

The Introduction of a Sub-plot in Shakespeare's Play *King Lear* and its Dramatic Effect

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Abstract

There has been so much controversy about the inclusion of a sub-plot in Shakespeare's play *King Lear*. Some critics think that having a secondary story, woven within the main story, is a defect and lessens the dramatic effect of the main plot in particulars, and the whole story in general, while others believe that it is an advantage and it enhances the dramatic effect of the main story. To come up with a clear idea and to answer the research question, which is, whether Shakespeare should have included a sub-plot in his tragedy, and in order to account for this intuition, and to substantiate the assumption that the sub-plot adversely affects the main plot, the drama's form and structure have been thoroughly analyzed and critiqued through analyzing and examining the plot of the play. The research concluded that including a secondary story within the main story is an advantage, and that the two plots (the Lear story and the Gloucester story) greatly resemble each other, in so far as in both cases an infatuated father proves to be blind towards his good-hearted and well-meaning child, Lear in the case of the main plot, and Gloucester in the case of the sub-plot, while the unnatural child, whom he prefers, causes the ruin of all his father's happiness. The paper also concluded that the two stories support each other, and that the sub-plot enhances the main plot's tragic or dramatic effect rather than weakens it.

Keywords: Dramatic effect, Form, *King Lear*, main plot, William Shakespeare, structure, sub-plot, tragedy

Introduction

Whether William Shakespeare was aware of the rule prescribing the unities and deliberately rejected that rule, or whether he violated this rule in sheer ignorance of its very existence, is unknown to us. It is quite possible that he deviated from this rule and violated it just by chance and in ignorance of it. Nor is there any reason for us to deplore his ignorance in this matter. Ribner (2013) has pointed out that "Such violations of rules are a natural result of the comprehensive genius of Shakespeare." Only petty-minded critics would disapprove such deviations from rules in the case of a genius. According to Johnson (1765), "Nothing is essential to the fable but unity of action, and as the unities of time and place arise evidently from false assumptions" (p. 4). Johnson demolishes the airy castles of pedantry with the breath of the facts known to every theater-goer. He shows that unity is required not for the sake of deceiving the spectators, which is impossible, for the sake of bringing order into chaos, art into nature, and the immensity of life within limits that can be bounded by the powers of the human mind. The unity of action, which assists the mind, is therefore vital. The unities of time and place, which are apparently meant to deceive the mind, are empty impostures. Although unity of actions is considered essential by Johnson, he defends Shakespeare's violation of it for the sake of novelty and to be true to nature. "Such violations of rules merely positive become the comprehensive genius of Shakespeare," added Johnson. (p. 5).

It's argued that only *King Lear* (1606), among the great tragedies of Shakespeare (*Macbeth*, *Hamlet* and *Othello*), has a fully-developed sub-plot. While the main plot in this play deals with Lear and the misfortunes that he has to face as a consequence of the ingratitude of his two eldest daughters, the sub-plot deals with the misfortunes which Gloucester has to experience as a consequence of the ingratitude of his bastard son Edmund. The parallelism between the two stories is obvious. Both men suffer the disastrous consequences of their folly and want of judgment in relying upon their wicked children. Each father is consoled and comforted by his good child, Cordelia, in the case of the main plot, and Edgar, in the case of the sub-plot.

The introduction of the Gloucester's story (the sub-plot) is necessary, since Gloucester offers much assistance to the mad Lear of the main plot; he finds Lear and the others of the heath without shelter on their heads, he wants to take the king with him and provide both food and shelter to him. He tells the king that he cannot bear the king's misery even though the king's daughters have issued strict orders that neither he nor anybody else should provide any relief to the king. When Kent tells him that the king is going mad, Gloucester says that the ingratitude of the king's daughters is enough to drive him mad. He then says that he himself is also going mad because his own son, whom he used to love dearly, had turned against him and had tried to put an end to his life. Referring to Edgar's supposed intrigue against him, Gloucester says: "The grief hath craz'd my wits" (3.4. 1966). Thus Gloucester rightly brackets himself with Lear because both of them are suffering the evil consequences of their own lack of judgment.

Gloucester's help to Lear does not end with his taking Lear to his farm-house and providing food, shelter, and rest to the King. Soon afterwards he learns that there is a plot to murder the King, whereupon he arranges a carriage and deposes Kent to drive the King away to Dover where the King will get both welcome and protection. Thus Gloucester's loyalty to Lear, like the loyalty of Kent, is a quality deserving much appreciation and admiration.

Now, it is a curious fact that there is a difference of opinion among the critics with regard to the effect of the introduction of the sub-plot in this play. According to some, the sub-plot interferes with the structural unity of the play and, at the same time, weakens the dramatic effect of the Lear story by diverting our attention to the characters and events of the sub-plot. Others point out the skillful manner in which Shakespeare has interwoven the main plot and the sub-plot, thereby keeping the unity of the whole play intact; and they also express the view that the dramatic effect of the main plot is reinforced by the sub-plot, rather than weakened by it. Before arriving at our own conclusion, it would be worthwhile looking at these two approaches to the play. In his discussion of the six elements of tragedy, The Greek philosopher Aristotle attaches great importance to the plot, putting it even above character and thought. He devotes seven or eight chapters to the kind of plot which he thinks is most suited to tragedy. By plot he means the structure of the incidents. The incidents and the plot he says "are the end of tragedy" (n. p.), and the end is the chief thing of all, in his view. The plot, he goes on to say, is the first principal and, as it were, the soul of a tragedy. Aristotle then speaks about the need of the unity of plot. The unity of plot, he says, does not consist in the unity of the hero. Just because a tragedy has one hero, it does not follow that its plot would possess unity. Since "The meaning of hamartia in respect of the tragic hero underwent a drastic change during the Renaissance. The Renaissance critics were the first critics and commentators to have seen the original Greek text of *The Poetics*" (Adade-Yeboah, Ahenkora & Amankwah, 2012, p. 55). This suggests that both, Lear, the hero of the main plot, and Gloucester who can be considered the hero of the sub-plot, support each other in adversity.

Infinitely various are the incidents in one man's life, and all these cannot be reduced to unity. Similarly, one man performs so many actions in his life that an author cannot make one single action out of them. What Aristotle meant by unity is that a tragedy should contain one main plot, instead of two plots, as seen in *King Lear*. Thus by introducing the Gloucester's story, Shakespeare has violated one of the classical rules recommended by Aristotle, and introduced a secondary story that aroused many contradictory views by the critics. Some were in favor of introducing another story, while some were against the idea, as will be clarified in the following discussion throughout this paper. (Aristotle, trans. 1986).

Discussion

Criticism of the Sub-Plot

According to Taylor (2001), Bradley's influence on Shakespearean criticism was so great that the following anonymous poem appeared:

I dreamt last night that Shakespeare's Ghost
Sat for a civil service post.
The English paper for that year
Had several questions on King Lear
Which Shakespeare answered very badly
Because he hadn't read his Bradley. (p. 46).

Bradley (1991) regards the sub-plot in this play as a defect. He is of the view that "this play suffers from a structural weakness which arises chiefly from the double action" (p. 3),

which is a peculiarity of *King Lear* among the tragedies. He points out that by the side of Lear, Lear's daughters, Kent, and the fool, who are the principal figures in the main plot, stand Gloucester and his two sons who are the chief persons of the secondary plot. By means of this "double action" (p. 3), says Bradley, the dramatist secured certain highly advantageous effects from the strictly dramatic point of view; but the disadvantages were dramatically greater. According to Bradley (1991):

The number of essential characters is so large, their actions and movements are so complicated, and events towards the close crowd on one another so thickly, that the reader's attention is rapidly transferred from one center of interest to another, and is in this way over-strained. (Pp. 9-10).

The reader becomes intellectually confused or at least emotionally fatigued. The battle, on which everything turns, hardly affects the reader. The deaths of Edmund, Goneril, Regan, and Gloucester seem only trifles as compared to the incomparable pathos of the close. The insignificance of the battle is evidently due to the fact that there was no room in the play to give to the battle its due importance and effect among such a large number of competing interests. Bradley goes on to the point that, on account of the double plot in the play, we have in the last scene no fewer than five persons who are technically of the first and foremost importance-Lear, his three daughters, and Edmund, not to speak of Kent and Edgar, of whom the latter is at any rate technically of great importance. And again, owing to the pressure of persons and events, and owing to the concentration of our anxiety on Lear and Cordelia, the duel between Edgar and Edmund, which occupies so much of the space, fails to excite sufficient interest. The truth is that all through both Act IV and Act V, Shakespeare has too vast a material to use with complete dramatic effectiveness. Xia (2014), states that "Shakespeare even has doubts about what he has already written and enters the deepest ethical confusion in which he sees no meaning for the rest of his life" (p. 55). But this criticism reflects the opinion of the critic, and does not necessarily devaluate Shakespeare, who remains the greatest dramatist of all ages.

Defense of the Sub-Plot

On the other side is the view of Schlegel (1965), who forcefully defends the sub-plot in this play. Schlegel is surprised that the incorporation of the two plots should be centered as destructive of the unity of action. According to him, "the two stories have been dovetailed into each other with great ingenuity and skill" (p. 2). Schlegel also thinks that the sub-plot "heightens the dramatic and emotional effect of the main plot" (Schlegel, 1965, p. 2). The pity felt by Gloucester for the sad fate of Lear becomes the means which enables his son Edmund to bring about Gloucester's complete destruction, and affords the outcast Edgar an opportunity of becoming the savior of his father. On the other hand, Edmund becomes active in his support of Regan and Goneril against the French forces; and "the illicit passion which both sisters entertain for him leads them to execute justice on each other and on themselves" (Sisson, n. d.). The laws of the drama have therefore been sufficiently complied with; but that is the least. It is the very combination of the two stories which constitutes "the sublime beauty of the play" (Muir & Wells, 1982, p. 1). The two cases resemble each other in the main; an infatuated father is blind towards his well-disposed child; and the unnatural children, whom he prefers, bring about the ruin of all his happiness. But the circumstances in the two cases are so different that these stories also from a strong contrast to each other. Were Lear alone to suffer from his daughters, the

impression would be limited to the powerful compassion felt by us for his private misfortunes. But two such unheard-of examples taking place at the same time have the appearance of a great commotion in the moral world. The picture becomes vast and gigantic, and fills us with such alarm as we would experience at the idea that the heavenly bodies might one day fall from their appointed orbits. Thus in Schlegel's opinion, the dramatic impact of the play is greatly increased by the Gloucester story.

Another noteworthy remark regarding the inclusion of a sub-plot is that of Hazlitt (1818) who claims that the indirect part that Gloucester takes in these scenes where "his generosity leads him to relieve Lear and his resent the cruelty of his daughters, at the very time that he is himself instigated to seek the life of his son, and suffering under the sting of his supposed ingratitude, is a striking accompaniment to the situation of Lear" (p. 16). Indeed, the manner in which the threads of the story are woven together is almost wonderful in the way of art as the carrying on "the tide of passion, still varying and unimpaired, is on the score of nature" Campbell (1930, p. 6). Among the remarkable instances of this kind are Edgar's meeting with his blind old father; the deception he practices upon him when he pretends to lead him to the top of Dover cliff to prevent his ending his life and miseries together; his encounter with the perfidious Steward (Oswald) whom he kills, and his finding the letter from Goneril to his brother Edmund upon him which leads to the final catastrophe, and brings the wheel of justice "full circle home" to the guilty parties.

Raj (2013) points out that some other critics have also commented on Shakespeare's ability to provide thematic unity to his plays, "underlying his dramatic action and expressed through his imagery" (p. 32), by taking up and forcibly shaping every little incongruity at the level of plot to fit into a play's general scheme in the belief that everything in that play, however insignificant, has a dramatic purpose. "The creative imagination has abundance and employs it lavishly, yet never casually, but always in contribution to the main design" (Evans, 1952, as cited in Raj, 2013, p. 32). Thus the words prove that the two stories support each other, rather than confuse the readers or include anything that can be considered irrelevant.

The Sub-Plot, a Parallel to the Main Plot

An examination of these two points of view shows that there is more substance in Schlegel's approach. From our own reading of the play, also we would feel that the fate which Gloucester meets serves to enhance the dramatic effect of the Lear story. In fact, the presence in the play of a second father, who meets a sad fate on account of the malignity of his own son, and on account of his own folly, lends additional force to the sad fate which the main protagonist meets for similar reasons. Knight (1972) is of the view that "the sub-plot in this play offers, not so much of a contrast to the main plot, as a close parallel to it" (p. 7). As if to indicate at the outset that this is going to be so, Shakespeare cleverly echoes near the beginning of the sub-plot a word that has been impressively used near the beginning of the main plot. The word "nothing" links the two stories at the very start, suggesting that they are going to be in the same key. In Lear's interrogation of Cordelia, the word "nothing" (1.1. 26) is emphasized unforgetfully. In Act I, Scene ii, when Gloucester finds Edmund reading a paper, he asks what Edmund is reading. Edmund replies: "Nothing, my Lord" (1.2. 76). Gloucester then makes a remark in which the word "nothing" occurs twice.

The Dramatic and Emotional Effect is Reinforced

The two plots reinforce each other in a remarkable manner. Lear lacks sound judgment at the start; and so does Gloucester. Gloucester betrays the same want of judgment which we find in Lear. Just as Lear had thought Goneril and Regan to be devoted to him, and Cordelia to be lacking in affection for him, so Gloucester thinks Edgar to be his enemy, and Edmund to be very devoted to him. In other words, Gloucester commits a folly similar to the folly of Lear. Both fathers suffer at the hands of children in whom they had put an implicit faith. Gloucester's credulity is almost shocking to us because he could easily have found a way of personally contacting Edgar and interrogating him, in which case Edmund's villainy would surely have been exposed.

Lear rejects the loving daughter and clings to the false ones; Gloucester likewise rejects the loving son and clings to the false one. Both fathers bring dire suffering on themselves through their own folly. At the same time, both are the victims of dynamic evil, existing outside themselves, and bringing itself to bear upon them. Both are comforted in their sufferings by those whom they have wronged, Edgar being as full of loving forgiveness as Kent and Cordelia are. Both Lear and Gloucester learn wisdom through suffering, and achieve spiritual salvation. The wisdom that each learns is essentially the same. Like Lear, Gloucester comes to sympathize with the poor and the down-trodden. Lear in his misery during the storm had expressed his deep sympathy for the poor houseless persons who had no roof over their heads to protect them against the fury of the elements. He wished the rich people to part with some of their "superflux" and to give it to the poor. The following speech by Lear best illustrates his state of mind:

Poor naked wretches, whereso'er you are,
That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,
How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,
Your loop'd and widow'd raggedness, defend you
From seasons such as these? O! I have ta'en
Too little care of this. Take physic, Pomp;
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
That thou mayst shake the superflux to them,
And show the Heavens more just. (3. 4. 28-36).

In the above lines, Lear describes the misery of the poor naked fellows who suffer badly at this time because they are exposed to the fury and violence of the storm. He feels sorry that the untouchable and poor people have to endure the assaults of this merciless storm, because they have no houses where they could take shelter. These poor people do not get enough food to eat, and they have to wear ragged clothes which are full of holes and openings. Such people live a desperate life and are deprived off all the necessities that provide humans with a decent life. Lear deplores the fact that he has never in the past taken much notice of the distress of the poor people. He then says that pompous men, who have authority in their hands, should learn a good lesson from the present situation. These men should expose themselves to such conditions in order to know how the miserable people feel. From their personal experience of such conditions, they would learn to shake off their superfluous possessions and pass them on to the poor. This will cause justice and lead to a more equitable distribution of wealth. As has been stated by Elton (1988), "there will be more justice in the world, and the gods will appear to be fair-minded" (p.

260). These words mark a clear development in the character of Lear. At the outset of the play, we found Lear to be haughty, arrogant, and self-centered. But his personal experience of human suffering and misery has opened his eyes to the general misery in this world and the sad fate which the poor people in this world have to meet. He realizes the gulf between the rich and the poor, and he expresses a strong wish that there should be a more equitable distribution of wealth in the world. This is what can be called the benevolent effect of nature; it is the storm that changed Lear and made him more sympathetic, especially with the poor.

Gloucester, in his misery, not long afterwards, cries out to the heavens, wishing the "superfluous" to give away some of his wealth so that an equitable distribution should undo excess, and each man has enough. In this connection he says:

Heavens, deal so still!
 Let the superfluous and lust-dieted man,
 That slaves your ordinance, that will not see
 Because he does not feel, feel your power quickly;
 So distribution should undo excess,
 And each man have enough. (1.1. 65-70).

As has been seen above, Gloucester prays to the heavens always to deal with people in this charitable and just way, so that one man's misery is comforted by another man's. That Gloucester is miserable, should be a source of comfort to Edgar who too has been feeling miserable. Besides Gloucester's having given some money to Edgar should relieve some part of Edgar's misery. Gloucester would like the gods above to treat human beings in the same generous manner. In his study of the world of Shakespeare's tragedies, Reibetanz (1977) stresses the fact that there are some people in this world who have much more than they need and whose desires are fed to the utmost. Such persons subordinate the divine will to their own pleasures and interests instead of submitting to the divine will. Such persons do not feel any sympathy for those who are miserable. Gloucester would like such persons to feel the divine power quickly so that they may give away their superfluous wealth and so that everybody in the world may have enough for his needs. This speech shows the development that has taken place in Gloucester's character. And this can be considered a psychological journey.

The parallel between Gloucester's "superfluous" and Lear's "superflux" is noteworthy. Again Gloucester, like Lear, learns in his torment the value of patience. Gloucester makes up his mind to commit suicide and asks the Bedlam-beggar to lead him to a cliff-top. For Gloucester's own good, Edgar deceives him, and Gloucester's life is preserved. Through this experience, Gloucester learns the lesson of endurance, and resolves henceforth to bear affliction. Lear, likewise, learns the lesson of endurance, humility, and tolerance as a result of all that has gone through. Furthermore, in both cases, we feel that the sufferers have to endure much greater suffering than could be justified by the faults in their characters and by the blunders which they committed (Hazlitt, 1818). In both cases, the sufferers have been more "sinned against than sinning." Thus Shakespeare's management of the main plot and the sub-plot (or under-plot) is masterly. Circumstantial differences between the two provide the interest of contrast; and at the same time the essential similarities emphasize the message of the play and deepen the dramatic

effect. In any case, the play does not suffer under the burden of the sub-plot, because the sub-plot is not really a burden on, but a support to, the main plot.

The Same Paradox in Both Cases

It is noteworthy that Lear, though technically sane at the outset, really behaves like a madman; and that, when he goes mad in a literal sense, he begins to speak wisely because in his mad speeches there is a plenty of reason and wisdom. This is a paradox about Lear. There is a corresponding paradox in the case of Gloucester. At the beginning, Gloucester can see with his eyes, but is lacking in a full mental, moral, and spiritual vision; and that is why he cannot see the worth of Edgar. It is when he loses his eyesight in the literal sense that he begins to attain this fundamental vision, and he then begins to realize the worth of the son whom he had wronged and learns also the value of endurance. In this respect also, the two plots are the same; they are the same in fundamental significance.

The Close Interweaving of the Two Stories

The interweaving of the main plot and the sub-plot is also perfect and has been effected with great skill. Edmund, the villain of the sub-plot, is brought into a direct contact with two of the principal evil-doers (Cornwall and Regan) of the main plot early in the play, and they take him under their wings. They can be described as evil because the same manipulation is depicted in *Hamlet* (1603). According to Safaei and Hashim (2012, p, 86), "in *Hamlet*, Gertrude immediately reports the death of Polonius to the king, though she tries to soften the committed crime by ascribing it to Hamlet's madness": here is what she says in this occasion: "Mad as the sea and wind....In his lawless fit....And in this brainish apprehension kills / The unseen good old man" (4.1. 7-12).

It is through Edmund that Cornwall and Regan learn about the secret activities of Gloucester, and it is on account of this betrayal by Edmund that Gloucester is blinded for having given succor to the mad Lear and for having sent him to Dover for protection. In this way both Edmund and Gloucester play an important role in the main plot. Not only that, Edgar, the third character in the sub-plot, is also brought into a close relationship with the main plot. During the storm, Edgar encounters Lear who is accompanied by Kent and the Fool. Lear begins to take an unusual interest in Edgar who now comes into the forefront, pushing the Fool into the background. Lear in fact does not make a move from this place unless he is assured that Edgar would also go with him. Subsequently, the mad Lear, fantastically dressed with wild flowers, appears before Gloucester and Edgar in the countryside near Dover. Here Lear delivers some of his most important speeches which contain much wisdom, he says:

...Tremble, thou wretch,
That hast within thee undivulged crimes,
Unwhipp'd of justice; hide thee, thou bloody hand,
Thou prejur'd and thou similar of virtue
That art incestuous; caitiff, to pieces shake,
That under convert and convenient seeming
Has practis'd on man's life; close pent-up guilts
Rive your concealing continents, and cry
These dreadful summoners grace. I am a man

More sinn'd against than sinning. (3.2. 49-59).

Although the above words are being delivered by a man who has lost his wits; and the audience who listens to these speeches in wonderment and dismay comprises Gloucester and Edgar. It is here that Edgar finds reason in Lear's madness, and he responds by saying "O, matter and impertinency mix'd! / Reason in madness!" (4.6. 2779). Lear wants the gods to find out their enemies during the night of the storm, because during such a night, all sinners will tremble with fear and will thus expose their reality to the gods. The wretch who has committed undisclosed crimes and against whom no court of law has yet passed a sentence of punishment will tremble in such a night. The murdered will hide himself in such a night to escape the fury of the elements. The perjurer and the pretender to virtue, who is in reality guilty of forbidden sexual relations, will also tremble with fear in such a night. The base wretch will tremble because he plotted against somebody's life and because he did so behind a surface appearance which was effective in concealing the truth and which was suited to the evil purposes planned by him. Closely hidden crimes will burst the covering which hide them, and the criminals guilty of such crimes will cry for mercy to the elements which are summoning such persons to the divine court to stand trial for those crimes. So far as he is concerned, Lear says, he does not belong to any of these categories because he is a man who has not done so much wrong to anybody as the wrong that has been done to him.

Edmund's role in the main plot becomes more and more important in the last two acts. After the death of Cornwall, he is appointed by Regan to command her forces, and he is largely instrumental in winning a victory over the invading French army. Meanwhile, both Regan and Goneril have fallen in love with Edmund, and Goneril has even been plotting with him against the life of her husband. It is on account of her jealousy that Goneril poisons Regan, and it is on account of her frustration in love that she herself commits suicide. (Another reason for her suicide is, of course, the exposure of her plot against her husband's life). When Lear and Cordelia having been taken into custody, it is under Edmund's orders that they are sent to the prison where, under his instructions, a captain undertakes to hang both of them. But he fails to do so when a challenger in the person of Edgar fought and wounded him, thus protecting the life of Lear. Thus Edmund, who is from the sub-plot, affects the incidents of the main plot and enhances the tragic ending of the play by taking the life of the innocent Cordelia. To illustrate Shakespeare's criticism of women when matters of love are concerned, it would be worthy to refer to his play *Hamlet* (1603).

Traub (1992, p. 30, as cited in Safaei & Hashim, 2012, p. 85) asserts that the Ghost in the play explains the second marriage of Gertrude as a "plunge into a whorish abyss; in other words, the text of *Hamlet* is, by virtue of its patriarchal ideology, assigning a dualistic role to women." The words suggest that women are either angels or harlots though the play arouses the suspicion that "women are prone to harlotry and their angelic features are more a matter of disguise," added Safaei and Hashim. These views suggest a grim picture of the women that Shakespeare created in his dramatic works.

The relationship between the two stories is further strengthened when Albany, acting upon Edgar's suggestion, summons Edgar to prove Edmund's treachery, and when Edgar fights a

duel with Edmund who receives a fatal wound in the fight. The interweaving of the two stories could not have been closer or more intimate.

Dramatic Irony in Lear's Praise of Regan

If we consider the dramatic irony in both stories (in the main plot and the sub-plot), we find a great similarity in both cases, especially in the father-son/daughter(s) relationships: When Lear is pleading his case to Regan and when, on a reference being made to Goneril, Lear begins to utter curses upon Goneril, Regan says that Lear will curse her also whenever, during his stay with her, he happens to become angry for one reason or another. To this, Lear gives a reply saying: "No Regan, thou shalt never have my curse / Thy tender-hefted nature shall not give..." (2.4. 1456).

These words are fraught with dramatic irony. Soon Regan will treat her father in a most heartless manner and will have even the doors of the castle shut against him. But Lear has no idea of what is going to happen. At this moment he tries to assure her that he will never curse her. He says that she has got a very gentle nature and that she will never speak to him or to anybody else harshly. He says that Goneril's eyes are fierce but that Regan's eyes are a source of comfort. He goes on to say that Regan will not grudge him his pleasures, will not try to reduce the number of his knights, will not exchange hot words with him, will not diminish his allowance, and will never bolt her doors against his entry. He adds that she knows the duties of a daughter and that she will not forget that she had received from him half of his kingdom as a gift. Now, Regan is going to prove just the opposite of all that Lear has said; and the reality about her will appear only a few moments later. This particular speech by Lear therefore becomes ironical in the light of what is going to happen shortly. The cruelty to which Lear is going soon to be subjected will appear to be much greater to us when we recall this particular speech in which Lear has rightly praised Regan's nature and temperament. Thus the use of dramatic irony here will intensify the tragic effect of what is about to happen.

Dramatic Irony in Gloucester's Faith in Edmund

In the brief scene in which Gloucester tells Edmund that he is going to help the discarded King secretly, and that he has received a confidential letter about certain developments in the country, we again have an example of dramatic irony. Gloucester is reposing his full faith in Edmund, but we know that Edmund is his father's enemy, exactly like Goneril and Regan to Lear, and that he has already set afoot an intrigue against him. Gloucester does not know the reality about Edmund, but we know it, and Edmund too knows it. The irony in this case arises from a contrast between what a character thinks is the case and what actually is the case. Gloucester thinks that Edmund is his devoted son, but the reality is that Edmund is his father's bitterest enemy. Thus the tragic implications of the relationship between Gloucester and Edmund are reinforced by the irony in the situation.

Again, there is dramatic irony in Gloucester's telling Kent on the heath during the storm that his son Edgar had plotted against his life and that he has got that son of his declared an outlaw. Gloucester says that he had loved that son of his, very much, but that the treachery of that son has driven him almost mad, just as the ingratitude of Lear's daughters has driven Lear mad. In this connection he says: "Our flesh and blood is grown so vile, my lord, / That it doth hate what gets it" (3.4. 1937). Here again the dramatic irony arises from the contrast between

Gloucester's belief that Edgar is his enemy, and the factual position, which is that Edgar, is still devoted to him. Here again the tragic effect of the situation is heightened by the dramatic irony or by the contrast between appearance and reality.

In the scene which follows, there is another example of dramatic irony. Here Edmund, while conveying all the information to Cornwall, pretends that he is giving this information to Cornwall on account of his loyalty to him, even though his duty as a son requires that he should keep all this information a secret. In other words, he gives to Cornwall the impression that his loyalty to him is greater than his sense of filial duty. Actually, however, the position is that Edmund is giving this information to Cornwall in order to promote his own advancement in life, and because he has already started an intrigue against his father.

The Deaths of the Two Protagonists in the Same State of Mind

It has already been pointed out that the dramatic effect of the Lear story gains in intensity on account of the sub-plot. When Gloucester comes to aid Lear during the storm on the heath, Lear has already gone mad, while Gloucester tells Kent that he himself is going mad, his reason being that the son whom he had been loving very much had proven treacherous towards him. Gloucester does not go mad, but he is soon afterwards blinded. The blinding of Gloucester adds to the emotional effect of Lear's madness on us, and this effect is further accentuated when the mad Lear faces the blind Gloucester in the countryside near Dover, claims Holloway (2005).

Similarly, the pathos of the situation, when Lear recovers from his madness and recognizes Cordelia, is enhanced by the fact, already known to us, that Gloucester's life has been saved by Edgar on two occasions, first when Gloucester wanted to commit suicide, and again when Oswald wanted to kill him. Subsequently, Gloucester dies experiencing the extremes of the two passions, joy and grief: joy at discovering that Edgar had been with him all the time after he had encountered him on emerging from his castle where he had been blinded; and grief at the thought that Edgar had deeply been wronged by him in the beginning.

Lear dies in a similar mental state: he is feeling heart-broken at Cordelia's death, but at the same time, he thinks that she is not dead and that her lips seem to be moving. Thus both men die in a similar state of mind, and each dies after being reunited with his loving child to whom he had been so unjust. Here again the Lear story gains in dramatic effect by the proximity of the Gloucester's story.

Another Key to the Unity of the Play

A different approach has been made to this aspect of the play by Heilman (1963). According to him, "Lear and Gloucester are two different types of men" (p. 3). Lear imposes on the whole world his own erroneous conclusions about children and court. He invites tragedy by three errors of understanding-errors with regard to the nature of kingship, the nature of love, and the nature of language (the value of certain statements about love). Gloucester, on the other hand, accepts rather than imposes. His error of understanding is that he too easily falls under the influence exerted upon him. He accepts the will of others (of Edmund, for instance) without effectually questioning their rightness. Thus Lear and Gloucester are, in terms of structure, not duplicates, but complements. This says Heilman is "one key to the unity of the play" (p. 3). The completeness of the play, its cosmic inclusiveness, is in part attributable to this double-focused

presentation of the tragic error of understanding. We see its basic forms which are action and inaction: one tragic character imposes error; the other accepts it. The roles continue consistently throughout the play-Lear as active, Gloucester as passive.

Conclusions

As is clear from the preceding arguments in this paper, and by looking at the form and examining the structure of *King Lear*, it can be claimed that the two plots greatly resemble each other in so far as in both cases and infatuated father proves to be blind towards his good-hearted and well-meaning child, while the unnatural child or children, whom he prefers, cause the ruin of all his happiness. The same problem (Moral problem) of the main plot appears soon afterwards in the sub-plot. This moral problem is created largely by Lear in the very opening scene, but Cordelia too contributes to this problem by her conduct. Lear divides his kingdom between his two elder daughters, and disinherits and disowns the youngest daughter, Cordelia, at the same time banishing the Earl of Kent. Lear fails both as a king and as a father, and proved even more unjust when he denies his youngest daughter Cordelia any share in the kingdom because she has failed to come up to his expectations in the matter of the expression of her love for him; therefore, Cordelia too fails as a daughter by her inability to humor Lear. She fails to realize the nature of her father who loves to be flattered, and she utters the following words which had a disastrous effect upon her: "Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave / My heart into my mouth, I love your Majesty / According to my bond, no more nor less" (1.1. 100-103). Even Lear himself is aware of Cordelia's love, and he knows that she loves him the most, just as he loves her the most, but because he is embarrassed in front of his court by her failure to express herself hurts his ego and annoys him deeply, he decides to disinherit and banish Cordelia from his kingdom. He even tries to prejudice both her suitors against her. He feels even more offended when she tells him that, after she gets married, half of her love will go to her husband. Now, strictly speaking, there is nothing wrong in what Cordelia has said, even though there may be something wrong in her incapacity to express her affection in glowing terms. In short Lear becomes hostile and antagonistic to his own flesh and blood. This is a flagrant violation of all codes of justice by a man who is expected to be himself a dispenser of justice and who is expected to rectify all wrongs. The king who should be the fountain of justice here gives way to "the dragon's wrath." Cordelia's fault is small, but the punishment given to her by Lear is colossal.

But one shouldn't forget Cordelia's true feeling for her father. To quote the following words would be noteworthy: "Cordelia's maternal love for her father, motherly in the sense that she is loyal and unselfish and she loves unconditionally, causes the resolution of their problems, and their unity at the end" Rahmani (2015, p. 27).

Kent incurs an undeserved penalty by his straightforwardness and sincerity. Thus the opening scene gives rise to the problem of domestic and personal relationships which are closely linked with royal power and authority. The same problem appears soon afterwards in the sub-plot. The rest of the play is a working-out of the complex problem. And yet the circumstances of the two cases are so different that the two stories form a complete contrast for our imagination. At the same time, two cases of a similar nature produce an impression of a great commotion in the moral world, so that the total picture becomes vast and gigantic. Thus on the whole, the sub-plot (double plot) in this play is an advantage, rather than a disadvantage. It enhances the dramatic effect of the main plot and adds essence to the play's form and structure.

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