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Abstract

Both Othello and The Taming of the Shrew by Shakespeare underscore the intersections of evidence, gendered implications, and the frailties of masculinity. This research illuminates how Othello's fixation on "ocular proof" of Desdemona's unfaithfulness, founded on Iago's manipulative tactics, mirrors Petruchio's determination to perceive Katherina's speech as proof of her submission. Central to this analysis is the interplay of male jealousy, skepticism, and anxiety, all situated within an unstable patriarchal ideology. The paper delves into the characters' obsession with female chastity and the illusion of omnipotent control. Drawing from theoretical frameworks on toxic masculinity, this paper examines the profound link between male anxiety and hegemonic masculinity, elucidating their joint role in shaping male perceptions of female agency and sexuality.

Keywords: Evidential Rhetoric, Masculinity, Male Anxiety, Ocular Proof, Patriarchal Ideology

In Elizabethan England, the social construction of gender insisted that women were physically weak, spiritually enfeebled, submissive, chaste, and beautiful by natural law or divine will. On the other hand, men are encouraged to be aggressive, competitive, and move through the world in a sexual, intellectual, physical, emotional, and economical dominant way, so they can produce male heirs and support their families. In many of William Shakespeare's plays, gender hierarchy, evidential rhetoric, and patriarchal control have always been at the heart of dramatic and theatrical conflicts.

Both *Othello* and *The Taming of the Shrew* pay special attention to evidence and the gendered connotation attached, of the lack thereof, to evidence. Othello wants to obtain the "ocular proof" that shows Desdemona's infidelity, but he only has a shred of evidence orchestrated by Iago. Iago also demonstrates that men resort to violence to avoid revision of self-image and a position of power. Similarly, in Taming of the Shrew, Katherina's speech at the end of the play has been taken and interpreted literally as evidence that she had been truly tamed and had submitted to her husband, Petruchio. Understanding the evidential rhetoric derived from masculinity is critical to understanding how Iago tricks Othello into believing in his scheme, how Othello fully buys into Iago's insinuation, and how Petruchio asserts his power over Katherina. This essay will show the inextricable bond between male jealousy, skepticism, anxiety, and masculinity, rooted in the unstable patriarchal ideology that produces Othello, Iago, and Petruchio's obsession with female chastity and fixation on boundless power that leads them to believe what they believe. This paper will first present a discussion on the theoretical framework that supports my argumentation on toxic masculinity, detailing the characters and features of masculinity and its relations to the agency of women, violence, accusations, and insinuations. Then, I will explore the inevitable link between anxiety and masculinity to show that these are not two distinct clauses but are deeply connected reasons why men are obsessed with submissive women and female sexuality.

Masculinity and Gender Theory

The gender dynamics and inequalities between men and women certainly are not novel ideas, but not until 1985, Sociologist Raewyn Connell identifies dominating attitudes and practices that subordinate women beneath men as hegemonic masculinity[1]. She systematically starts academic and sociological research on men and masculinity. Connell offers a three-fold model of the structure of gender that helps us to understand masculinity: power relations, production relations, and cathexis. The power relations entail the gender dynamics that praise the patriarchy, a structure that upholds men's dominance and women's subordination, legitimizing masculinity's politics. Production relations, elaborated on Marx's idea of the division of labor, emphasize the economic consequences of the gendered division of labor. Cathexis is a Freudian term that connotes sexual desire and emotional energy attached to an object. Connell and American philosopher Judith Butler[2] contend that masculinity is socially constructed through

[1] Connell, R. W., and James W. Messerschmidt. "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept." *Gender and Society* 19, no. 6 (2005): 829–59. http://www.jstor.org/stable/27640853.
[2] Butler, Judith. Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity. New York: Routledge, 1990.

repeat performances, cultural context, and cultural norms, which intersect and interact with race and class. Not all masculinity is the same; for this paper, we also need to understand the harmful aspect of masculinity–hegemonic masculinity, which Connell later defines as "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees the dominant position of men and the subordination of women. Building on the hegemonic characters, the idea of toxic masculinity perhaps first derived from a behavioral science study[3] that describes "male role norms," which include three elements: status, toughness, and anti-feminity. Status serves as a presumption that men must work toward obtaining authoritative and patriarchal power and high social status to gain the respect of others, especially women. Toughness requires men to stay physically strapping, emotionally insensitive, and behaviorally bellicose. Antifeminity obliges men to reject anything related or considered feminine, which fosters destructive misogyny and commends violent domination. The front-loaded discussion on gender theory is necessary as it is essential to the theoretical framework of the analysis and provides clarifications and common footings on this nebulous concept.

Othello's Ocular Proof

In *Othello*, violence is explicit and obvious–Othello strikes his beloved wife Desdemona and eventually throttles her. Othello resorts to violence because he is anxious about, according to the "honest Iago," his wife having an affair with another man, Cassio. To combat his "worry and uneasy concern"[4] about the uncertainty, painful and disturbing suspicion, and his masculinity, he demands Iago to show him the "ocular proof." As there is no ocular proof but Iago's twisted testimony and surreptitiously planted evidence, this section argues that Othello relies on ungrounded suspicion derived from his masculinity rather than syllogism. Case in point, Joel Altman[5] suggests that it is Iago's mastery yet vicious use of *hysteron proteron*, present conclusion before reasons and evidence, that lead Othello to believe in his palpable yet preposterous theory of infidelity. Lorna Hutson[6] elaborates this idea with additional forensic construction. Since Act one, when both Brabantio and Iago question Othello, his marriage with Desdemona becomes the product of legal challenges he must defend by gathering evidence. By self-justifyingly looking for proof, he is trapped in the disoriented sequence and reversals of tense. These critics' discussion on suspicion and skepticism is valid and explains Othello's action, but they cannot explain why Othello resorts to violence when his suspicion threatens his egocentric values. Desdemona is taciturn, faithful, and lives up to the stereotype of an ideal woman in a patriarchal society. Stanley Cavell proposes that Othello must keep his image and masculine traits intact and uncontaminated. But what kind of self-image is he trying to protect?

[3] E.H. Thompson, J.H. Pleck. The structure of male role norms. American Behavioral Scientist. 1986; 29: 531-543. doi.org/ 10.1177/000276486029005003

[4] OED, Anxiety

[5] Altman, Joel. *The Improbability of Othello: Rhetorical Anthropology and Shakespearean Selfhood.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.

[6] Hutson, Lorna. *The Invention of Suspicion: Law and Mimesis in Shakespeare and Renaissance Drama*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

How does Othello use evidence in his favor to construct and protect his masculine status from sustaining his hegemonic masculinity and reproducing the patriarchal culture?

The handkerchief is one piece of evidence that Othello uses to convict Desdemona. As the following section will demonstrate, the handkerchief is not only an object; through the objective correlative process, the handkerchief becomes the symbol of female virtue. Considering Othello's fixation on possession of the handkerchief in tandem with his suspicion towards Desdemona when the handkerchief is absent, his unbridled, unquenchable cathexis on the handkerchief epitomizes his male anxiety to stay in power and subordinate women, reveling his toxic masculinity. In the exchange regarding the handkerchief between Othello and Othello, Desdemona, a kind woman, wants to reinstate Cassio's position by telling Othello how competent he is. Witness Cassio's "love and service," she promises Cassio that she is his "solicitor," would not "give thy cause away," and talk Othello "out of patience" (3.3. 23). Nevertheless, after rounds of Desdemona's pleads, Othello does not give her a definite answer but gives a coy response that he "will deny thee nothing!" (3.3.83). Considering Desdemona's "curtain wife lecture"[7] and "foolish honest" Iago's groundless manipulation as he knows that the losing handkerchief would be a "confirmations strong/ as proofs of holy writ" (3.3.320), Othello buys into Iago's scripts, asking Desdemona for that specific handkerchief that he gives to her. Desdemona does not have it because she "drops" it. Othello is furious, asking Desdemona,

> OTHELLO. Fetch me the handkerchief! [aside] My mind misgives.
>
> DESDEMONA. Come, come. You'll never meet a more sufficient man.
>
> OTHELLO. The handkerchief!
>
> DESDEMONA. A man that all his time
>
> Hath founded his good fortunes on your love,
>
> Shared dangers with you—
>
> OTHELLO The handkerchief! (*Othello* 3.4.86-90)

Othello menaces Desdemona to show him her handkerchief immediately to prove her innocence. However, this is a kangaroo court because Othello came in with a "misgiven" mind and a plan to search tenaciously for evidence about her fidelity. He does not even attempt to communicate with his wife or ask her for clarification. He does not want Desdemona to clarify the situation because Othello is fixated upon his self-favored narrative, and skepticism germinated from Iago's narrative. The only words he utters are "the handkerchief," demonstrating his obsession with the handkerchief to the point where he is abusively interrogating her to extort a confession. He fears that Desdemona's explanation might prove him wrong, exposing his inflated ego and toxic masculinity. Othello is also enraged because Desdemona, indeed, lost her handkerchief. Iago, as previously quoted, considers the handkerchief as "trifile light as air" (3.3.319). It seems trivial, but "wonder" is attached to that

[7] Lamb, Mary, and Karen Bamford. *Oral Tradition and Gender in Early Modern Literary Texts*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008.

handkerchief. Othello gifts Desdemona the handkerchief as a token of his love. For Othello, passing his mother's handkerchief to his lover is the equivalent of passing on his love. He has this beautiful story that an Egyptian gives his mother that handkerchief, and his mother keeps it to preserve his father's love (3.4 66-72). Othello is not simply obsessed with the handkerchief as an object but with the meaning it actively evokes. The handkerchief is undoubtedly essential, but for Othello, what exactly does the handkerchief represent? The handkerchief that is "spotted with strawberries" and dyed in mummy, which the skillful/ Conserved of maidens' hearts" (3.4.71-72) simultaneously evokes twofold meaning. The "spotted" handkerchief is precisely the "stain[8]" on his masculinity. The stain–Desdemona's infidelity–cannot be purified. Othello turns the symbols of sexuality into guilt. The evidence has been elevated to the symbolic corrective. He compares married love with maternal love, which means the loss is symbolized as Desdemona is not as good as Othello's mother. Othello also takes it as ocular proof of Desdemona's adultery. The handkerchief is the evidence. It is both proof of Othello's love and Desdemona's infidelity. The handkerchief is powerful enough to symbolize love and female chastity but simultaneously so trivial and vulnerable to prove the absence of it.

Othello and Desdemona's distinct understandings of the connotation of the handkerchief demonstrate Othello's male jealousy and anxiety. For Othello, the possession of the handkerchief–Desdemona's chastity–signifies his masculine and influential status in the patriarchal culture. However, Desdemona values her handkerchief but does not consider it to represent her moral qualities. Othello's obsession with Desdemona's handkerchief is a quintessential example of cathexis. The initial question here is how does Desdemona lose the–the core evidence of Iago's orchestration and the seed of the tragedy–handkerchief? Even Emilia, who picks up the handkerchief upon her husband Iago's request, knows Desdemona "loves the token" and "reserves it evermore about her" (3.3.291). It is rather ambiguous to answer the question. After listening to Iago's spiel, Othello claims, "if she be false, heaven mocked itself./I'll not believe't" (3.3.276-277). Othello does not seem to believe it, but his symptoms suggest otherwise. When Desdemona invites him to dinner with the nobles of Cyprus, Othello says, "I have a pain upon my forehead here" (3.3.281). This pain has been broadly interpreted as a pain derived from a cuckold's horns[9], which is the visual signifier of cuckoldry. There is, undoubtedly, no such concrete horn on his head. His fear and belief that he might be the victim of cuckoldry challenge his unstable masculinity, which produces the invisible horn[10]. Desdemona cares about him, comforting him that "twill away again" (3.3.282). Then, Desdemona offers Othello her handkerchief, but Othello does not want it because "your napkin is too little./ Let is alone" (3.3.285). This is when the handkerchief is dropped. In *the Norton Shakespeare*[11] version of *Othello*, the stage direction is "*they* drop the handkerchief" (emphasis mine). The gender-neutral pronoun "they" denote the ambiguity. Nevertheless, in

[8] See Cavell's argument mentioned in the opening paragraph.
[9] See annotation in page 2133 of *The Norton Shakespeare*, *Third Edition*. Miranda Fay Thomas also discusses the historical context of "the horns sitting on the husband's head" in her book *Shakespeare's Body Language*, 117.
[10] Similarly, the horn imagery appears again in Act 4 where Othello says, "A horned man's monster and a beast" (4.1.59).
[11] Greenblatt, Stephen, Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard, and Katharine Eisaman Maus, eds. *The Norton Shakespeare: The Third Edition*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2015. ISBN: 978-0-393-93499-1.

the First Quarto of *Othello*[12], the stage directions say, "she drops her handkerchief." The editor argues that First Quarto was printed from a "theater script reflecting cuts and actors' interpolation made in the playhouse." The gendered pronoun indicates that Desdemona dropped her handkerchief, alluding to her fault. Attempting to reconcile the misalignment, or rather contradistinction, I consult another version of *Othello*[13], annotated and edited by Burton Raffel. In this edition, the stage directions say, "he pushes the handkerchief away, and it falls" (115). We see three different editions present three distinct stage directions that point to three incompatible propositions. While we need to remember Leah Marcus' claim that the editing of Shakespeare has traditionally been a gendered activity, it is the editors' job to tame text into meaning[14]. Who drops it? Does Othello push it aside? Does Desdemona drop it by accident? Examining different editions of *Othello*, I argue that there is no answer or at least no unequivocal answer to these questions. Although it is ambivalent about finding out who dropped the handkerchief, it is indisputable to claim that Desdemona offers her handkerchief to serve Othello, to "bind it hard," trying to comfort his headache (3.3.283). Desdemona uses the love token as a means to an end–not as a symbol of love but as a piece of lawn that could condole her husband. Desdemona's affection toward Othello transcends the symbol of love, which kills her. The handkerchief is dropped when Desdemona's love itself bids her forget it. Desdemona loves Othello dearly and entirely, yet Othello does not believe that he can be loved completely. The positionality of the handkerchief precisely proves that while Desdemona views her beloved handkerchief as a vehicle to deliver her love, Othello considers the handkerchief intrinsically love. Without the handkerchief, Desdemona still loves Othello, but for Othello, the absence of the handkerchief is evidence that signifies infidelity. Thus, Othello's reaction, his madness, toward the inadvertent loss of the handkerchief precisely proves his male jealousy and cuckoldry anxiety as instances of toxic masculinity. The revelation of infidelity would emasculate Othello, which is why Othello does not listen to Desdemona's explanation and insists on asking for the handkerchief–his symbol of female chastity.

The handkerchief is not the only evidence that Othello uses to sentence Desdemona. In a later scene, Desdemona reads the letter brought by Lodovico, and Othello attaches groundless suspicion to it, and holds wanton destruction against Desdemona, which, similar to the handkerchief scene, is another instance of excessive cathexis.

> DESDEMONA. My Lord?
>
> OTHELLO. I am glad to see you mad.
>
> DESDEMONA. Why, sweet Othello?
>
> OTHELLO. Devil!
>
> [He strikes her.] (*Othello* 4.1.225-227)

[12] McMillin, Scott, ed. *The First Quarto of Othello*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

[13] Shakespeare, William. *Othello*. Annotated and introduced by Burton Raffel; essay by Harold Bloom. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005.

[14] Marcus, Leah S. *Unediting the Renaissance: Shakespeare, Marlowe, Milton*. London;: Routledge, 1996. While, in her original argument, she is talking about the differences of Taming of the Shrew and Taming of A Shrew, I argue the same sentiments apply here as well.

Othello becomes infuriated with the assumption that Desdemona is glad about Cassio's promotion and thus revealing their adulterous affair. Othello forcefully imposes his interpretation onto the letter to keep his masculine status intact. Desdemona asked, "my lord," trying to tell Othello to express his feelings, but he is reluctant to speak outright. It is worth noticing that after Othello receives the letters, Desdemona calls him "my lord" three times. She is not simply inviting him to speak up but challenging him to speak his mind so they can engage in a conversation rather than a disjointed, one-sided scolding. She is actively seeking to build a mutual understanding. When she senses that Othello is disinclined to talk to her, she softens her tone, addressing him as "sweet Othello." Although some would see "sweet Othello" as a passive-aggressive way of speaking, she does show her genuine concerns with fondness.

Othello doesn't speak a word but strikes her in public, adopting physical violence. Othello entirely out of control, or, in Cavell's words, he is "continuously outstrips reality, dissolves it in trance or dream or the beauty or ugliness of his incantatory imagination; in which he visualizes possibilities that reason, unaided, cannot rule out."[15] Again, like he fears the absence of the handkerchief would emasculate him, Othello fears that being replaced by Cassio would debilitate his masculinity and enfeeble his patriarchal power. Othello angrily asks Desdemona to get "out of my sight" (3.3.234). His anxiety and fear are deeply rooted in the toxic masculinity he needs to be powerful and stay in an authoritative position in military status and familial relationships. But now, "Cassio shall have my place," in Othello's mind, Cassio not only replaces him as the general but also displace him in the relationship with Desdemona. Both events emasculate him. He only likes the docile, submissive, and "obedient" Desdemona because women's sexuality would help him to stabilize his masculinity and makes him the dominant man. Othello loses his ability to control Desdemona and now loses his position in Cyprus.

This kind of replacement looks familiar to what Desdemona did to her father with Othello. Othello is proud that he wins a white young lady and has control over her sexual appetite. The jealousy and fear that he might become powerless motives him to kill Desdemona to regain his patriarchal control. Mark Breitenberg[16] asserts that Othello's sexual jealousy is "both constitutive and symptomatic of the normative operations of early modern patriarchy… and the very condition of romantic love." While I agree with his analysis that Othello's anxiety and jealousy are derived from patriarchy, I do not agree that the sentiments Othello holds for Desdemona would account for romantic love–it is instead an obsession with female chastity and "obedient" womanhood, revealing his toxic masculinity. I would like to clarify further that I arrive at distinctly different conclusions from Breitenberg as our arguments differ in sequences and causality. He finds a pervasive sense of anxiety in masculinity. In other words, he contends masculinity is inherently anxious. I do not consider Othello's masculinity an innate biological trait simply because he embodies a male body but as a socially constructed product or a

[15] Cavell, Stanley. *Disowning Knowledge: In Seven Plays of Shakespeare*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003, 128.
[16] Breitenberg, Mark. *Anxious Masculinity in Early Modern England*. Cambridge Studies in Renaissance Literature and Culture. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. 175

signifier of patriarchal society. To put the concept in context, Othello keeps talking about women as a way to cope and contain his anxiety and fear of losing his masculine image and his possession of female chastity caused by a patriarchal culture that praises the subordination of women.

Othello is not the only man in this play with a hostile attitude and aggression toward women. Iago's behaviors drive it home, demonstrating that men resort to violence to avoid revision of self-image to defend their ego. Even before Emilia appears on stage and utters her very first line, Iago complains, "Sir, would she give you so much of her lips/ As of her tongue she oft bestows on me,/ You would have enough" (2.1.101). Iago's presumption that Emilia is stereotypically talkative even when she has never spoken a line on stage shows his self-centeredness. It considers his projection of Emilia as who she is and refuses to believe otherwise. Then, his language intensified: "pictures," "bells," "kitchens," "saints," "devils," and "housewifery" (2.1.108-111). They are all nouns in plural forms. She is not only mocking and belittling Emilia but all women in a discriminatory manner. These misogynistic adjectives about women are his shield to veil an honest Emilia who is different from his self-made imaginary projections, safeguarding his egotistical, glorious self. When the only protest she has is "you have little cause to say so" (2.1.107), she receives vicious remarks and psychological abuse from his husband. He refuses to listen to her explanation because it would disrupt his highly favorable yet inflated views of himself. Instead, he resorts to violence to prevent the alteration of his undue sense of self-importance and stabilize his masculinity.

After the conversation with Othello in the last scene, Emilia realizes that Iago has deceived her and that she is the one who fetches the handkerchief and gives rise to Iago's orchestration, ultimately killing Desdemona. This is when Emilia transforms from an amenable and obedient woman to an assertive and forthright one who does not fear men's threats. When she discovers that Othello killed Desdemona because Iago framed him to do it, Othello threatens her, "Peace, you were best" (5.2. 156). Nevertheless, she did not back up but responded, "I care not for thy sword: I'll make thee known" (5.2.160). When Iago heard her and came in, after realizing that she had found out his plan, he threatened her three times, trying to silence her because her response hurt his ego. Emilia resisted and said, "I am bound to speak," and "I will speak as liberal as the north" (5.2 176, 215). Unlike previous examples, a woman decides to speak up, and the word "speak" appears five times during their exchange. The only time a woman speaks up ruptures through Iago's machination and deflates Othello's delusional projections. Her concise yet forceful retort, "I will not" (5.2.217), wounds men's egotistical, arrogant self-importance and threatens the embedded egotism patriarchal values. Thus, Othello choose death rather than face his ego and alter his views of self. Similarly, Iago can no long subordinate Emilia under him, which breaks through his lines of defense that protect his egocentric value and patriarchal control; he can only direct anger outward as a way to avoid falling off of the patriarchal hierarchy.

Othello strikes and hurts Desdemona when he dramatizes and uncompromisingly obtrudes his meaning and connotation onto objects like the handkerchief and the letter. As mentioned above, Othello sees these objects as the supreme representation of female chastity he utterly cherishes and does not allow anyone to sway otherwise. Nevertheless, although these objects are related to him, it is physically separated from Othello per se. When part of

him becomes the evidence that convicts Desdemona's infidelity, Othello has to kill her and annihilate the feminine sinfulness that might potentially prostrate his masculinity to regain patriarchal power.

> OTHELLO. Think on thy sins
>
> DESDEMONA. They are loves I bear to you.
>
> OTHELLO. Ay, and for that thou die'st. (*Othello* 5.1.40-41)

When Desdemona's sins are her "loves [she] bears to [Othello]," Othello simultaneously adopts and inescapably becomes part of the unwavering evidence to pronounce Desdemona's pernicious sexual appetite, which in turn, "stain" his masculinity and patriarchal status. To ease his anxiety and jealousy created by the evidence, Othello has to throttle Desdemona, regaining his masculine status free from any sins, especially sins that might relate him to femininity. From the handkerchief to the letter to Desdemona's final line, we see that Othello repeatedly uses his very own imagination as the forensic evidence that indicts Desdemona's infidelity. Desdemona and Emilia are indeed the victims of Iago's scheme and Othello's suspicion, but it is Othello's toxic masculinity, stemmed from the patriarchal culture, that inevitably kills the innocent women.

Taming of the Shrew

The *Taming of the Shrew* has always been a popular play because of its controversial nature. In the modern context, the general audience would consider the gender relations between the pair–Katherina's *literal* submission to Petruchio's will–utterly sexist. I emphasized the word literally because there is no agreement even among literary critics. The structural opposition that interprets Katherina's last monologue differently leads to vastly distinct conclusions. While anti-revisionists insist that Katherina's speech is the evidence of her truehearted submission to patriarchal authority and her unwavering allegiance to her husband after his cruel taming tactics, revisionists take an alternative approach that rejects the literary reading but claim that Katherina's extended monologue is nothing but a feigned, performed submission, a wholly ironic performance, retaining her psychological independence, which shows Petruchio's inability, rooted in the fragility of patriarchal control, to tame her. Robert Heilman[17] even accuses the revisionists of "imprisoning the play…hacking away its bounding and boisterous freedom" and claiming Katherina "is conceived of as responding automatically to a certain kind of calculated treatment, as automatically as an animal to the devices of a skilled trainer." There are also critics like John Bean[18] who propose an unconventional argument that breaks the binary, asserting that the play is the "emergence of a humanized heroine against the background of depersonalizing farce." The pair is eventually "liberated into the bonds of love." Although the discussion mentioned above helps answer "what is the gender dynamic," they fail to explore the significance of the Induction section and the discourse behind gender relations–

[17] Heilman, Robert B. "The Taming Untamed, Or, the Return of the Shrew." Modern language quarterly (Seattle) 27, no. 2 (1966): 147–161.

[18] Bean, John "Comic Structure and the Humanizing of Kate in The Taming of the Shrew", *The Women's Part: Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare*, edited by Lenz, Carolyn Ruth Swift, Gayle Greene, and Carol Thomas Neely. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980.

Why is gender politics the way it is? What makes Petruchio act the way he does? Knowing the editing of *The Shrew* is critical to the gender analysis of the play, as "historically-inclined editors[19]" affirms patriarchal ideology. This essay, however, will not touch on the issues of gendered editing. Instead, I will use the Induction scene, the war of words between Petruchio and Katherina, to show how Petruchio uses women's submission as evidence to fulfill his patriarchal desire and status; how Katherina's last speech subversively breaks Petruchio's masculinity which is rooted in the fragility and instability of patriarchal authority. Including the Induction scene where Sly is persuaded he is the Lord fundamental to my argument as I am drawing a parallel between Sly's power over the page Bartholomew and Petruchio's control over Katherina.

We first need to dissect how Sly becomes the Lord he thinks he is before understanding the juxtaposition between the Induction and the final scene. In the Induction, the Lord directs a play that dupes Christopher Sly, the drunk beggar, into believing that he is the Lord and marries Bartholomew, the Lord's page. The Lord asks his servants to dress him in the most adorned clothes and jewelry and give him a luxurious bed and an aromatic room with artworks. The Lord lays out a detailed plan, telling his servant what to say after Sly wakes up, directing the scene sentence by sentence, just like how Petruchio trains his hawk and orders his servant not to offer Katherina food in the later scene. The wealthiest man in the nation tries to assert his patriarchal authority over Sly directly, hoping "the beggar then forget himself" (*The Shrew* Inc 1.37). Not only do the servants meticulously follow the plan--addressing him as the Lord, offering him the opportunity to hunt and precious painting--but even the Lord himself also joins the conversation, trying to convince Sly that he is indeed the Lord. But at first, he fails to do so. The Lord and his actors do not successfully persuade Sly as Sly questions himself, "Am I a lord, and have I such a lady? Or do I dream? Or have I dreamed till now?" (*The Shrew* Inc 2.66). He doubts not only his class identity but also feels anxious about his identity as a man. Only after meeting Bartholomew, his "wife"–a page disguised as a woman–does his attitude toward his new identity pivot. The following conversation encapsulates his changes.

> SLY. Are you my wife and will not call me "husband"?
>
> My men should call me "lord." I am your goodman.
>
> PAGE. My husband and my Lord, my Lord and husband,
>
> I am your wife in all obedience.
>
> SLY. I know it well.—What must I call her? (*The Shrew* Inc 2.101-105)

Sly contends, "My men should call me "lord." I am your goodman." (*The Shrew* Inc 2.102). His wife successfully induces him into believing that he is the Lord. Sly's identity is closely related to Bartholomew, calling her "Madam wife," declaring his authority by commending servants to "leave me and her alone." The instability of the patriarchal authority requiring the validation of a woman comes twofold. The first aspect is the Lord's authority over Sly. The Lord's attempt to assert his patriarchal authority over Sly fails until his page comes in, submits, and validates both his Lord as a servant and Sly–as an obedient wife. His power stays unstable till his page,

[19] See Citation 14.

concealed as a woman, makes it possible and facilitates his orchestration. Corroborating that Sly is the Lord by performing, "I am your wife in all obedience," Bartholomew drives Sly to reaffirm his identity. In other words, his "wife" has the power to validate his identity. The power relation between the Lord and Sly is established when Sly truly considers himself the Lord. Without deliberating the positionality of Bartholomew's performance and the validation it brings, the interrelation between the Lord and Sly collapses. Now, we see the power of Bartholomew's performances, but, on the flip side, the page's performances draw out Sly's hegemonic masculinity that, more fundamentally, it is not the mere appearances of his "wife," but his hegemonic masculinity that he needs to own his "wife" to showcase his dominating status and affirm the legitimacy of patriarchy that makes him confirm his identity as the Lord. Sly uses Bartholomew's fake performances to demonstrate his power over his "wife."

The war of words between Petruchio and Katherina, their first encounter in Act two, shows Petruchio's incapability to assert his patriarchal authority over Katherina because she does not back off–thus unable to fulfill his masculine identity. After knowing that Baptista, Katherina's father, will offer significant amounts of dowry, which is precisely what Petruchio looks for in his marriage, he decides to woo her. Petruchio has the assumption that women are sorted into categories like "rail," "frown," or "mute" and prepares praises for each type. He also presumes that males will always dominate the relationship regardless of Katherina's response. Starting by calling her Kate, an extended duel between Petruchio and Katherina initiated, intertwined with allusive sexual language and erotic innuendo.

KATHERINA. If I be waspish, best beware my sting.

PETRUCHIO. My remedy is then to pluck it out.

KATHERINA. Ay, if the fool could find it where it lies.

PETRUCHIO. Who knows not where a wasp does wear his sting?

In his tail.

KATHERINA. In his tongue.

PETRUCHIO. Whose tongue?

KATHERINA. Yours, if you talk of tales, and so farewell.

PETRUCHIO. What, with my tongue in your tail? (*The Shrew* 2.1.210-216)

However, their interaction does not go as he planned. Katherina does not easily allow him to dominate the relationship. Katherina rejects any shape or form of objectification and the male gaze. Unlike Bianca, many gentlemen in the play consider Katherina masculine precisely because she does not conform to the conventional gender role and answers back to men's humiliating comments. In this very early exchange, Katherina is being her true self, unashamedly expressing her view against the misogynistic, oppressive ideals of women and femininity. Many scholars, such as Amy Smith, consider this exchange as "a scene in which there is no clear winner or loser"[20]; However, in a patriarchal society where Petruchio has the

[20] Smith, Amy L. "Performing Marriage with a Difference: Wooing, Wedding, and Bedding in 'The Taming of the Shrew.'" *Comparative Drama* 36, no. 3/4 (2002): 289–320. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41154130.

advantage of subduing women, he does not end up winning the conversation because Katherina keeps coming back and response to his provocation. His inability to control the conversion through the language in their first encounter shows that he cannot wield his patriarchal authority. Katherina exhibits her exceptional intellect and excellent command of the language, as most men in the play would agree–her shrewishness in the forceful dialogue with Petruchio. If he stably asserted his authority and power over Katherina, she would "lose" the argument by being unable to continue the exchange and being quiet and demure as a "tamed" woman. Nonetheless, this is not the case here. She effectively ripostes Petruchio by not only attacking his masculinity by suggesting that his sexual ability is not up to her standard but also using puns to reject his sexual invitation. Katherina rejects his authority by retorting back. Consequently, Petruchio neither dominates the exchange nor successfully asserts his patriarchal authority over Katherina. She invalidates his patriarchal authority by dismissing his attempt to exploit and dominate her.

Later in the play, Katherina seems to submit to Petruchio. Many critics contend that the scene where Katherina agrees with Petruchio by stating the sun is the moon reflects her submission. However, the following lines provide a different way to look at Kate's submission:

KATHERINA. Then God be blessed, it is the blessèd sun;

But sun it is not when you say it is not,

And the moon changes even as your mind.

What you will have it named, even that it is,

And so it shall be so for Katherine. (4.6.19-23)

It seems like Katherina is tamed. And one might ask why Kate's validation that the sun is the moon does not count. I argue that Kate's real motives are disguised at this point like Sly disguises the Lord. Kate conceals her straightforward attitude toward the patriarchal world. She parodies Petruchio on his utterly preposterous attempts to assert his dominance and performs subservient femininity, a wifely submission. Mirroring with Petruchio that the sun is indeed the moon does not suggest her defeat, but the exact opposite—she is performing strategically. As Sly's narrative shows, she does not have to believe what she says or provide analysis to give validation. She simply has to perform subservience for him authentically. She acknowledges her burlesque and is aware that she is performing by saying, "But sun it is not when you say it is not" (4.6.20), indicating her submission is a merely deliberate performance, not an internalization of patriarchal authority. I want to emphasize the parallel between Bartholomew and Katherina to clarify the argument. They are both faking the performances. Just like Bartholomew's performed validation is a performance that does not give Sly the authority he thinks he has, Katherina's feigned submission also does not give Petruchio the power he thinks he possesses. Therefore, she designed a delusion that tricks Petruchio into using her performed submission as evidence to fulfill the toxic masculine desire that constrains him to subordinate women; consequently, her validation remains absent.

The concept that asserting patriarchal authority over others requires the validation of women contributes to the interpretation of the play as a whole, especially in the last scene

where Katherina gives her grand finale. Everyone wants to see Katherina be tamed as she is rough, shrewd, and unmarriageable. Nevertheless, one person, in particular, yearns for her to be submissive, tamed, and docile—Petruchio. Previously, he failed to dominate her. Nevertheless, now, he needs Katherina's help to show his ability to assert his dominance and authority over a woman, a shrew, and win all the money everyone bid to see him make a fool of himself. Katherina is aware of what he wants of her. It is her cooperation to perform the submissive action of "place(ing) your hands below your husband's foot (5.2.177)" that validates his patriarchal authority. Indeed, she does profess her submission to her husband out loud.

Nonetheless, it only represents that she recognizes the value of society and learns how to circumvent, even transcend it, by performing submission. It is a "mimetic parody of patriarchal conventions that serves not as a capitulation but rather to produce an almost contrived closure."[21] Katherina gives out an illusion that she has been tamed. Her performed submission shows the fragility of patriarchal society because she easily tricks and challenges the concept of taming women–subordinating women to obtain a dominant social status. Her forceful speech is the most extended monologue in the play, with everyone listening to her, elevating her position. If she is genuinely tamed, she will act the opposite way, like her sister, with "mild behavior and sobriety" (1.1.70). To interpret her speech completely ignores her intelligent mind and eloquent language. In addition, everyone on stage devours her last speech because she presents an ideal image of womanhood in Elizabethan England, which satisfies men's toxic masculinity. In this case, Petruchio obtains his authoritative status over her wife, maintains a tough image of a tamer, and uses destructive misogyny to restore his masculinity. Katherina's performance simultaneously presents the quality of masculinity and subversively wields the very patriarchal value to shatter toxic masculinity.

Considering the frame plot, both the page and Katherina, through their performance of subservient femininity, convince Sly and Petruchio, respectively, that they have more authority than they possess, and it is critical to highlight that they are performing. None of them truly believe in the value of patriarchal authority. At the same time, only through their performed validation can men assert patriarchal authority. Although Bartholomew is not a real woman, Shakespeare bestows him to validate and alter Sly's identity. When validation is absent, the patriarchal authority becomes unstable, as the exchange between Petruchio and Katherina reflects. The parallel between Katherina's submission and the page's subjection epitomizes that the premise of patriarchal authority is the validation of women.

Conclusion

In the culmination of our analysis of Shakespeare's *Othello* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, the intricate dynamics of evidential rhetoric, as anchored in the constructs of masculinity, emerge as paramount. The fervent quest for "ocular proof" by Othello transcends a mere desire for tangible evidence of Desdemona's fidelity; it epitomizes the precariousness of an unstable patriarchal ideology that informs and constrains his worldview. This ideology, deeply embedded in the societal fabric, also underpins Iago's insidious insinuations and Petruchio's relentless

[21] Breitenberg, Mark. *Anxious Masculinity in Early Modern England*. Cambridge Studies in Renaissance Literature and Culture. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. 169

pursuit of Katherina’s ostensible submission. The inextricable nexus between male jealousy, skepticism, anxiety, and masculinity is not a superficial thematic overlay but a critical epistemological framework that elucidates the motivations and machinations of characters such as Othello, Iago, and Petruchio. Their preoccupation with female chastity and an insatiable thirst for unbridled power unveils the profound anxieties undergirding their masculinity. Drawing upon the theoretical scaffolding of toxic masculinity, this discourse has endeavored to illuminate the characters' actions, positioning them within the broader sociocultural discourses surrounding the agency of women, the proclivity for violence, and the politics of accusations and insinuations. The indissoluble linkage between anxiety and masculinity further accentuates the underlying motivations propelling the male protagonists' obsession with the subjugation of women and the control of female sexuality. Shakespeare's intricate characterizations, thus, offer a trenchant critique of the perils of unchecked masculinity and the pervasive societal structures that sustain and amplify it.

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