteristics matches Catholic Mass and makes it papal and therefore similar to moral plays during medieval ages. This skepticism was one of the reasons that the early Elizabethan period (1583) prohibited having religious and political debate on stage (Johnston 80). What happened at a later stage was that London’s public theaters began relying on the absence and presence of Biblical tradition, especially with emotional power referring to Christ’s miraculous transfiguration and resurrection. Williamson explains emotional power was mostly derived from the Gospel of Luke since it is a gospel of emotions and foreplays the different emotions experienced by the disciples (113). *The Winter’s Tale* portrays such emotion, and Christ, although not part of the *dramatis personae*, is evoked through other characters and actions (114). This phenomenon is also present in *King Lear*. While Christ is not directly represented or even referred to, both Lear and Cordelia are represented as figures of Christ, and the allusion embedded in the beginning of the scene pertains to the figure of Christ post-resurrection (Williamson). This style of scriptural evocation on the stage can also evoke the tensions within the audience’s society between Catholicism and Protestantism. Shakespeare plays out these tensions in

King Lear in its different aspects. Despite the illegality of religious subjects on stage, playwrights used the New Testament as a source.

As a result, while the secularized theater still reflected religious culture, it was masked by negotiations affiliated with power. Anthony B. Dawson believes that Shakespeare himself believed that he and his contemporaries were in “some sort of ministry” (240), and are far from secular. The complex structure of *Lear*, close reading, and content are filled with references to political, religious and social issues. His adept inclusion of religious conflicts and debates is a sign that he does have a hidden religious agenda. The Protestant’s desire to secularize from theater was appropriated by Shakespeare, at least in the form of language. Despite his long list of religious and political allusions, Shakespeare never got in any trouble in his lifetime for them. However, no matter how “secular” theaters were forced to be, politics still included religious culture within it, and, therefore, it was nearly impossible to remove religious implications, conflicts, allusions, or symbols from the theatrical equation (246). Shakespeare was able to combine the secularization of the theater with the ability to allude to religious ideas, the New Testament, and even doctrines without being accused of blasphemy.

C. Shakespeare's Religious Complexity

Shakespeare's use of indirection and allusion in evoking religious matters has the additional side-effect of leaving his own affiliation ambiguous, and critics and scholars continue to debate it. While some claim that Shakespeare was Catholic (Pearce 10; Colston 51; Marotti) others believe that Shakespeare had more of a Protestant inclination knowing that he was supported by Queen Elizabeth (Bloom 102; Diehl). The heated debate still continues; however, if one looks closely, one can realize that it is perhaps too amateurish to simplify Shakespeare and his plays mere religious partisanship despite modern theories hinting at a Catholic Shakespeare, or at least a Shakespeare inclined to Catholicism. Some researchers believe that Shakespeare sorts out the elements of Catholic and Protestant in his works (Baker; Rubinstein; Mayer). Despite some modern theories' emphasis on a Catholic Shakespeare, I believe that Shakespeare uses Act Scene I in *King Lear* to criticize the Catholic doctrine in Early Modern England on the one hand, and at the same time, to hint at the rivalry between them. He pinpoints the corruption that occurs among both Catholics and Protestants. Some of the arguments that critics make, whether they believe he is a Catholic, Protestant, both, or neither, helps advance certain arguments that will help enhance the argument in Chapter 3.

Some scholars are keen to force Shakespeare into one single identity category. Sarah Beckwith believes that Shakespeare carried his Catholicism to his grave (259).

David Beauregard also contributes to a recent trend supporting the idea that Shakespeare persisted as a Roman Catholic throughout his life.¹² Likewise, Richmond believes that Shakespeare had a bias for Catholicism. His sympathies were predominantly Roman Catholic since he was raised as a Roman Catholic (13).¹³ Nevertheless, Richmond mentions other critics, like Shoenbaum, who argued that Shakespeare expressed anti-Catholic sentiments (qtd. in Richmond 15), a key factor to my argument when analyzing Act 1, Scene 1 in *King Lear*.

Including themes that are preferred by a certain doctrine does not guarantee that Shakespeare shared the beliefs these doctrines encouraged. Graham believes that Shakespeare's religious identity is at play with both Catholic and Protestant (7). Just because Shakespeare shows sympathy for Catholics in some of his plays does not mean he supports Catholicism, and even engaging in Protestant pastoral discourse is not

¹² He seeks to argue that despite Elizabeth's new policy to establish religious unity, the "layers" of religious discourse, and Shakespeare's use of both elements in his plays, he did not abandon his "Catholic heritage" and therefore "manifests" a Catholic mind (942-943). However, as Beauregard uses examples of different plays to portray his views, he tends to focus more on the Catholic elements and briefly mentions Protestant elements in the play, brushes them off, or reduces them to mere irony or sarcasm.

¹³ Her argument is mostly based on Shakespeare's biography and Catholic background. His family remained loyal to Roman Catholicism even after the reformation (Richmond 79). Some of his relatives remained nuns during his lifetime, but others, such as his cousins were executed and imprisoned during the Elizabethan era for their religious beliefs (80). His father, John Shakespeare, had financial and legal difficulties and was constantly fleeing for his life during the Elizabethan reign (81; Collinson 58). Even his favorite daughter, Susanna, was a devoted Catholic whose life was constantly in danger (82-83).

evidence of Protestant beliefs (8). Pastoral and anti-pastoral elements are present in *King Lear* and are highly related to the John 21:15-18. For example, the opening setting in *Lear* and the setting in John 21:15-18 include pastoral elements. In the former, Lear is offering pastoral lands to his daughters in which he later seeks to spend his retirement days (but does not since his daughters banish him). In the latter, Peter has sought refuge back as a fisherman, but Jesus has reconciled with him and offered him the role of “feeder of his sheep”. Of course, the pastoral or anti-pastoral elements in both texts are not only limited to settings; events also play an important role.¹⁴

An interesting approach to Shakespeare is perhaps viewing him through the lens of ethical studies, making him a highly critical persona. Patrick Gray and John Cox classify Shakespeare as someone whose orientation towards Christianity is better characterized as ethical than confessional. His Christian reflection on ethics is portrayed complexly in his plays (21). Even *King Lear* is regarded as a play that establishes moral teaching, for “madness presents an idiosyncratic version” (25). Moralistic emotions, pity and compassion, are at the heart of *King Lear* (26). In a later essay by Peter Mack, the analysis of Lear’s madness is a combination of moral axioms and proverbs

¹⁴ Refer to Thribhawandutt Ramnath Audan’s “Pastoral and Anti-Pastoral Elements in Selected Tragedies of Shakespeare” for more information on pastoral and anti-pastoral elements in *Lear*.
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harmonious with Christian ethics. The play is developed through agents of good and evil and respects personifications of a morality play (290). Mack explains that Shakespeare explored several issues during the Renaissance that could have been philosophical issues of the century, most found in *Lear*: “the relation between divine providence and human suffering, the nature of justice, the comparison between animal and man, the relations between fathers and children, the proper role of emotions, and the wretchedness of human life (297). Most of these issues coincide with religious issues of the century, especially when it comes to doctrinal conflict. Shakespeare could have used John 21:15-18 to lay out the moral consequences of these issues such as the agents of good and evil (sin versus redemption), father and his son, comparison between man and sheep, the emotions of guilt and love, the wretchedness of Peter’s suffering and divine intervention and repentance.

A more moderate group of scholars have a more objective criticism of Shakespeare’s affiliation, most suggesting a Shakespeare who knew how to use current events and information and manipulate them within his plays for different purposes, mostly to criticize the religious conflict going on during his time. Mayer states that Shakespeare’s plays have “the power to pose pressing questions but also allow potential contradictions to remain” (qtd. in Jackson & Marotti 4) and therefore, he might be seen as “a religious skeptic who was critical of his own religiously conflicted society and emotionally attached to some of the features of ‘old religion’ as he sought ways to

translate some of them into psychologically and ethically powerful theater” (5)¹⁵ Hunt believes that Shakespeare’s religious allusiveness was thoughtful and carefully chosen as he engaged with the contemporary religious matters (xiii). Even when analyzing the religious allusion in Chapter 3, it is certainly not easy to pinpoint his stance when it comes to religious issues. Similarly, Hunt explains that Shakespeare plays on these Catholic and Protestant concepts and repeatedly endorses both customs in his plays (ix). Act 1, Scene 1 in *Lear* reveals the endorsement of both Catholic and Protestant, both through critical lenses.

A similar group of critics believe that Shakespeare resented both doctrines because of the war-like nature it had created in England. According to Frankie Rubinstein, Shakespeare felt angry and desperate over the religious and political turmoil in the courts of Elizabeth and James I, for he saw it as “destructive to the welfare of a state” (234). He asserts that this struggle is evident throughout *King Lear*. Rubinstein asserts that Lear himself “delivers a pivotal speech filled with allusions to the profound political issues of the Catholic-Protestant controversy of Shakespeare’s times” (235).

¹⁵ Jackson and Marotti state that Shakespeare is skeptical and critical of religion but does he his religious impulses, but can never be categorized as a traditional “Catholic” or “Protestant” or even “skeptic” (5). However, as a scholar and highly knowledgeable about ancient past, medieval and earl modern world and even the future, his plays are not disconnected form the long and rich history or religious practices and set of interpretations available to him (9).

Rubinstein describes how the drama, although set in Pagan time, is carried through the audience in Christian terms of one God (236). Rubinstein uses the term “God’s spies” as puns to describe and play on the “theological mysteries and doctrinal disputes” (237). Lear is associated with the “bishop,” a figure of a “father,” found in both Anglican and Roman Catholic churches (238). Nuttall, on the other hand, describes Lear and Cordelia as the mother and Christ respectively (307). Shakespeare also reflects the struggle in the religious community of the sixteenth century by trying to find a balance between tradition and reform (240). The religious conflict seemed endless. The constant alteration in religious power--from Mary to Protestant Henry VIII to Catholic Mary to Protestant Queen Elizabeth—was apparently an element of English history and society Shakespeare apparently incorporated into his plays, specifically *King Lear* (242).

These eclectic discussions of Shakespeare’s doctrinal orientation or identity seem to be an ongoing and heated debate longing perhaps for more research and findings to help pinpoint a genuine consensus. However, what all scholars seem to agree upon is the presence of both doctrines. A common example stated in some of these books is how a ghost from purgatory in *Hamlet* offers a Catholic inclination, but ironically, in the same play, a Protestant doctrine surfaces as the audience comes to know that Hamlet has attended a Protestant university. After much reading, a personal yet solid argument could easily state that a man of such maturity, ingeniousness, knowledge, and understanding did not restrain himself by personal inclination, at least

in his literal work. As a man of wit and intelligence, he had had the capability of encompassing, and interchangeably playing out the different doctrines, along with other scholarly, classical, and historical material. Regarding the ongoing conflict between the doctrines, I believe that instead of engaging in the “big picture” debate, it would be a more effective strategy to focus on how Shakespeare handles the fine details of specific texts that brings this big picture within the tight artistry of *King Lear*.

CHAPTER 4

“WHICH OF YOU SHALL WE SAY DOTHT LOVE US MOST?”

A. Shakespeare’s Religious Allusions

The long process of drama secularization, particularly the law of 1603 that outlawed naming God in plays and openly using any religious denotations, surely qualitatively influenced Shakespeare’s use of the Bible and other religious material, but this does not lessen the sheer quantitative fact of his reliance on such sources. Leland Ryken states that Shakespeare has referred to 42 books of the Bible: eighteen from each of the Testaments and the remaining from the Apocrypha. She argues that Shakespeare’s writing contains more references to the Bible than the plays of any other Elizabethan playwright. A conservative tally of the total number of Biblical references is 1200 (Par. 5). While the exact number of allusions is unclear, critics have counted hundreds of possible allusions. Moreover, some of these allusions have also served as a mirror to the religious events that occurred in Early Modern England and that had a drastic effect in political and social life. The Elizabethan religious settlement was one (important) stage in a long Reformation history in England that cast its influence upon almost every facet of social and cultural life, including theatre. Shakespeare’s allusions reflect not only the religious saturation of his community, or a specific Protestant formation, but at times also function as critical interventions or occasion meditations on

the complexity of a theological contest experienced quite literally as a matter of life and death.

Allusions are present in almost all of Shakespeare's plays; their presence in *King Lear* is intriguing to critics due to the play's apocalyptic and pre-Christian setting. Nuttall states that the play takes place before the founding of Rome (*Shakespeare the Thinker* 300). Bloom claims that there are more Biblical allusions in *Lear's* tragedy set in a pagan Britain than in *Macbeth*, supposedly set in a medieval and therefore Catholic Scotland (108). Shakespeare's plays encompass highly complicated structures and language. *King Lear* is one of Shakespeare's latest works, and as critics have noted, it is one of the densest in language and emotion. The allusions in *King Lear* contain powerful images of pain and suffering on one hand, and great love and redemption on the other. These allusions complement the play's intensity and density of emotions that portray Christian beliefs and propositions.

1. Biblical Allusions in King Lear

A lot of well-known scholars provide solid evidence of the relationship between Lear and Job. For Frankie Rubinstein and Piero Boitani, the reason why this allusion is significant is because of the immense suffering of both Lear and Job throughout the play ("God's Spies"). Boitani argues that Lear's thoughtlessness and carelessness in the beginning scene leaves him guilty; he is deprived of all he has and

suffers greatly (26-27). Lear here is an exclusively tragic Job because deprived of everything; Job is reduced to a bundle of sores, albeit Lear's sores are spiritual. However, Lear's suffering is a "counterpoint, the image of the Passion and Crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth", who is in this case Job's fulfillment (27). Boitani explains that Lear alternates between the Passion and the *Patientia* of Job and Christ on one hand and the most unbridled fury that Yahweh shows against his enemies of the Bible on the other. Finally, Passion and *Patientia* will become *hysterica passio*, a term of intensive analysis within the feminist critical tradition (a point to which I will return).

Boitani further notes the importance of suffering and patience of Lear in relation to the Biblical Job. However, he points out the differences between them. The God in Job evokes his own Creation while Lear within his hurricane calls for destruction, wanting a second Flood and returning it to nothingness. Lear enacts a trial for his daughters as Job calls God to judgment (29). Lear is also compared to the Jesus in Gethsemane in the Gospel of Luke, who wants to "pray, and then... sleep." (30). His suffering during the storm and his "resurrection" towards the end when he recognizes Cordelia shows is parallel to both the suffering and resurrection of Jesus Christ (34).

Boitani does not stop here, however, but goes on to show how Shakespeare creates grounds for seeing Cordelia as another distinct figure of Christ (34). Before the grand reunion between Cordelia and Lear, she asks those at her service to look for her father. The phrase she utters "Oh dear father/ It is thy business that I go about" (4.4.23-72

24) is also a phrase in the Geneva Bible when Jesus explains to Mary and Joseph, who have been searching for him for days, why he is desperately needed at the temple: “How is it that ye sought me? Knew yee not that I must goe about my Father’s business?” (Luke 2:49). Boitani concludes that “Cordelia is thus Daughter in the same way in which, in the Gospels, Jesus of Nazareth is the son (34). The portrayal of Cordelia as a figure of Christ is considered revolutionary in Shakespeare’s studies amongst feminists (McLuskie; Berry; Adelman). Lear’s plea for forgiveness will also be granted by Cordelia and a “new awareness, an opening of the mind towards the other” will take place (36).

Hannibal Hamlin emphasizes the comparison between Lear and Job, with special attention to the theatrical context in which Shakespeare creates this comparison. As Boitani mentioned, the resemblance lies in in the theme of patience in adversity and the prolonged suffering of both Lear and Job (129). Hamlin explains that Shakespeare’s version of Lear is the only version of *Lear* that alludes to Job, but he has seen *King Leir* by the Queen’s Men in 1594. Shakespeare will also have been aware of Robert Greene’s contemporary *Job*, and might have made the link through this second play (131). Throughout his chapter, Hamlin provides direct intertextual relationships between Lear and Job and refers to the Geneva Bible, along with the marginal notes and cross references (133). Also, Calvin’s *Sermons* has influenced the language in *King Lear* in terms of themes and imagery (135). They were translated to English by Arthur

Golding and were highly available in England starting 1574 and sold well. Therefore, the “constellation” of allusions to Job is very significant according to Hamlin and the theme of patience is also very indicative. He refers to the Latin roots of Patience which means to suffer to explain Lear’s situation and compare it to that of Job’s (140).

However, whether Lear is an ideal Job is questionable. For example Hamlin does not believe that Lear achieves Job’s standards because Lear is not as patient as Job, but Job is not so patient either (142-143). Shakespeare creates an etymological relation between patience, passion and Christ’s passion which will be later known as Lear’s fear in *hysterica passio*. The patience- competition does not only rest between Lear and Job, but also on Cordelia and Lear. If one looks closely, Cordelia is the character who possesses the most patience. Hamlin explains that she suffers without complaint the banishment given by her father, the hatred and jealousy of her sisters, rejection by a suitor, defeat, and death and links her character to the suffering and passion of Christ: “...Thou hast one daughter/ who redeems nature from the general curse” (4.6.201-202). Cordelia become a redeemer to her father and becomes the allegorical figure of Christ, in her innocence, and patient suffering on another’s account (145). Lear emphasizes on the importance of her sacrifice: “Upon such sacrifices, my Cordelia/The gods themselves show incense” (5.3.20-21).

While most critics have associated the Book of Job with *King Lear*, Harold Bloom in *Where Shall Wisdom Be Found?* – revising his own earlier emphasis on Job –

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associates the play with Ecclesiastes, The Apocryphal Wisdom of Solomon, and Proverbs. Bloom believes that the play is closer to Ecclesiastes than the book of Job, due to the absence of God and Satan, and instead of suggesting a heroic Lear as in Job, the skepticism of Ecclesiastes tends to make a stronger presence since Lear regains Cordelia then loses her again to death (102-103). In addition, the Bloom compares Lear to the aged Solomon. Lear's laments in Act 4, Scene 6 are evidently the same in the Wisdom of Solomon 7:1-6 (104). While Solomon cries out that "when [he] was born, [he] drew in the common air, and fell upon the earth, which is of like nature, and the first voice which [he] uttered was crying, as all other do", Lear painfully advises Gloucester:

"Thou must be patient; we came crying hither;
Thou know'st the first time that we smell the air
We wawl and cry, I will preach to thee mark.
...
When we are born, we cry that we are come
To this great stage of fools: (4.6.174-176,178-179)

Bloom believes the play "despairs all relationships between parents and children and turns against Solomon by denying any wisdom to old age" (115), a wisdom clearly absent in Lear in the beginning of the play. The idea of lamentation between infancy and old age is also emphasized. Bloom compares excerpts from Wisdom of Solomon to

that of Lear, who both weep as they surpass eighty, and reminisce the past where both undergo an act of crying and parallel that with the loss of old age; in Lear's case, losing Cordelia.

Direct Biblical allusion represents one striking kind of religious engagement in *King Lear*. Other critics have explored how Shakespeare's wider intertextual practices anchor this Biblical material in his own historical context. Among them is Stephen Greenblatt, who discusses Shakespeare's use of Samuel Harsnett's *A Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures* when he was writing *King Lear* ("Shakespeare and the Exorcists" 94). In his book, Harsnett includes priestly accounts of the exorcisms, statements of witnesses and a commentary. Harsnett was unconvinced about the existence of demons, arguing that possessions and their succeeding exorcisms by both Catholic and non-conforming Protestant priests were a fake attempt to convert people away from Anglicanism. He linked Catholicism to pagan superstition, using sarcasm, satire and an intimidating bombastic tone to condemn the beliefs and practices under question. He also made frequent allusions to priests as theatrical performers. Greenblatt argues that *King Lear* serves as the "double corroboration of Hasnett's arguments" (120) While Shakespeare adopted both the names of Edgar and Poor Tom from Hasnett's book, Edgar's possession turns out to be fiction and Lear's madness against the storm was just a figment of a certain condition known as *hysterica passio* that most certainly needed the attention of a doctor rather than an exorcist (119-120). Whatever

Shakespeare's personal views on exorcism, this stratum of allusion tends to associate the play *King Lear* with the Protestant critique of the practice. If so, then this is in line with the doctrinal orientation of Shakespeare's use of the fresh Biblical allusion I bring forward in the next section.

2. Allusion to John 21:15-18

As discussed in Chapter 2, Elizabethan England changed the religious orientation of the country to theologically moderate but politically compulsory Protestantism. While Bible translations in the vernacular language were available and highly encouraged, Protestant English scholars and theologians consulted the language origins of the Old and New Testament of the Bible in Hebrew and Greek respectively to seek interpretation of the Bible (Muller). This phenomenon had emerged earlier in the beginning of the sixteenth century reform but escalated during the Elizabethan reign. The exegetical mind of the early seventeenth century was highly focused upon textual and philological skills as well as rhetorical analysis of the ancient languages of the Bible. The activity of translation itself necessarily implied greater and more widespread critical engagement with the original languages. Furthermore, the interpretation of the Gospels and Pauline letters became very crucial to Protestant exegesis (Muller 25). Sermons, centered on the close reading of scripture, became a more prominent part of church services during this period, and commentaries were also built upon textual interpretation.

A prominent and multi-talented figure like Shakespeare, who was a scholar, a poet, a dramatist, who performed for Queen Elizabeth, was very familiar to the court life. Born to a family with Catholic roots or sympathies on both sides but who worked in a Protestant public and royal ambience, Shakespeare was a writer whose plays exhibit a deep religious intellect. Shakespeare, like any other Elizabethan subject, was a regular attendee to sermons, and like school boys, took notes of these sermons as routine exercises (Collinson 47), and was a close reader and a propagator of theologians' sermons, exegesis and commentaries, mainly Luther's, Jewel's and Calvin's. Moreover, when it comes to his Biblical allusions, Shakespeare is known to have referred to the Geneva Bible and the King James version.¹⁶ According to Boitani, Shakespeare alluded mostly to the Gospels of Luke and John, especially when it came to post-resurrection scenes to explain the concept of grace (5). In addition, Shakespeare is highly impressed by John, the poetic and philosophical Gospel (38). Collinson states that the Geneva Bible advises the reader to 'diligently keep such order of reading the scriptures' as his calling will allow: at least twice every day...' (124). This explains why Shakespeare could be very familiar and meticulous with it. There are reasons why

¹⁶ Critics have pointed out that the Geneva Bible was used more dominantly than the King James Version (Greenblatt, Bloom, Wooding; Collinson). Wooding also argues that Shakespeare has occasionally referred to a Catholic Bible.

Bloom associates Shakespeare's stances as more Protestant than Catholic (102). Being knowledgeable in various fields, and familiar with eclectic environments, well-known to have a regular attendance to sermons, and have a swarm of allusions in his plays, the endless world of Shakespeare allows new ideas and discoveries to appear. While critics have mostly focused on allusions pertaining to scenes where Lear was left exposed to nature and performing lamenting speeches and cries of suffering, little or no attention has been given to the beginning Scene during the distribution of the kingdom in terms of possible allusions. Lear produces a bizarre question: "Which of you doth say shall love us the most?" and this question with its replies and possible implications arouse curiosity. The question asked brings forth a theme of love that is prevalent in the New Testament, and its important among Protestants (and Catholics) has been a subject of discussion. The Gospel of John, specifically, emphasizes the importance of God's love to the world, stated in the famous verse John 3:16 "For God so loveth the world, that he hath given his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." The complexity of the number three, a number to indicate the trinity, is also a subject discussed in the philosophical Gospel. Therefore, taking the major concept of the Act 1, Scene 1 in *King Lear*, and comparing the conversations with issues of love found in the Gospel of John, the first scene in Act 1, specifically the fateful conversation between Lear and Cordelia suggestively parallels yet another famous "love" story in the Gospel of John, a love trial between Jesus and Peter, a Son of

God and Son of man respectively. The story of Peter and Jesus in the Gospel of John - John 21:15-18- shows significant similarities in its structure and content when compared to the conversation between Lear and Cordelia, a father in power ready to give a legacy. This allusion is highly complex and extends to various parts of the play, especially in scenes involving Lear and Cordelia. The allusion provides multiple connections with different characters, events, concepts and themes in the play. The new allusion provides a cross analysis of Peter and Jesus with Lear and Cordelia, but not necessarily in contrast with Yahweh and Job, as Boitani discusses. While the new allusion is established in the beginning scene of the play, its effects are rippled in later scenes, especially in scenes that involve Lear and Cordelia. Moreover, the new allusion merely adds to the rich list of other famous allusions and adds to the ingeniousness of the complex mind of its author.

The key verses that make up the allusion are in John 21:15-18. The setting takes place at the sea of Tiberias after Jesus's resurrection. The disciples have gone fishing when Jesus appears to them for the third time:¹⁷

¹⁷ In previous verses, Jesus performs a miracle by asking his disciples to release the fish net in the water after the disciples spend a fruitless evening of not catching any fish. The net was filled with so much fish that it was difficult to carry the net (John 21: 3-6)

15. when they had dined, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon the son of Jonah, lovest thou me more than these? He said unto him, Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. He said unto him, Feed my lambs.

16. He said to him again the second time, Simon the son of Jonah, lovest thou me? He said unto him, Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. He said unto him, Feed my sheep.

17. He said unto him the third time, Simon the son of Jonah, lovest thou me? Peter was sorry because he said to him the third time, Lovest thou me? and said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things: thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus said unto him, Feed my sheep.

18. Verily, verily I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou [f]girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thine hands, and another shall [g]gird thee, and lead thee without thou wouldest [h]not.

(John 21: 15-18, Geneva version).

In this passage, Jesus reunites with Peter after the resurrection, the third such appearance of Jesus to his disciples. While they were dining, he asks Peter (in private) whether he *loves* him *three times*. Why does Jesus need to ask Peter the same question three times? Critics have analyzed the arresting and strange structure of this encounter

by going to Greek, the language of the New Testament. They note that when Jesus asked Peter “lovest thou me?,” the first two times, He uses to the Greek verb *agapao* (“to love with the selfless, unconditional love of God”) while when Peter replied, “Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee,” he used the Greek word *phileo*, which means “to love with human love” (Kerwin par 2). During the third exchange, Jesus used the word *phileo* when he asked Peter “lovest thou me” in which Peter felt “sorry because he said to him the third time...and said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things: thou knowest that I love thee,” but he met with the same language level of love with Jesus: *phileo*.

The Latin Vulgate text of the Bible (i.e. the Catholic text) also employs two different verbs for "to love" in the relevant parts of John 21:15-18, reproducing this feature of the Greek text.¹⁸ In this version, the word *diligis* used by Jesus is used where the Greek has *agapao* while the word *amo* is used where the Greek has *phileo*. This double vocabulary is explained differently by different scholars. While the rhetoric and philological exegesis was more emphasized by Protestant scholars, the Latin Vulgate Bible also contained rhetorical distinctions that were later studied by reformists such as

¹⁸ Cum ergo prandissent, dicit Simoni Petro Iesus, "Simon Iohannis, diligis me plus his?" Dicit ei, "Etiam Domine; tu scis quia amo te." Dicit ei, "Pasce agnos meos." Dicit ei iterum, "Simon Iohannis, diligis me?" Ait illi, "Etiam Domine; tu scis quia amo te." Dicit ei, "Pasce agnos meos." Dicit ei tertio, "Simon Iohannis, amas me? Contristatus est Petrus, quia dixit ei tertio, "Amas me?" Et dixit ei, "Domine, tu Omnia scis; tu scis quia amo te." (606-8)

John Wycliffe and Martin Luther. While Luther did not use this Bible version to translate the Bible to German vernacular language, he did draw attention to the dual terminology for “love” into his exegesis of John 21:15-18.

Luther’s commentary offers an intriguing explanation. He states that at that point, Peter was already grieving over his denial of Jesus, and Jesus’s referral to “Simon”, his original name, shows a cross reference to his denial warning in Luke 22:31. His original name demonstrates his fall into sin, and Jesus’ first question, “Simon the son of Jonah, lovest thou me more than these?” only intended to gently remind Peter of his affectionate character and his promises to dedicate his life to Him (such as the time he threw himself in the sea). Peter has also been filled with humility and gentleness after his suffering of the denial. Therefore, when Jesus used the word *agapao* that “denotes the highest the most perfect kind of love and belonging to the sphere of divine revelation”, Peter substitutes it with the *phileo*, the natural human affection, which is never used to express man’s love to God, but the Lord in John 16:27 to express his love from the Father to his disciples (333). However, while Peter’s confesses a “lesser” love that Jesus’s due to his shame and self-doubt, his answer is true because Jesus knows what is in his heart and hence the “knowest” (333).

The second time Jesus asks Peter the question; he omits the comparative note “more than these”. He wants Peter to confine to Peter’s love exclusively, knowing that Peter has given up on comparing himself to others (335). When it comes to the “love”

terminology, Jesus also uses the *agape* and receives *phileo* as a response. However, during the third attempt, the questions serves as a direct reminder of the denial, and that is why Peter felt “sorry”.¹⁹ Of course, the third time, Jesus uses the word *phileo* instead of *agapao*. Luther explains that Peter feels more confident answering the third time because he states “thou knowest all things; thou knowest I love thee”. Peter is aware that Jesus knows all, his sins, his thoughts, his pride, his repentance, his conversion, his love, and his devotion. The third attempt serves as an emphasis of the love and redemption of the fallen disciple. As a result, Jesus reveals the future course of Peter as a martyr as he glorifies God (336-337).

The Lutheran commentary also discusses the importance of “feed my sheep” or “feed my lambs” after each question and response. The Lord entrusts Peter with the care of the “flock” in his becoming of a “Chief-Shepherd” and taking care of the lambs which He purchased with his blood. The difference between the nouns Jesus uses are the conditions or classes: those who are beginners in the faith (lamb) and those who are adults in the congregation (sheep).

¹⁹ In other versions, Peter is “saddened” or “grieved”

John Calvin complements the Lutheran interpretation, although not in detail. Calvin's commentary on John 21 also emphasizes on the importance of Peter's suffering for his denial and the redemption that occurs after the three questions. Calvin also discusses Peter's state of guilt and shame throughout Jesus's confrontation and emphasizes Peter's love for Jesus as he voluntarily and wholeheartedly accepts his mission and legacy to become the "Shepherd" that would take care of the "flock". The *Geneva Bible* commentary also notes in its margins that after Jesus's questions, Simon is referred to his former position: Peter. It was important that these three confessions neutralizes his three denials and therefore is restored back to his "office of apostleship." Finally, verse 18 foretells Peter's violent death. This encounter and procedure was only a gesture from Jesus to Peter to show that he was forgiven, loved, shown mercy and given Grace. This passage has always been intriguing to scholars not only for its multiple revelations, but due to its uniqueness in appearance. While all Gospels portray Peter's denial, the Gospel of John is the sole provider of a closure and a repentance to the sin committed.

3. King Lear and John 21:15-18

The post-resurrection scene and its rich interpretations can be paralleled with the beginning scene of *King Lear* and with specifics of the dialogue between Lear and Cordelia, firstly emphasizing on the scenario itself that contains a dominating theme of love, and secondly exploring verbal patterns and contexts of "love" uttered by both

father and daughter. First and foremost, the theme of love and trinity concept is highly indicative. Peter and Jesus's encounter includes a "love question" asked three times to neutralize a triple denial. Lear has three daughters who have to undergo his love test, with Cordelia also given three chances to articulate her love to her Father in the quarto text.²⁰ The encounter between Lear and Cordelia does not end well, unlike Jesus and Peter's, but both discussions involve a misunderstanding of the meaning of love—potential in the Jesus-Peter dialogue and catastrophically real in the case of Lear and Cordelia. While Jesus and Peter went through a peaceful and subtle rhetorical negotiation between a discourse of *agape* and a discourse of *philia*, Lear and Cordelia have an aggressive contest over the meaning of "love". Since Cordelia has been associated with the image of Christ, the love she possesses for her father is the *agape*-love, the unconditional love (Foakes 81, 99; Boitani; Colston).

The unpromising conversation between Lear and Cordelia involve a three-time trial of articulation of love:

LEAR: ... What can you say to draw
 A third more opulent than your sisters?

CORDELIA: Nothing, my Lord.

²⁰ The folio text includes another chance added to the confrontation.

LEAR: How, nothing will come out of nothing. Speak again.

CORDELIA: Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave
My heart into my mouth. I love your majesty
According to my bond, no more nor less.

LEAR: How, how, Mend your speech a little,
Lest you may mar your fortunes

CORDELIA: Good my lord,
You have behot me, bred me, loved me. I
Return those duties back as are right fit,
Obey you, love you and most honour you.
Why have my sisters husbands, if they say
They love you all? Haply when I shall we,
That lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry
Half my love with him, half my care and duty.
Sure I shall never marry like my sisters
To love my father all.

The above conversation shows that Lear gives Cordelia three chances: the first begins with a mere and promising question (“more opulent”), the second chance comes in the form a command (“Speak again”) while the third is also a command but is proceeded with a threat (“mend your speech a little, lest you may mar you fortunes”). In all three replies, Cordelia’s reply does not satisfy her father. Her replies are reduced to mere formal commitment and filial love. While she possesses the *agape*-love, she does not articulate in this conversation. The reason for this is due to the fact that love is a gift, and a gift cannot be commanded; it is given. While Lear was asking for *agape*-love, which can’t be demanded, Cordelia was only capable of expressing the filial, or the *philia*: “Unhappy as I am, I cannot heave/My heart into my mouth. I love your majesty/According to my bond, no more no less” (1.1.91-93). Cordelia is therefore

unhappy that she can only provide him with the filial in such a context although she initially possesses the *agape*. C.S. Lewis calls the *agape*-love a form of gift-love, that can only be given but not demanded while describes Lear's love as need-love, a love that is inferior to the gift-love (qtd. in Colston 20).²¹ Lear confuses gift-love with need-love; for "love commanded is love denied" (23); that is, gift-love can't be demanded. As a result, when Lear demands gift-love, Goneril and Regan were able to provide their father with the need-love while Cordelia, who already possessed the gift-love (a long equivalent to the *agape*-love) wasn't able to give him what can't be demanded.

Also, Lear's need-love can be paralleled with the materialism discussed in Chapter 1. Lear needs love and is ready to trade for it with property ("draw a more opulent [land]"). Therefore, the only language Cordelia is able to speak in that context is to talk about her filial bond with her father, a type of bond that is based on duty rather on love, a love that can be spoken in public contexts: "I love your majesty/ according to my bond, no more no less (1.1.92-93). Like Peter, the filial bond that Cordelia is referring to is the *philia*. However, all Lear has to do is to accept the "gift-love" that Cordelia

²¹ Gift-love is "that love which moves a man to work and plan and save for the future well-being of his family which he will die without sharing or seeing" while need-love is the kind of love which "sends a lonely or frightened child into its mother's arms". God's love is the gift-love because it does not treat love as a liability but is given. The need-love is a perverted version (20-21).

already bears for him like Peter accepts Jesus's *agape*-love for him. Her possession of the "gift-love" is that of blessing and forgiveness, not to mention Grace (Colston 42). Cordelia possesses a greater love, a perfect love that Lear is not able to comprehend. She remains committed to her love and even sacrifices herself in the end. Just as Jesus sacrificed Himself for the sin of humankind, she sacrificed herself for the "sin" of her father, be it because of greed, ignorance, or pride. She takes upon herself the burden of the evil world (Botiani 38). Like Jesus, she forgives her father and is understanding; her death saves her fallen kingdom.

With Peter and Jesus, Jesus has the *agape*-love but cannot demand it from Peter, who can only offer Jesus the *philia*-love. However, while Jesus understands this disparage, Lear is not able to comprehend the situation. The reason can be traced back to Nuttall's theory of Lear having a low emotional "IQ" (85) in contrast with Cordelia's "intensified intelligence" (87). Cordelia understands the discrepancy of the level and intensity of the love language her father is articulating, and whether she could have done something to alleviate the situation, one cannot know, but taking power into consideration, she is not in a position to correct her father.

Despite the bitter end of the scene, the *agape*-love of Cordelia's remains true to Lear till the end of the play. Cavell argues that "Cordelia is viewed as a Christ figure whose love redeems nature and transfigures Lear" (73) and that her Grace is shown by the absence of unearthly experiences (74). We can clearly see that despite her

banishment and Lear's denial to her as a daughter, as was done to Christ when he was on trial to be crucified, her love remained true and unconditional. Her love paved the way for Lear's redemption and peace towards the end. However, Cordelia, like Peter, experiences pain and feels misunderstood by her father, a feeling undergone by Peter as he grieves his grand sin of denial. The difference lies within the inverse of the roles regarding the love expressed. Cordelia is placed as the inferior status but possesses the *agape*-purer love while Lear possesses an inferior love, be it the materialistic or political love discussed in Chapter 1. The allusion, on the other hand, has Jesus as the "Father", who possesses the *agape*-love and offers that love to his "child" by forgiving him and giving him the honor to continue his legacy, but also realizes that the feeling of type of love cannot be mutual, while Peter, who knows that he has done wrong does not deserve the *agape*-love Jesus has for him.

Apart from the discrepancies and hierarchies of love languages, the allusion is made even more complex as one compares Peter and Jesus's conversation stemming from an earlier context where Peter performs his grand sin. While Peter and Jesus's conversation acts as redemption to the triple denial executed earlier, the wording of the exchange between Lear and Cordelia is a triple denial: "Nothing, my Lord" (1.1.87) the

first time, "...I cannot heave My Heart into my mouth" (1.1.91-92) the second time and "...Sure I shall never marry like my sisters to love my father all" (1.1.104-105).²² All three responses serve as different ways of denying the love Lear was asking from Cordelia. This means that the scene evokes Jesus and Peter twice, once in the languages of love, and second in the denial of a specific level of love. Peter finds himself in a position where he can't admit to a love that he genuinely possesses, and likewise Cordelia is in such a position. In the Gospel of John, Peter is allowed to "repair" that situation and free himself from the sin although the dialogue is complicated by the friction between the difference semantics of "love" that Jesus and Peter bring forward. However, Lear and Cordelia's discrepancy in semantics adds to the complication and denies love thrice instead of affirming it. Moreover, Goneril and Regan reply in the same "sense" (just as Peter uses the same word in his first two answers- *phileo*) whereas Cordelia gives a *different* answer. Although the track of love the sisters use is not a different English word for "love" as Peter uses the different Greek work, but Cordelia's "non-answer" may be seen as structurally reinforcing the allusion, her response being quite different than her two sisters, who each gave similar responses. Cordelia's silence perhaps implies the lack of sufficiently wide vocabulary of love in English. Both the

²² Notice the negative sentences in all three responses: "Nothing" in the first response, "cannot" in the second response and "never" in the third response.

Vulgate and the Greek Bible contain different words to use for different arrays of love, vocabulary not present in the English language after the middle ages (lufian vs lofian).

Therefore, one can see that complications in Jesus's and Peter's conversation are quite different. Prior to the encounter, as previously mentioned, Peter had denied Jesus three times. He is already filled with shame and guilt as he approaches Jesus after the resurrection, just as Lear was feeling ashamed, in the beginning, when he loses power, and later, when he realizes what he has done to Cordelia. Jesus's love test requires a different approach. Kerwin (par. 8) discusses the importance of the mission Jesus bestows upon Peter: "Feed my sheep" (16) just as Lear tries to bestow his daughter with the role of a caregiver and the ruler of his lands, but his wish to be publicly loved prove incompatible in the complex interpersonal situation. After the third time Jesus asks Peter "do you love me?" (16), Jesus does not only negate the three times denial of Peter, but also sets him free from guilt and achieves harmony between their relationship, the relationship of the *philia*, the filial bond that, as Jesus realizes, can be the only language of love that can be offered by Peter. However, Lear does not understand Cordelia's pure love for him, and in that context can only offer her "filial bond" (1.1.91). Singh explains that this discrepancy is due to the fact that conceptions of love and beauty are mostly written for men and mostly emphasize what men are expected to receive to obscure the obvious power dynamic of the relationships (15). While the Platonic love is often associated with the female, it is often deemed as passive hence allowing masculine

dominance through “economic love” (15-16). Finally, sermons in general also often point out how Peter is saved by grace in this encounter, as he is offered the responsibility to carry on Jesus’s legacy, a legacy that is not materialistic, the spread of the “Good News”. While Cordelia is brutally banished for not offering the “need-love”, her pure love for her father is represented as a Christ-like figure in the very end. She eventually redeems her father (Rudnytsky 307; Kaiter 288). The mere fact that Cordelia is represented as redeemable Christ challenges patriarchal notions of having a male savior and even challenges theological traditions of having a male Jesus opposed to the new theories that emphasize a more feminine God/Jesus, such as representing God as a mother God, or even stating that God is genderless, and that Jesus was only male in order to correspond with the patriarchal culture of the time.

The elevated, flawless and uncorrupted love, as a result, makes Cordelia the Christ-like figure. Like Peter, Lear is “mad as the vexed sea” (4.4.1) and suffers for “ungoverned rage” (4.4.16). Lear expresses signs of guilt as he reunites with Cordelia: “Thou art a soul in bliss, but I am bound/ Upon a wheel of fire that mine own tears/ Do scald like molten lead” (4.7. 46-48), his confession of wrongdoing: “I am a very foolish, fond old man” (4.7.60) and finally, knowing he is unworthy of the Grace she is about to give him: “If you have poison for me, I will drink it./ I know you do not love me, for your sisters/ Have, as I do remember, done me wrong./ You have some cause, they have not” (4.7.71-74). Similar to Peter’s suffering; the guilt consumes him, knowing he has

wronged his only true child. Lear believes himself to be dead, only to be brought “back” to earth by Cordelia’s redemption: “You do me wrong to take me out o’ the grave” (4.7.45). Lear experiences a different form of resurrection, a belief that he can be forgiven and reunited with his long lost daughter. Peter, on the other hand, is restored to his former glory as being the “rock” and a true disciple and follower of Jesus.

While Lear can be easily represented as Peter due to his ignorance, impulsive reactions, and uncalculated decision taking skills, he also possesses some characteristics of Jesus. He, too, feels betrayed for what his eldest daughters committed. Goneril and Regan abused his weakness and took everything from him: his legacy, his honor and dignity. In the first scene, like Jesus, Lear is asking his daughters to share their highest form of love, but he either asks for the wrong kind of love or demands a love that cannot be given, and his lack of awareness ends up unjustly punishing the daughter he should have entrusted with his legacy in the first place. However, it is Cordelia who redeems her father’s guilt, shame and honor. It becomes her honor to tend him during his weakest point and remains loyal to him. Her actions are a mixture of Peter’s loyalty towards Jesus despite a misunderstood “betrayal” in the beginning scene and Jesus’ unconditional and never ending love towards his “child”.

Lear, as mentioned, also possesses certain characteristics of Peter. He is ignorant of the love his daughter had for him, just like that of Peter, who was unaware of Jesus’s *agape*-love. Like Peter, Lear was unaware of his lack of *agape*-love. While Peter

experiences great shame for betraying and denying Jesus, Lear also experiences shame because he betrayed Cordelia by banishing her. Their union in the end, the discovery of the love, and the forgiveness is comparable to neutralization of Peter's sin (betrayal). By referring to Christian traditions, Shakespeare was able to create a scene of extraordinary dramatic intensity enriched by complex Biblical resonances. Perhaps the way in which the theme captures so much of human nature, fallen love, betrayal, and revival is what makes the play an apocalyptic one. Manipulation and the misunderstanding of words is perhaps what led to the doom of both Cordelia and Lear, as well as to the rest of the family. However, the strength of a greater love "*agape*-love" sacrificed (Cordelia) was able to win over the evil (Goneril, Regan, and Edmund) that had bestowed and saved a sinner (Lear) from great guilt.

B. Religious and Political Critique in King Lear

How does this reading of a complex Biblical allusion connect to the broader religious context in which Shakespeare lived and wrote? It is clear among scholars, especially Rubinstein, Baker and others, that Shakespeare was highly critical of the issues and events that were partaken in his surroundings. In such a complex play and with such a possible allusion, religious elements surface, and we can get a glimpse of what Shakespeare might have had in mind. In this scene at least, I believe that both doctrines are getting criticized, yet there are elements in the scene which could be taken

as implying a Protestant viewpoint, or at least a viewpoint skeptical of Catholic Doctrine.

The reformation of the Church brought new explaining the distinction between the Catholic doctrine of salvation by works and the Protestant of salvation by grace alone, and these can be mapped onto the attitudes towards love and the respective behaviors of Lear and Cordelia. If one examines Act 1, Scene 1 carefully, we notice a king who is ready to give up his lands to his daughters in return for their love. Just like any Catholic ideology, barter is taking place: love in return for land. The better the love is, the “more opulent” the land. The idea of simony here is overtaking the scene. Therefore, knowing that Cordelia has the truest love, Lear plans to give her the better third. However, as explained in Chapter 1, Cordelia refuses to deal with materialism and finds herself silent in the process. Is Lear a representative of the Catholic doctrine of indulgence and simony? Is Cordelia is the symbol of Protestant Doctrine concentrating on *sola gratia*? Is Shakespeare criticizing the Catholic doctrine?

The answer is perhaps more complicated than it looks. While Grace is highly emphasized amongst Protestant scholars who follow the *sola scriptura/sola fide/sola gratia* doctrine and believe that redemption comes purely from God’s Grace and that works alone do not guarantee a ticket to heaven. Moreover, Lear’s attempt to bribe his daughters in return for love is also a highly critical matter to point out the “ungodly”

rituals performed by Catholic priests, and Cordelia being a symbol of reformation to end the mistakes of Catholic misguidance.

However, Shakespeare could also be referring to the corruption that exists in the Elizabethan court in England. As Collinson, Greenblatt and Logan, Smuts, and others have argued, the court opened doors for deceit and manipulation among its members. The amount of flattery present in the court to advance is highly relatable to Goneril and Regan's fancy speeches towards in the beginning scene in order to advance and get the materialistic reward they desired. The public space the court creates is an invitation to manipulation and treachery to one's self-interest. Just as Collinson has described, personal ambitions drive Goneril and Regan to violate love, marriage and kinship to get what "breeds [their] heart". Sharpe and Lake refer to these types as "parliamentary and political discourse to denounce the corruptions of the evil projectors and parasites who allegedly surround the court" (17). Their fancy speeches only served devious and unholy purposes while Cordelia refused to partake in such conniving activity, which is why scholars argue she does not belong in the corruptive public sphere.

In addition, the concept of martyrdom was also a disputable subject in Tudor England. Nick Crown discusses the representation of Catholic and Protestant Martyrdom, and the radical and philosophical changes that occurred throughout the sixteenth century. Crown also discusses the gender roles of martyrdom as more female

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martyrs portrayed masculine virtues of courage (339). Of course, both parties often mock each other's concept of martyrdom (340). For example, Protestants often referred to Christ as the "Lamb of God" and like Puritans, regarded martyrs as "sheep appointed to be slain" or as "courageous shepherds defending the sheep-like laity" from so called papist "hirelings, thieves and murderers". Eventually each party accused the other of being "wolves in sheep's skin" (348). Elizabethan propagandists portrayed themselves as humble and lamb-like (342). This can be easily applied in *King Lear*. Of course, this might be analyzed on different levels: Regan and Goneril being the "wolves in sheep skin", and Cordelia being the martyred lamb while she should have been the carrier of Lear's legacy to look after the "most opulent" land, to become the true ruler of the kingdom, the shepherd of her people. Peter also ends up being the shepherd of the lambs- "feed my sheep"- and end up being martyred for his faith. While Catholic history takes pride in Peter's foundation of Catholic Church, the truth remains that the "rock on which the Church was built was faith" and not "the headship of St. Peter and his descendants" (Wooding 128).

The scene therefore adds to the "materialism" of Lear and to the doctrine of salvation of work, the relevance of Shakespeare's setting of the scene in the court. Act 1, Scene 1 makes Lear look bad precisely for his demand of recompense and exchange, and that negative valence implicitly then adheres to Catholic practices attacked by Reformers as "sale" of spiritual goods and corrupt Renaissance court culture. John

21:15-18 opens up a variety of new perspectives and interpretations to one of Shakespeare's most famous plays. The new possible allusion, with its complexity and multiplicity, adds richness to the first scene of *King Lear* that runs through the entire drama, and complements political, material, feminist and religious interpretations of famous critics and scholars. The content and structure of the scripture is strongly paralleled with the highly unpromising conversation between Lear and Cordelia providing Shakespearean scholarship with a new theological explanation to help understand a significant misunderstanding in one of the most tragic family feuds ever staged.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Despite the vast and ongoing research in the field of Shakespearean studies, many aspects and research areas still remain controversial and open to many scholars. New discoveries and avenues of inquiry are ongoing, and due to the massive availability of many sources in relation to Shakespeare and Early Modern England, scholars still find possibilities for new encounters. In this thesis, I explored one of those possible new encounters. By closely reading Act 1, Scene 1, exploring the socio-political and religious background of Early Modern England, and looking closely into Shakespeare's possible beliefs and lifestyle, John 21:15-18 stands out as a strong potential influence upon the dramatization of *King Lear*.

In chapter 1, most of these theories are laid out and critically evaluated. While some critics have analyzed the first scene as a conflict between public and private parameters, others have drawn a material/immaterial binary opposition. Some others have combined the two aforementioned pair of binary oppositions into their theories. The allusion can fit within these parameters in an effective way. While Lear is mixing the private with the public, Jesus does a wiser job at distinguishing the two while being inclusive at the same time. In other words, Jesus first had a private conversation with Peter about his love and later on gave him a mission which in turn would be public to

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the world. The private love of God to individual human kind would be spread in a public world as Peter “feeds [His] sheep”. Moreover, Jesus intertwines both a material concept “sheep” serving as a metaphor or symbol and an immaterial concept “love” to create his legacy.

Furthermore, the socio-political and religious background of Early Modern England also has paved its way through Shakespeare’s work, as we have seen critics argue. The series of tumultuous events preceding the Elizabethan era left dreadful scars on a new generation of martyred, exiled or on-the-run parents and grandparents. Apart from the reforming the churches, changing doctrines and changes in the political life, these events have also affected court life which in turn, has affected family life, especially in terms of relationships between husbands and wives and parents and children. This aspect is highly criticized in *King Lear*, as court life was filled with deception, flattery, and benefit oriented relationship and as a result, relationships between husbands and wives and between fathers and children became corrupted. Finally, drama was also being greatly influenced, as its content became less “religious” and more “secular”. This, however, as it is clearly seen, did not stop Shakespeare of slipping religious connotations, such as allusions to the Bible, which are heavily scattered, throughout his plays. Critics have always tried to figure out his religious inclinations by analyzing the plays and the allusions (Biblical and pagan).

An innovation to the Biblical allusion studies included a reference to the Gospel of John 21:15-18 in Act 1, Scene 1 as King Lear gets ready to divide his inheritance among his three daughters. The particular encounter with Cordelia is what brings the allusion alive. Cordelia cannot articulate her love to her father because it was a “wrong” love that he demanded. The misunderstanding itself is one of the issues that parallels itself with the allusion. Jesus and Peter also had a misunderstanding regarding the “love language”. Lear can be compared with Jesus in his term of giving out his legacy to the “rightful owner(s)” while Jesus is doing the same with Peter, but Jesus ends up to be the wise one in this case. Lear can also be compared with Peter, who wrongs his own daughter and like Peter, betrays her and in the end, ends up begging for forgiveness and asking redemption. Cordelia, on the other hand, is in Peter’s position in relation to her father and needs to be understood in terms of her love to her father, yet Lear does not provide that understanding, and things take an ugly turn. Cordelia can also be paralleled with Jesus because in the end, she ends up redeeming her father. This has also showed some pro-feminist theories.

This thesis allows a more in depth analysis in the world of Shakespeare’s Biblical allusions. *King Lear* is a highly critical play that has captured the attention of many scholars for its richness in allusions, a possible additional text not only adds richness to the variety of allusions, but also allows a new perspective of reading *King Lear* and thus opens doors of further exploration. Scholars have discussed Lear’s representation of

Job, Wisdom of Solomon, and Christ, and with this thesis, Lear also represents Peter with this impulsive and irrational behavior. Moreover, Cordelia's referral to Christ is even more strengthened with this illusion, and the wise and redeemer Jesus in the Gospel of John is added to Cordelia's identification.

The new theory of allusion to John 21:15-18 would serve as an initiative to conduct deeper studies into the world of *Lear*. An interesting research would be using John's representation of Jesus vis-à-vis Luke's representation of Jesus, that serve as an exact verbal echo. Another potential research can be more inclined towards a non-Biblical allusion and study its affect in relation to a Biblical one. For example, alluding Cordelia to Griselda, a figure who spans multiple European literatures, and studying this resemblance in regard with the image of Christ in the Gospel of John could be an interesting research. Perhaps a personal future pursuit would be exploring *The Chronicle History of King Leir* and study the changes that Shakespeare has implemented and investigate how that might affect the allusion in question.

Shakespeare's many plays have long been subjected to study in terms of allusions. There are many plays that could be possible plays where extended allusions can serve as great research and could offer connections to Shakespeare's religious context or even to Biblical typology. Such plays like *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and even comedies such as *Midsummer Night's Dream*, written about the same time as *King Lear*, can be good areas of Biblical research to explore possible allusions that Shakespeare might have

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considered and compare the nature of such allusions with other allusions in different plays. The wide area of Shakespearean studies still has a lot to discover from such a man whose fifty-two years of life and works were so intriguing and revolutionary to scholars that a wide area of research is appointed to him and his works, and this scholarship still continues after 400 years of his death, teeming with new theories and discoveries. The world of Shakespeare has opened up endless possibilities of research and discoveries that are waiting to be unleashed.

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