Pragmatics and Manipulation in Three Shakespearean Tragedies

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Abstract

The power of language to shape perception and the consequences of its misuse are a common theme throughout Shakespeare's tragedies. Time and again the playwright tells stories of cunning manipulators who pursue their goals through their influence over others rather than through direct action. This study considers examples of manipulation in *Othello, Macbeth*, and *Julius Caesar* through the lens of linguistic pragmatism's Speech Act Theory and Relevance Theory. Using these theories, I seek to understand how Shakespeare constructs tragically plausible manipulative discourse. Analysis of the discourse between three manipulator-manipulatee pairings – Iago and Othello, Lady Macbeth and Macbeth, and Antony and the plebeians – reveals a pattern of discourse wherein the manipulator seeks to constrain the context in which their manipulatee interprets information via strategic violations of the Co-operative and Politeness Principles, thus allowing the manipulatee to believe that they have drawn their own conclusion when in actuality the manipulator has coached them to it. In all three plays, manipulators abuse the principles of Speech Act and Relevance Theory in their discourse in order to privilege contexts beneficial to themselves, and in so doing, gain dominance over their manipulatees.

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To my dog Strider, who sat with me through countless all-nighters but didn’t see it finished.

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Introduction

The power of language to shape perception and the consequences of its misuse are recurring themes throughout Shakespeare's tragedies. Time and again the playwright tells stories of cunning manipulators who pursue their goals through their influence over others rather than through direct action. *Othello*'s Iago, a master manipulator who deceives others constantly for his "own sport and profit," is the archetypal example of this trope (1.3.385). Iago shapes the reality of his victims – not just Othello but Cassio, Brabantio, and Roderigo as well – through his discourse, convincing them to act against their own interests based on the false beliefs he instills in them. Yet Iago is just one example, and variants of his manipulative tactics appear in many of Shakespeare's earlier works with varying degrees of effectiveness. This study considers the manipulative tactics employed in key scenes of *Othello, Macbeth*, and *Julius Caesar* in terms of pragmatic principles derived from Speech Act Theory and Relevance Theory. These principles are employed in analysis of interactions between manipulator and manipulatee, focusing on Iago and Othello, Lady Macbeth and Macbeth, and Antony and the plebeians. In each play, the manipulator exploits the principles of Speech Act Theory to their own advantage, using strategic violations of the Co-operative and Politeness Principles in order to circumvent resistance to the ideas they are attempting to convey. In so doing, they seek to constrain the context in which a manipulatee thinks about a certain issue, not convincing them so much as establishing a context in which they will convince themselves. In all three plays, manipulators abuse the principles of Speech Act and Relevance Theory in their discourse in order to privilege contexts beneficial to themselves, and in so doing, gain dominance over their manipulatees.

This project works within a critical tradition concerned with language meaning as a product of context rather than its relationship to an abstract referent. It reflects the interest of

scholars of ordinary language philosophy such as Sarah Beckwith and Toril Moi with the relationship between language meaning and language use. It also follows the lead of Lynne Magnusson in its emphasis on discourse analysis and the way in which language use reflects social dynamics. An increased emphasis on the technical aspects of language use, such as the Co-operative and Politeness Principles and context selection, allows for a more systematised approach to the study of language use in Shakespeare. The advantage of this approach is that it helps to clarify how Shakespeare creates dramatic tension through the situational use of language.

Much of the existing scholarship on the pragmatics of manipulation in Shakespeare draws upon the principles of Speech Act Theory, focusing particularly on manipulators' exploitation of the Co-operative Principle and the Politeness Principle. The Co-operative Principle consists of four maxims governing effective communication, first proposed by Paul Grice. Grice summarizes the Co-operative Principle as a directive to "make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged" (26). The Co-operative Principle breaks down into maxims of Quantity, pertaining to the amount of information offered; Quality, the factual accuracy of an utterance; Relation, the relevance of an utterance; and Manner, the clarity of an utterance (Leech 8). However, the maxims of the Co-operative Principle cannot alone encompass all forms of discourse, as it presupposes a perfect confluence between literal meaning and pragmatic force that does not always exist in the real world (Leech 80). This apparent conflict necessitates the existence of the Politeness Principle as a mechanism to explain violations of the Co-operative Principle that would be unjustifiable were literal truth the speaker's only concern (Leech 80-81). If any two maxims of the Co-operative or Politeness Principle conflict, a

violation of the Co-operative Principle is not only permissible, but socially expected (Leech 80-81). The violation of one maxim to preserve another results in an implicature that is distinct from the sense of the utterance; that is to say that the pragmatic force of the statement differs from its literal semantic meaning (Leech 31-33). For example, a speaker may offer a partial truth in order to avoid impoliteness, but this violation of the maxim of quantity would still communicate the impolite belief via implicature (Leech 80-81). False implicatures are a key weapon of Shakespearean manipulators, as Stefan D. Keller notes in his analysis of *Othello*:

> Iago rouses Othello's suspicions about Cassio by a sequence of unanswered questions, not simply because they are unanswered but because they are avoided clumsily. […] Leaving an utterance deliberately obscure or incomplete (thus violating the 'cooperative principle') is an efficient way of inviting conversational inference. (401)

Whereas an explicit lie might be detected, an implicit one may escape notice due to the inherent ambiguity of implicature as a method of communication, and this is frequently the case in Shakespeare's tragedies. Exploitation of the Co-operative Principle, or more precisely exploitation of characters' assumption that their interlocutors will adhere to the Co-operative Principle, allows Shakespeare's villains to manipulate their victims.

The incorporation of Relevance Theory, and particularly the concept of context selection, into the study of Shakespearean manipulation allows for a more nuanced understanding of how manipulation operates in the specific contexts of each play, and of the role that the manipulatee plays as a participant in, rather than mere receiver of, manipulative discourse. While a Speech-Act-theoretic approach necessarily centers the manipulator, Relevance Theory, in concert with Speech Act Theory, allows for greater consideration of the manipulatee as an active participant in manipulative discourse. Relevance Theory emphasizes the cognitive interpretive processes of

the hearer over the intention of the speaker, contending in effect that the context in which an utterance is made is the primary determinant of its meaning (Pilkington 73-76). In "Defining Manipulative Discourse," Didier Maillat and Steve Oswald argue that manipulation is best understood through the lens of Relevance Theory. They note that humans have a natural tendency to assume "all utterances are optimally relevant within the specific context in which they are produced" (Maillat and Oswald, 362). An addressee will assume, by default, that any utterance is relevant and search for the context in which to interpret it, rather than determining whether the utterance is relevant based on the context (Maillat and Oswald 362-365). Manipulators exploit this tendency by influencing the context in which the manipulatee interprets their utterances, a process Maillat and Oswald term "constraining context selection" (362-370). Maillat and Oswald thus define manipulative discourse as speech which leads the manipulatee to interpret the manipulator's utterances through a narrow set of contextual assumptions "so as to ensure that the addressee does not process the target utterance within a larger context […] in which it might appear inconsistent or contradictory with some prior background knowledge he upholds" (365). Manipulation limits the range of contexts in which a manipulatee can consider an idea, thus instilling a false belief.

Under Maillat and Oswald's definition, manipulation is a distinct form of discourse which must be clearly distinguished from persuasion. In "Constraining Context Selection," Maillat outlines how manipulative discourse differs from persuasion. Persuasion, he argues, "ensures that there is no contextual subset […] in which [an utterance] is both relevant and inconsistent with other contextual assumptions" (194). In other words, manipulation seeks to restrict the context in which information is interpreted, while persuasion seeks to contribute new information in order to reinforce an idea in relation to all other relevant contexts. Additionally, as

Adrian Pilkington notes, Relevance Theory generally assumes that interlocutors are sincere in their attempts to communicate and understand the context in which an utterance is made. He writes,

> This more sophisticated version of the code-model depends on the pre-existence of *mutual knowledge*. For communication to be failsafe and code-like, it has been argued, it is not enough for A and B to share contextual assumptions. A has to know that B knows that p; A has to know that B knows that A knows that p; A has to know that B knows that A knows that B knows that p; and so on *ad infinitum*. (Pilkington 61)

Manipulation thus differs from other forms of discourse in the fact that the manipulator and manipulatee are operating on separate sets of contextual assumptions, but only the manipulator is aware of this fact.

The first chapter considers *Othello* in light of Maillat and Oswald's concept of context selection, arguing that Iago constrains Othello's context selection processes in order to undermine his relationships and isolate him, resulting in Othello experiencing a break from reality. Analysis of the Iago-Othello relationship in terms of context selection reveals a pattern of compounding manipulations targeted specifically at Othello's personal anxieties and designed to render him dependent on Iago by undermining his other relationships. Iago is almost systematic in his poisoning of Othello's other relationships, orchestrating a rift first with Brabantio by revealing Othello's marriage to Desdemona in the worst possible context, and then with Cassio by plying him with wine and orchestrating a fight with Roderigo. Capitalizing on the situation he has created, Iago then subtly implicates that Cassio and Desdemona are having an affair. Given Othello's natural inclination to infer optimal relevance from his utterances, Iago is able to establish a context in which Othello views Cassio and Desdemona's innocent behaviour with

suspicion. While Iago shapes the context in which Othello thinks, he forces Othello to work out for himself what his Ancient is saying, allowing Othello to believe he has come to his own conclusion. By isolating Othello and controlling the context in which he views the world, Iago achieves complete dominance over the general.

The second chapter deals with the bifurcated cultural legacy of Lady Macbeth, considering how pragmatic principles can shed light on the long-standing critical tendency to view her alternately as a witch-like villain or innocent victim. It argues that Lady Macbeth variably employs persuasion and manipulation as a result of the need to navigate the constraints of societal gender norms, and that this inconsistency can help to explain the binary critical conceptions of her character. This chapter focuses particularly on Lady Macbeth's desire for influence, and the pragmatic methods that she employs in a futile effort to obtain it. While Lady Macbeth is willing to employ manipulative tactics, she does so only when persuasion fails, and with varying degrees of success. Lady Macbeth is quite successful in manipulating her husband in her famous speech, "When you durst do it, then you were a man," but this manipulation is a response to her failure to achieve results through good-faith communication in the couple's previous scene together (1.7.49). Despite her ambitions, Lady Macbeth is ultimately dependent on her husband, and thus does very little without his support, nor can she employ any manipulative tactic which is directly harmful to him. This limitation results in Lady Macbeth employing an inconsistent mix of persuasion and manipulation, which can partially explain the consistently opposed theatrical and critical traditions that have emerged around her.

The third chapter argues that Marc Antony turns the citizens of Rome against Caesar's assassins primarily through exploitation of the Politeness Principle, feigning support for their actions while implicitly recontextualizing their arguments. Despite Brutus having apparently

won over the plebeians to the point that they are prepared to "let him be Caesar," Antony quickly turns them against him by exploiting the Approbation Maxim in order to implicitly criticize Brutus while seeming to praise him. Antony's excessive praise of Brutus does more to harm him than any overt criticism, as it encourages the plebeians to doubt his sincerity, particularly when such praise clearly conflicts with the substance of the funeral oration. Moreover by praising Brutus's oratorical skill while effacing his own, Antony can cast Brutus as a manipulator rather than himself, precluding any further counter-manipulations. While Antony exploits the Politeness Principle to recontextualize Brutus's speech, he leaves the intellectual labour of reinterpreting the speech to the plebeians, whom he makes active participants in his manipulative discourse. Antony never tells the plebeians what they ought to think, but rather coaches them toward a conclusion, guiding and focusing their arguments while allowing them to consistently believe that they are the ones in control. Exploiting the Politeness Principle grants Antony cover for his manipulations, allowing him to undermine Brutus and gain dominance over the plebeians without appearing to do so.

Analyzing Shakespearean manipulations through a Relevance-theoretic lens allows for a deeper understanding of how Shakespeare uses discourse to lend tragic plausibility to his plays. All three manipulators discussed in this project are eloquent speakers, yet they are not the only capable rhetoricians in their respective plays. Their success or failure hinges, rather, on their ability to successfully constrain the context of the discussion in order to instill in their manipulatees a false belief or spur them to a course of action; to do so, moreover, without the manipulatees recognizing that they did not come to this realization or decision on their own. Iago plays to Othello's insecurities about his place in Venetian society in order to poison him against Desdemona. Lady Macbeth drives her husband to murder by alternately needling his sexual

insecurities and feeding his ambitions. Antony uses the restrictions placed upon him by the conspirators and the plebeians against them, pretending that they are in control while engaging in subtle contextual shifts that allow him to dominate the mob. In each case, the manipulator seizes on a beneficial set of contextual assumptions, and exploits Co-operative and Politeness Principles in order to constrain the context selection process of the manipulatee to privilege that beneficial context, thus allowing them to gain dominance over their manipulatee.

Chapter 1. Iago, Isolation, and Control of Information in *Othello*

The Tragedy of Othello is, among other things, a tragedy of communication. The right information consistently fails to reach the right people at the right time, from Brabantio being whipped into a fury by the late-night news of his daughter's elopement to Emilia's just-too-late exposure of her husband's crimes. At the center of these events stands Iago, Shakespeare's master manipulator. Iago's power comes from his ability to control access to information, not only between other characters, but within the minds of his victims. Throughout the play there is an abiding sense that Othello must eventually realize that Desdemona's betrayal is nothing more than a misunderstanding, yet Othello fails to see through Iago's manipulations, fails to communicate with Desdemona, and fails to accept evidence of her innocence when it is presented to him. Such is the frustration at Othello's obtuseness that audience members have even been known to intervene in the performance themselves when Desdemona's anticipated salvation fails to materialize (Cressler 77-78). Othello's failure stems from Iago's ability to constrain context selection, causing Othello to interpret new information only as Iago wishes him to. Each of Iago's manipulations raises Othello's sense of suspicion toward others, thus isolating him from every other source of friendship and support and making him dependent on Iago. The more isolated Othello becomes, the more susceptible he is to further manipulation, and the harder it becomes for him to differentiate honest discourse from manipulative. The particular tragic irony of *Othello* lies in Iago's ability to constrain Othello's context selection to the point at which he cannot differentiate persuasion from manipulation and embraces Iago's duplicity while treating Desdemona and Emilia's honest entreaties with suspicion.

By allowing us to attend systematically to conversational context, pragmatics helps to demystify Iago's influence over Othello, and so throws into starker relief how the play operates

as a tragedy of communication. Iago's mysterious, virtually all-consuming influence over Othello presents a distinct challenge to scholars seeking to understand the play. Some treat Iago as a near-supernatural force, a Vice figure if not worse, while others consider him as a purely secular character, defined by his class, nationality, and sense of alienation, and conceptualize his influence in these terms. Maurice Charney describes Iago as "Shakespeare's archetypal villain, who defines the parameters of what it means to be a villain" (1). Charney's view of Iago is "ruthless and sociopathic in his utter disregard for human life" and as a "hunter, who enjoys tricking his antagonists for the sheer pleasure of the game" (2). Similarly, Meredith Skura characterizes Iago in terms of his "cold-blooded, calculating rationality" and "universal nihilism" (319). Blair Morris treats Iago as something closer to the supernatural, arguing that "his language has possessed Othello in the manner of a demon possessing his demoniac" (322). On the other hand, Loren Cressler characterizes Iago as a malcontent, relating him to the conventions of revenge tragedy (78). Cressler emphasizes Iago's litany of ever-changing grievances against Othello, arguing that, more than advancement, Iago desires "the destruction of the powers that denied him the advancement he once sought" (77-78). This characterization is somewhat in line with Northrop Frye's characterization of Iago as a traitor "whose actions dissolve and disintegrate society" (95). A common theme among these attempts at categorization is Iago's deep sense of resentment toward society and desire to bring about chaos and destruction for its own sake. The latter characteristic puts him very much in line with traditional Vice figures, though the specificity of his grievances represents a significant departure from the purely abstract Vice of the moralities (Cressler 81). Emma Smith instead identifies Iago with the tradition of the "witty servant," a character type most associated with comedy (221). She notes that "Iago seems a figure of improvisatory flair rather than a malign plotter" (Smith 221). In this,

Smith echoes Stephen Greenblatt, who characterizes Iago as an "inventor of comic narrative" who is "demonically sensitive to the way individuals interpret discourse, to the signals they ignore and those to which they respond" (*Self-Fashioning* 234-235). Iago may not have a clear motive, but he does have understandable (arguably even sympathetic) reasons to be resentful. Marianne Novy points out that Iago occupies a position of perpetual subordination due to his class standing, and faces frequent condescension from virtually every other character in the play. Iago considers himself deserving of more respect than he receives, as his opening monologue makes clear, but his class and lack of education relegate him to a role barely above that of a servant. Richard Van Oort offers another perspective on Iago's outsider status, arguing that "Iago must be the first literary character to glean the power of victimary rhetoric" (101). Recent criticism of the play, then, is primarily concerned with Iago's place in dramatic history, either as an echo of the middle ages or as a distinctly modern development, and with his rhetorical and interpersonal skills. A pragmatic approach is complimentary to both strains of criticism, offering a more systematic means of understanding Iago's rhetorical effectiveness and consequently helping to reconcile supernatural and secular interpretations of the character. Iago is more complex and more human than the Vice figures from which he evolved, and pragmatic analysis offers a concrete way of understanding his Vice-like influence over Othello much as previous scholarship has sought to produce a secular understanding of his Vice-like behaviour.

Othello's paradoxical and uncertain social standing provides a weakness that Iago can exploit through constraint of context in order to undermine Othello's other relationships while presenting himself as a loyal servant. Frye describes *Othello* as "the simplest and starkest account of the isolating of an unreflective temperament," highlighting the way in which Othello's blackness isolates him from Venetian society and how Iago capitalizes on this fact

(102). Iago preys on what Novy calls Othello's "ambiguous insider/outsider situation" (95). Othello is Venice's foreign general, granted a place of honour specifically because he is an outsider and cannot easily attain political power or defend his position if the Duke chooses to dismiss him (Novy 95). This tension is even greater for Othello because he is a Moor. His blackness physically differentiates him from the native Venetians, and makes him subject to stereotyping (though not always consistent stereotyping). Othello bears considerable resemblance to the Moors described by Leo Africanus; forthright, valiant, but prone to jealousy, and his own account of his early life mirrors Africanus's life story (Novy 93-96). It also implicitly associates him with the black devils of earlier morality plays, a fact that is not lost the characters in the play, as Emilia refers to him as a "blacker devil" (Novy 92-97; *Othello* 5.2.140). In Frye's definition of a tragedy of isolation, the destruction of the hero is inextricable from the destruction of his society, as the loss of his society "obliterates the idea or real form" of the hero, "[striking] at a deeper life than his physical one" (108). Through his manipulations, Iago strikes at the idea of Othello, transforming him from the articulate, charismatic general of the first act to an incoherent, violent man who strangles his wife in their bed. Iago undermines Othello's confidence in his friends, his wife, and his society through subtle implicatures and distortions of context, effectively isolating Othello to the point that he can no longer communicate with those around him.

Iago gains dominance over Othello by subtly influencing the context in which he interprets the speech and behaviour of those around him, undermining his social relationships and isolating him from other sources of information that might reveal Iago's deception. This pattern of isolation begins in Venice with Iago's attempt to turn Brabantio, and by extension the rest of the Senate, against him. Prior to Iago's intervention, Brabantio and Othello were on good

terms, sufficiently so that Othello and Cassio were both able to visit Desdemona in his home without raising suspicion (1.3.128, 3.3.100). By contrast, Brabantio considers Iago and Rodrigo to be troublemakers at the outset and threatens them for disturbing his sleep (1.1.101-102). Nonetheless, Iago quickly succeeds in poisoning Brabantio against Othello. In Venice, though, there are other authorities present to rationally assess the circumstances of Othello and Desdemona's marriage. Removed from Venice, and the support that it provides, Othello is far more vulnerable to Iago's influence. On Cyprus, Othello must rely on a small circle of trusted officers, namely Cassio and Iago. Repeating the same tactic that he employed in Venice, Iago orchestrates a falling out between Cassio and Othello, for which Cassio is sufficiently embarrassed to avoid even encountering Othello. This leaves Iago and Desdemona as the sole voices of influence in Othello's life, and Iago quickly gets to work sowing distrust toward her in Othello's mind. Containment of information is key to Iago's manipulative strategy. According to Maillat's definition, manipulation relies on restricting the ability of the target to interpret information in a context that would be inconsistent with the narrative that the manipulator is trying to advance ("Constraining Context Selection" 195). Having severely restricted Othello's access to information, Iago can ensure that he controls the context in which Othello can acquire any new knowledge.

A key component of Iago's manipulative strategy is his use of implicature to communicate with Othello in a way that circumnavigates his critical faculties. Rather than accusing Desdemona of infidelity outright, an accusation for which Othello could reasonably expect proof, Iago plants the seeds of doubt in his mind through strategic violations of conversational norms. Iago raises Othello's suspicions slowly, building upon implicature after

implicature, starting with the Temptation Scene in Act 3, Scene 3. In this scene, Iago repeatedly violates the maxims of the Co-operative Principle:

> IAGO. Did Michael Cassio, when you wooed my lady,
>
> Know of your love?
>
> OTHELLO. He did, from first to last.
>
> Why dost thou ask?
>
> IAGO. But for a satisfaction of my thought,
>
> No further harm.
>
> OTHELLO. Why of thy thought, Iago?
>
> IAGO. I did not think he had been acquainted with her.
>
> OTHELLO. O yes, and went between us very oft.
>
> IAGO. Indeed?
>
> OTHELLO. Indeed? Ay, indeed. Discern'st thou aught in that?
>
> Is he not honest?
>
> IAGO. Honest, my lord?
>
> OTHELLO. Honest? Aye, honest
>
> IAGO. My lord, for aught I know
>
> OTHELLO. What dost thou think? (3.3.94-107)

This dialogue violates Grice's Maxims of Quantity and Relation; Quantity by declining to make any statement of sufficient length for Othello to grasp what he is trying to communicate, and Relation by answering questions with other questions rather than responding to Othello's conversational contributions directly. In violating the Maxim of Relation, Iago paradoxically makes his utterances appear more relevant than they actually are. As Keller notes, "his preferred

weapon is the figure *paralipsis*, pretending to pass over a matter in order to give it more emphasis" (403). This puts Othello at a disadvantage, focusing his attention on the meaning and intent behind Iago's cryptic words rather than the truth of the underlying idea. Juhani Rudanko also notes of this dialogue, that Iago's skeptical echoing of the word *honest* "reduces the word *honest* to a disturbing hollowness or lack of meaning" (27). Moreover, the repetition of *honest* implies that Iago has some reason to doubt the characterization of Cassio as honest, giving Othello cause to investigate further. By implicating that Cassio and Desdemona are having an affair while appearing to avoid the topic, Iago lends the insinuation greater veracity in Othello's mind than such a baseless allegation would otherwise warrant.

By baiting Othello into thinking that Iago possesses information that he does not, Iago inverts their roles, leading Othello to treat Iago as an authority rather than a subordinate. This represents a significant change in the power dynamic between Othello and Iago, as prior to the Temptation Scene Iago displays little ability to influence Othello. Rudanko writes of Iago's first attempt to manipulate Othello in Act 1, "Here Iago suggests to Othello that he should go in, in effect, an order to hide. Othello's response […] is self assertive. By brushing aside Iago's suggestion in this way, Othello displays his independence and his refusal to be dominated by Iago" (47). Iago achieves his greatest success when he communicates by implicature, as he forces Othello to interpret his meaning. Although Iago cannot exert dominance over Othello openly, he can place himself in an authoritative position by undermining Othello's confidence. Iago's implicatures in the Temptation Scene have such an effect on Othello that he practically begs Iago to accuse his wife of adultery:

> By heaven, thou echo'st me
>
> As if there were some monster in thy thought

Too hideous to be shown. Thou dost mean something,

I heard thee say even now thou lik'st not that

When Cassio left my wife: what didst not like? (3.3.109-113)

Othello correctly suspects that Iago is hinting that there is something untoward happening between Cassio and Desdemona, but he cannot be certain, and his belief that Iago possesses information that he does not inverts the power dynamic between the two men.

Iago's implicatures are particularly effective because they exacerbate the ill-will that he has already created between Othello and Cassio. At each stage of his deception, Iago is able to control the context in which Othello interprets the behaviour of those around him. Thus, Iago can capitalize on the fact of Cassio's demotion, and Desdemona's taking of his side, in order to widen the rift between the two men while undermining the trust between husband and wife. This is, itself, a circumstance that Iago has orchestrated in its entirety; plying Cassio with wine, directing Rodrigo to instigate the fight that put him and Othello at odds, and finally proposing that he entreat Desdemona for assistance (2.3). Keller argues that Iago's effectiveness in the Temptation Scene relies in part on the timing of the conversation: "Since Cassio has already irritated Othello, this mechanism is powerful enough to cancel out the effects of Desdemona's pleading, which would most likely have succeeded in any other context but this" (402). By initiating his scheme immediately after Desdemona has finished pleading Cassio's case, Iago ensures a negative association between the two in Othello's mind. From there, Iago has only to implicate that he knows something about their relationship that Othello does not, and let Othello draw his own conclusion. Even as he questions Iago, Othello begins to put the pieces together in his mind:

When I told thee he was of my counsel

In my whole course of wooing, thou criedst 'Indeed?'

And didst contract and purse they brow together

As if thou then hadst shut up in thy brain

Some horrible conceit. (3.3.114-118)

Given the human predisposition to view utterances as relevant, Iago's ambiguous questions do not suggest to Othello that he is lying but rather that he is withholding some unpalatable truth (Gilbert 317). In this context, Othello is trapped between two conclusions: either Cassio did not know about his and Desdemona's relationship prior to their marriage, which Othello knows is not true, or else Cassio has acted dishonestly by secretly pursuing a relationship with her at the same time as Othello – a relationship that could easily have continued after their marriage (Gilbert 317). Despite a complete lack of evidence, Iago is able to sufficiently control the context in which Othello thinks about Cassio and Desdemona in order to make him convince himself that the two of them are having an affair.

Iago frames his deception so that his implicatures appear, not as a form of manipulation, but as the expression of a truth too unpalatable to acknowledge openly. From Othello's perspective there is nothing inherently suspicious about Iago's use of implicature in this way, as a violation of the Co-operative Principle need only indicate a conflict of one maxim with another, or with those of the Politeness Principle, and this is how Othello interprets it:

And for I know thou'rt full of love and honesty

And weigh'st thy words before thou giv'st them breath,

Therefore these stops of thine fright me the more. (3.3.121-123)

As Othello assumes Iago is adhering to the Co-operative Principle, Iago's violations of the Maxim of Quantity can be easily explained by a hesitance to voice suspicions for which he lacks

evidence, thus violating the Maxim of Quality. Othello is aware of the deceptive potential of Iago's speech, but nonetheless views his Ancient's vacillation as a sign of sincerity:

> For such things in a false disloyal knave
> Are tricks of custom, but in a man that's just
> They're close delations, working from the heart,
> That passion cannot rule. (3.3.124-127).

The Politeness Principle offers additional justification for Iago's evasiveness. Being subordinate to both Othello and Cassio, Iago must naturally frame any accusation carefully, whether it is true or not. Gilbert argues that Iago's use of implicature can be explained away "in its intention to maximise polite beliefs about Cassio" (318). By this point, Iago has already established his hesitance to speak against Cassio, previously having made a great show of reluctance to implicate him in the brawl that resulted in his demotion:

> I had rather have this tongue cut from my mouth
> Than it should do offence to Michael Cassio
> Yet I persuade myself to speak the truth. (2.3.217-219)

In the Temptation Scene, as well, Iago goes to considerable lengths to show his reluctance to speak against Cassio:

> I do beseech you,
> Though I perchance am vicious in my guess
> – As I confess it is my nature's plague
> To spy into abuses, and oft my jealously
> Shapes faults that are not – that your wisdom
> From one that so imperfectly conceits

Would take no notice, nor build yourself a trouble

Out of his scattering and unsure observance. (3.3.147-154)

Given Iago's standing, and his relationship to both Othello and Cassio, Othello can easily interpret Iago's obfuscation as evidence of his desire not to appear insufficiently deferential toward Cassio. By feigning hesitancy, Iago maintains a façade of sincerity and loyalty, allowing his manipulation to go undetected.

Another reason that Iago's implicatures in the Temptation Scene are so effective is because they occur in the context of Othello's recent alienation from Venetian society. Whatever his social standing, Iago is part of a cultural in-group that Othello has recently come realize will never accept him due to his ethnicity. Othello's sense of place within his adopted society has recently been shaken by his marriage to Desdemona and the response that it engendered. Brabantio views Othello and Desdemona's relationship as being "against all the rules of nature" (1.3.119). His first reaction is to assume that it is a result of "charms / By which the property of youth and maidenhood / May be abused" (1.1.193-195). He accuses Othello of such, insisting that it is the only explanation for why she would have "shunned / The wealthy curled darlings of our nation, / would ever have, t' incur a general mock, / run from her guardage to the sooty bosom / Of such a thing as thou" (1.2.86-90). Brabantio's reaction represents significant departure from how Othello perceives his place in Venetian society. Prior to the play's beginning, according to Othello, Brabantio loved him and actively sought out his company (1.3.149). Additionally, when confronted by Brabantio's armed men, Othello displays the utmost confidence that his political standing will protect him, insisting that "My parts, my title, and my perfect soul / Shall manifest me rightly" (1.2.36-37). Ultimately the Duke and senators prove Othello correct, but the incident demonstrates that there is a limit to the Venetians' acceptance of

him. He might enjoy certain privileges due to his martial abilities, but he is still fundamentally an outsider. The Duke's final pronouncement on Othello's marriage emphasizes this point: "If virtue no delighted beauty lack / Your son-in-law is more fair than black" (1.3.330-331). The Duke plays off of the multiple meanings of *fair* and *black*. Kim F. Hall notes that during the Renaissance, the contrast between *white* and *black* could represent a number of dichotomies, including beauty vs. ugliness, morality vs. immorality, and good vs. evil (4). Although these dichotomies find their origins in Christian symbolism, they were becoming explicitly racialized even before the Renaissance with the cultural association between blackness and evil being applied to people of African origin (Hall 4-6). Despite the Duke presenting his remarks as conciliatory, they ultimately serve to reinforce Othello's otherness by conflating whiteness with virtue. Whether intentionally or not, he establishes Othello's virtue as an aberration; something that differentiates him from other black men. Both Brabantio's hostility and the Duke's backhanded praise serve to alienate Othello from Venetian society, making clear to him that, although he may be granted privileges on the basis of his usefulness, he will never be viewed as one of them.

Iago's manipulation of Brabantio to turn him against Othello foreshadows Iago's attempts to undermine Othello's relationships with Cassio and Desdemona, but with the addition of a racial element. In keeping with his habit of manipulating powerful men to advance his own goals, Iago incites a conflict between Othello and Brabantio as retaliation for being passed over the lieutenancy. Iago rouses Brabantio in the middle of the night with "timorous accent and dire yell" warning him that he has been robbed (1.1.82-94). As with Othello in the Temptation Scene, Iago tactically violates the Co-operative Principle, evading Brabantio's questions with other questions or lengthy uninformative answers:

BRABANTIO. What tell'st thou me of robbing? This is Venice:

My house is not a grange.

[…]

IAGO. Zounds, sir, you are one of those that will not serve God, if the devil bid you. Because we come to do you service, and you think we are ruffians, you'll have your daughter covered with a Barbary horse; you'll have your nephews neigh to you, you'll have coursers for cousins and jennets for germans!

BRABANTIO. What profane wretch art thou?

IAGO. I am one, sire, that comes to tell you our daughter and the Moor are now making the beast with two backs.

BRABANTIO. Thou art a villain!

IAGO. You are a senator!

BRABANTIO. This thou shalt answer. I know thee Roderigo! (1.1.104-117)

Iago avoids offering Brabantio any direct explanation for his presence, instead bombarding him with disturbing sexual imagery that implies that something has happened to Desdemona but leaves the specifics to Brabantio's imagination. Iago also subtly establishes the context in which Brabantio will interpret Othello's involvement when he finally learns of it. Iago's use of animalistic and demonic imagery serve to dehumanize Othello, and both carry racist overtones (Hall 4-6). As the dialogue proceeds, Iago's imagery becomes increasingly shocking and explicit describing Desdemona engaging in bestiality with a "Barbary horse," while also implying that Brabantio is permitting it. Only after provoking Brabantio with these images does Iago state clearly that he is talking about Desdemona's relationship with "the Moor." Iago sets Brabantio

up to interpret the news of Desdemona's relationship with Othello in the least favourable possible manner, implicitly creating an equivalency between interracial sex and bestiality.

Iago exacerbates Brabantio's existing racial prejudice by presenting the unwelcome news of Desdemona's marriage in the context of her husband's blackness. Iago's language plays in to cultural fears about black male sexuality. As Ania Loomba observes, black men were considered a threat to white women, not only as potential rapists, but as objects of female desire who might induce women to sexual impropriety, thus undermining paternal authority (52). Iago invokes these fears when he confronts Brabantio with such disturbing descriptions of his daughter's sexuality. Curiously, Brabantio never entertains violence as a possibility, instead asking whether they are married and wondering how Desdemona got out of his house (1.1.168). His fear is not that she has been taken against her will, but that she has left of her own volition in order to marry a man that he deems unsuitable. Brabantio's later reference to Desdemona shunning "The wealthy curled darlings of our nation" reflects these European male anxieties about the sexual allure of black men (1.2.68). Although Brabantio initially has a positive opinion of Othello, Iago's manipulations ensure that racism forms the primary context in which he interprets the news of Othello and Desdemona's marriage.

The racism of the Venetian leadership, combined with Iago's feigned loyalty forms a crucial context for how Othello responds to Iago's manipulations in the Temptation Scene. Despite expressing intensely racist views behind his back, Iago consistently presents himself as a loyal servant to Othello, in contrast to the Venetians whose racism he encourages. Immediately after raising Brabantio against him, Iago proceeds to seek out Othello to warn him of Brabantio's outrage, though he omits his own part in inciting it. On the contrary, he claims that he had to resist the urge to kill Brabantio for the "scurvy and provoking terms" he levied against Othello

(1.2.1-7). Iago comes to Othello as a loyal subordinate, seeking to know if he is “fast married” and warning that Brabantio will try to forcibly divorce them (1.2.11-17). Othello fails to see any malice in Iago’s actions, even though he recognizes that Iago is giving him bad advice when he suggests that Othello hide (1.2.18-29). On the contrary, Othello continues to put his trust in Iago throughout his ordeal with the senate, even putting Desdemona in his care as he is “a man of honesty and trust” (1.3.285). Furthermore, the backlash against Othello’s marriage to Desdemona firmly reinforces the fact that Othello is a cultural outsider. Loomba argues that Othello initially believed that his marriage to Desdemona would secure his position in white Venetian society and ties his sense of self-worth to his ability to win her affection (54). Having instead alienated himself from the Venetian leadership, Othello would naturally be less confident in his understanding of Venetian social mores and more determined than ever to prove himself a part of the in-group during the Temptation Scene than he is at the start of the play. Othello is not aware of the role that Iago has played in his alienation, knowing only that Iago learned of Brabantio’s anger and came to warn him. This makes Othello particularly vulnerable to Iago’s manipulations, as he can reasonably interpret Iago’s insinuations about Desdemona as an expression of genuine concern from a steadfast servant, who as a cultural insider may also observe things that Othello does not.

Iago’s implicatures prey on Othello’s anxiety about his place in Venetian society, using his lack of cultural awareness to undermine his faith in his relationship with Desdemona. Since Othello has reason to view Iago as a supporter of his relationship with Desdemona, and is increasingly uncertain of his standing in Venetian society, Iago is able to present himself as an authority on Othello’s adopted culture. Additionally, because Iago relies on implicature, Othello can never be wholly sure of his intended meaning. This keeps him mentally off balance and

unable to see the flaws and contradictions in Iago's underlying claim. Gilbert notes an underlying hint of racism in Iago's questioning whether Cassio knew of Othello and Desdemona's relationship. He argues that the question implies that Othello knowingly permitted a relationship to grow between Cassio and Desdemona because his culture is permissive of adultery, or at least the question is ambiguous enough for Othello to interpret it that way (Gilbert 316-317). In addition to goading Othello, this implicature further reinforces his status as a cultural outsider. Since the taunt is only implicit, it goes unremarked upon when Iago proceeds to contradict himself by suggesting that it is Venice that is sexually permissive:

> I know our country disposition well –
>
> In Venice they do let God see the pranks
>
> They dare not show their husbands; their best conscience
>
> Is not to leave't undone, but to keep't unknown. (3.3.204-208)

Though Iago refers to Venice inclusively as "our country," this is hardly something that would need pointing out to a cultural insider. Novy argues that this passage "call[s] up Othello's sense that he does not understand the adultery and deceit of the women of the city he is defending and therefore of his own wife" (87). Iago uses his perceived cultural authority to push Othello into a state of confusion and anxiety, exploiting general doubts about his social standing in order to undermine his confidence in his relationship with his wife. Iago makes no accusations, but rather feeds Othello's doubts, allowing them to grow until he convinces himself of the truth of Iago's insinuations. Though Iago has not yet offered any sort of evidence, by the end of the Temptation Scene, Othello already acts as though Desdemona's infidelity is a known fact:

> She's gone, I am abused, and my relief
>
> Must be to loathe her. O curse of marriage

That we can call these delicate creatures ours

And not their appetites! (3.3.271-275)

Iago exploits the disparity of cultural knowledge between himself and Othello in order to lend greater credibility to his insinuations about Desdemona's infidelity, causing Othello to convince himself that they are true.

Having established a context in which Othello will view Desdemona and Cassio's behaviour with suspicion, Iago changes tactics in their next interaction, arguing against the claim that he is trying to advance and thus forcing Othello to argue the case for Desdemona's infidelity. Even as he feigns trying to assuage Othello's fears, Iago feeds them, filling his mind with images of what Cassio and Desdemona may be doing:

IAGO. Will you think so?

OTHELLO. Think so Iago?

IAGO. What,

To kiss in private?

OTHELLO. An unauthorized kiss!

IAGO. Or to be naked with her friend in bed

An hour or more, not meaning any harm?

OTHELLO. Naked in bed, Iago, and not mean harm?

It is hypocrisy against the devil. (4.1.1-6)

Having planted these torturous thoughts in Othello's mind, Iago then reintroduces the topic of Desdemona's handkerchief, the one piece of tangible evidence to corroborate his accusations:

IAGO. So they do nothing, 'tis a venial slip;

But if I give my wife a handkerchief –

OTHELO. What then?

IAGO. Why, then 'tis hers, my lord, and being hers

She may, I think, bestow't on any man. (4.1.9-13)

By bringing up the handkerchief while simultaneously denying its significance, Iago forces Othello into the position of arguing in favour of the accusation, thus forcing him to draw the conclusion that Iago wants him to:

OTHELLO. She is protectress of her honour too:

May she give that?

Iago. Her honour is an essence that's not seen,

They have it very oft that have it not.

But for the handkerchief –

OTHELLO. By heaven, I would most gladly have forgot it!

Thou said'st – O, it comes o'er my memory

As doth the raven o'er the infectious house

Boding to all – he had my handkerchief.

IAGO. Ay, what of that? (4.1.14-23)

As in the Temptation Scene, Iago offers little in the way of real conversational contributions, instead offering a series of hypotheticals only to deny their significance. Greenblatt notes that, in this exchange, Iago imitates medieval discourse on sexual morality, adopting "an extreme version of the laxist position in [confessional manuals] in order to impel Othello toward the rigorist version," exploiting Othello's internalization of medieval Christian anxieties about adultery in order to manipulate him (*Self-Fashioning* 246). Iago's refusal to offer any concrete

argument pushes Othello into the position of arguing Iago's own initial claim for him, convincing himself of its truth in the process.

Each of Iago's manipulations occurs in the context of the previous ones, making Othello more inclined to believe Iago's 'evidence' because he is already half-convinced that Desdemona has been unfaithful. Othello's growing susceptibility is most evident in the overheard conversation between Cassio and Iago in Act 4. Having bid Othello hide and "mark [Cassio's] gesture" (4.1.88), Iago strikes up a conversation with Cassio about a woman he is seeing. This woman's name, Bianca, is mentioned only once, in a low voice, immediately after Iago advises Cassio to "ply Desdemona well" (4.1.107). From then on, Bianca is referred to only by her pronouns, and Othello cannot know that Desdemona is no longer the topic of conversation, nor has Cassio any means of realizing that he is incriminating himself in the eyes of his general. Rudanko writes of this scene,

> What is the topic here for Cassio, as witness the reference of the pronoun *she*, is not the topic for Othello and what is the topic for Othello as witness the reference of the understood subject of *Crying*, is not the topic for Cassio, but only Iago knows all this […]. Iago is in complete command: he knows – and brings about – what is apparent and what is real to each of the other two. (52-53)

Iago controls both men's access to information, allowing them to know only what he wants them to know, when he wants them to know it. Othello is so incensed by the dismissive way that Cassio (apparently) speaks of his wife that he resolves to murder them both (4.1.188-204). Even though no evidence has been produced, Othello interprets Cassio's words in the context of Iago's previous manipulations, accepting without question that he is referring to Desdemona. As Iago's

manipulation progresses, he gains ever greater control over how Othello interprets information, allowing Iago to determine how he perceives the world around him.

Iago's manipulations rob Othello of his capacity to communicate with others, thus ensuring that Desdemona cannot learn of the allegations made against her and correct them. This is evident in Othello's confrontation with Desdemona over the handkerchief. As the argument escalates, Othello entirely abandons the maxims of the Co-operative Principle:

OTHELLO. Fetch't, let me see't.

DESDEMONA. Why, so I can, sir; but I will not now.
This is a trick to put me from my suit.
Pray you, let Cassio be received again.

OTHELLO. Fetch me the handkerchief, my mind misgives.

DESDEMONA. Come, come,
You'll never meet a more sufficient man.

OTHELLO. The handkerchief!

DESDEMONA. I pray, talk me of Cassio

OTHELLO. The handkerchief! (3.4.87-94)

Othello and Desdemona are, in effect, having two different conversations. As Desdemona steadfastly presents her suit, Othello responds to each utterance with "the handkerchief." In failing to engage substantively with each other's conversational contributions, Othello and Desdemona violate the Maxim of Relation, which posits that in conversation, each utterance should be relevant to that which preceded it (Leech 8). Although Othello's focus on the handkerchief is relevant in his own mind to the discussion at hand, by simply repeating himself he fails to make a conversational contribution of sufficient quantity for Desdemona to understand

the source of his concern. This is in distinct contrast to the articulate Othello of the first act, who even under the threat of violence is able to make sound conversational contributions. Desdemona, for her part, views Othello's fixation on the handkerchief as an attempt to divert her from her conversational topic of choice and pushes on without regard for his interjections. This is understandable from Desdemona's perspective, as Othello had in the previous scene told her to "let it alone" when this same handkerchief was dropped on the ground (3.3.292). Since Othello is behaving irrationally and failing adequately to communicate the source of his fixation, Desdemona can neither identify the fears that underlie his behaviour nor offer any counterargument to them.

Part of the tragic irony of the play is that Desdemona's earnest entreaties help to incriminate her in her husband's eyes, while Iago's lies and evasions make him appear honest. Although Desdemona seeks to influence others, she favours persuasive rhetoric, laying out arguments that are consistent with all relevant contexts in the hope of shifting her addressee's point of view, an approach that proves far less successful than Iago's context-constraining implicatures. Desdemona displays considerable rhetorical skill, but there is little to suggest that she successfully persuades anybody in the course of the play. By the time she addresses the senate, the Duke has already acknowledged, based on Othello's account, that "this tale would win my daughter too" (1.3.172). Desdemona gives her greatest rhetorical effort to securing a place with Othello on his voyage to Cyprus, but only Othello acknowledges her efforts, and it is to Othello's expression of support rather than her speech that the Duke responds. The Duke leaves the matter for Othello to "privately determine," suggesting that Desdemona's speech has had a minimal impact at best (1.3.249-276). Similarly, Keller notes that Desdemona's efforts to persuade Cassio that she can get him reinstated are met with skepticism (400-401). Desdemona

makes a concerted effort to have Cassio reinstated, but this primarily serves to irritate Othello, even before Iago has begun to undermine his relationship with her. Desdemona seeks to situate Cassio's demotion in a broader context, arguing for the disproportionateness of the punishment compared to the transgression, particularly in light of Cassio's remorse and proven loyalty to Othello:

> And yet his trespass, in our common reason
>
> Save that they say the wars must make examples
>
> Out of their best – is not, almost a fault
>
> T'incur a private check. […]
>
> What, Michael Cassio
>
> That came a-wooing with you? And so many a time
>
> When I have spoke of you dispraisingly
>
> Hath ta'en your part (3.3.64-73)

Although Desdemona is successful in obtaining Othello's agreement through this speech, she is upset by the idea that he is only doing it for her sake and continues arguing, with growing hyperbole, that her request is no different than reminding him to wear gloves or eat healthily (3.3.77-78). Determined to convince Othello not only to reinstate Cassio, but to do it for the right reasons, Desdemona fully sabotages her own case, resulting in him sending her away (3.3.84-85). It is in the context of this unsuccessful attempt at persuasion that Iago first begins to undermine the relationship between Othello and Desdemona. These scenes suggest that Desdemona aspires to power and influence through persuasion, but her own guilelessness and lack of skill undermine her, creating a rift between her and Othello that Iago can exploit. Where Iago is "demonically sensitive to the way individuals interpret discourse," Desdemona is the

polar opposite (Greenblatt, *Self-Fashioning* 235). She rejects anything short of perfectly co-operative discourse with a self-sabotaging determination not to be misunderstood. Iago deceives those around him almost constantly, but gets away with it because he is cunning enough to avoid detection, whereas Desdemona has deceived only one person, her father, but had the misfortune for that deception to become widely known. In Iago's hands, this one deception is enough to paint her as a practiced liar:

> She did deceive her father, marrying you,
>
> And when she seemed to shake, and fear your looks,
>
> She loved them most
>
> […]
>
> She that so young could give out such a seeming
>
> To seel her father's eyes up, close as oak (3.3.209-213)

Iago attributes to Desdemona a kind of effortless deceptiveness much more in line with his own personality than hers. However, Othello can no more differentiate sincerity from duplicity in her than he can in his Ancient. Desdemona eschews manipulation in favour of persuasion, but her steadfast adherence to the Co-operative Principle cannot compete with Iago's manipulation and only succeeds in giving him more material to use against her.

In a play where truth and falsehood often appear so similar, there is also a distinct irony in Emilia being able to persuade Othello of the truth only by mirroring her husband's manipulative tactics. Like Desdemona, Emilia seeks to persuade rather than manipulate, however her speech in the final scene shares many of the same features that critics point to in discussion of Iago's manipulation in the Temptation Scene. The difference lies not in the tools employed, but in the underlying intent, for while Iago's suspicions of Cassio and Desdemona are feigned,

Emilia's growing suspicion of Iago is entirely genuine. As Othello insists on Desdemona's guilt, Emilia keeps returning to the same key question:

OTHELLO. Thy husband knew it all.

EMILIA. My husband?

OTHELLO. Thy husband.

EMILIA. That she was false?

To wedlock?

OTHELLO. Aye, with Cassio. Had she been true,

If heaven would make me such another world

Of one entire and perfect chrysolite,

I'd not have sold her for it.

EMILIA: My husband?

OTHELLO: Ay, 'twas he that told me on her first.

An honest man he is, and hates the slime

That sticks on filthy deeds.

EMILIA: My husband! (5.2.137-144)

Just as Iago's repetition of the word *honest* undermines Othello's confidence in Cassio's honesty (Rudanko 27), Emilia's repetition of "my husband" brings to the fore the fact that Othello has nothing beyond Iago's word to justify his actions. Emilia's repetition of the same question is a violation of the Co-operative Principle once Othello has given her an answer, but unlike Iago's earlier violations that are meant to exploit Othello's context selection process, Emilia's reinforce a context that Iago has conditioned Othelllo to avoid: the fact that there is no direct evidence of Desdemona's infidelity. This implicature (which is most likely unintentional on Emilia's part) is

persuasive rather than manipulative, as the idea it conveys is consistent with the context of the situation as Emilia understands it, and as Othello will shortly come to understand it as well. Yet there is considerable tragic irony in the fact that Emilia's persuasion appears so similar to Iago's manipulation. This is significant particularly in light of Emilia's earlier, plain-spoken defence of Desdemona, in which Othello, his mind thoroughly corrupted by Iago's manipulations, finds non-existent evidence of her guilt:

> She says enough; Yet she's a simple bawd
>
> That cannot say as much. This is a subtle whore,
>
> A closet, lock and key, of villainous secrets; (4.2.20-23)

Charrel Guilfoyle has argued that Emilia acts as a representation of conscience, or "voice of God" in the play, appearing at the last moment (ironically a moment too late) in order to set the record straight (311). This makes the similarity between her speech and Iago's all the more significant. That the voice of truth resembles nothing so much as that of a consummate deceiver reinforces just how gifted a manipulator Iago truly is. The audience may see through him because the play grants them insight into Iago's thoughts, but his manipulations bear an unmistakable resemblance to Emilia's genuine pursuit of an unpalatable truth. The difference between the two lies in their intent, and in their approach to context selection. Iago constrains it to include only those contexts which support his narrative, while Emilia champions those contexts that are most relevant to the truth. Even in persuading Othello of the truth, Emilia affirms the effectiveness of Iago's manipulative tactics, emphasizing just how similar persuasion and manipulation can appear.

When Iago's tactics are laid out in their entirety, they may appear as a fiendishly complex plan, but Iago is more a tactician than a strategist. His power over others comes primarily from

his ability to consistently employ context-constraining techniques while maintaining the illusion of trustworthiness. Greenblatt discusses Iago's improvisational skill at length, his "ability both to capitalize on the unforeseen and to transform given materials into one's own scenario" (*Self-Fashioning* 227). Each of Iago's manipulations builds on the context of previous manipulations, but this is not indicative of an elaborate plot, but rather Iago capitalizing on the materials given to him. Iago's overarching plan, as he reveals in Act 1, is "To get [Cassio's] place" by convincing Othello "That he is too familiar with his wife," however he ultimately reverses this plan, first getting Cassio demoted and then using the rift between him and Othello to his advantage in the Temptation Scene (1.3.392-394). Iago is primarily concerned with his own "sport and profit" (1.3.385), and there is not much indication that he plans beyond the gratification of his desires. This is particularly evident in his dealings with Roderigo. Iago convinces Roderigo that the plan is to cuckold Othello in order to obtain money from him for "gifts to Desdemona," (5.1.17). Once Roderigo's money runs out, though, Iago realizes that "Live Roderigo, / He calls me to restitution large" (5.1.14-15). Iago convinces Roderigo to fight Cassio, but treats the possibility of his death as a fortuitous circumstance rather than the final stroke in a master plan:

> Now, whether he kill Cassio
> Or Cassio him, or each do kill the other,
> Every way makes my gain. (5.1.12-14)

Though Iago is impressed by his own cleverness at pitting the two men against each other, he also acknowledges that he is leaving a lot to chance, as either Roderigo or Cassio may survive. This suggests less the conclusion of a complex plot than a last-minute improvisation in the hope of getting rid of a loose end. Iago is a master manipulator, but not necessarily a master plotter.

Though he clearly has some overarching strategy, most of his success stems from his ability to utilize what is available in the moment and build on it.

Othello offers a particularly revelatory take on honesty and manipulation. Although Iago manipulates everybody around him almost constantly, he is able to present himself to Othello as an honest, steadfast servant, even as he orchestrates most of the obstacles that Othello faces. Iago systematically isolates Othello from his social relations, orchestrating the rift between him and Brabantio, then Cassio, and finally Desdemona, all the while maintaining the guise of a loyal servant. Using this position of trust, he subtly implicates that Cassio and Desdemona are having an affair, relying on the human tendency to ascribe every statement optimal relevance, and the taboo nature of the topic, in order to cover his deception. By implicating that he holds knowledge Othello does not, while simultaneously withholding it, Iago forces Othello to put the pieces together in his own mind. Considering the evidence in the limited context that Iago has presented it, Othello becomes convinced of the truth of his Ancient's claim to the point that he can no longer differentiate honest speech from deception. Iago uses manipulation to invert the hierarchical relationship between himself and Othello, making himself a figure of authority and Othello a subordinate. By isolating Othello from other sources of information, Iago is able to dominate him to the point that he can barely speak for himself and he instead echoes Iago. Iago influences the context in which Othello interprets the speech and behaviour of those around him, allowing him to control how Othello perceives the world around him.

Chapter 2. Fiend-like Queen? Pragmatic Inconsistency and Lady Macbeth's Cultural Legacy

In his victory speech at the end of *Macbeth*, Malcolm speaks of "this dead butcher, and his fiend-like queen" (5.9.35). The former seems a fittingly tragic epitaph for a man who once "bought golden opinions from all sorts of people" (1.7.32-33). Though Macbeth performed many great deeds, he will be remembered only as a butcher. Yet while Malcolm's statement has a strong sense of tragic irony to it, no attentive reader of the play could credibly claim that this is all Macbeth is. Not so for the "fiend-like queen." Centuries of theatrical and academic tradition have firmly established Lady Macbeth's reputation as a manipulative and domineering woman who bears a more than equal share of blame for the events of the play. While there is no question that Lady Macbeth is a collaborator in her husband's crimes (at least initially), one might fairly question why Malcolm's reductive epitaph sticks on her so much more easily than her husband. Lady Macbeth is no less morally complex than her husband. She experiences just as much doubt, and considerably more regret. She can hardly be reduced to the "fiend-like" moniker that Malcolm gives her any more than her husband can be reduced to a mere butcher. Recent work by feminist critics has begun to push back on this overly-simplified view of the character, but many scholars still treat Lady Macbeth as a rather simplistic cautionary tale about female ambition. Lady Macbeth's inconsistent use of persuasion and manipulation as a result of her need to navigate the constraints of societal norms can go some way toward explaining the consistently opposed theatrical and critical traditions surrounding her character.

Much of the critical disagreement regarding Lady Macbeth stems from the ambiguity of her motives, and the inconsistency of her actions. Unlike *Othello*, where the tragic irony stems from the protagonist's inability to see that he is the victim of sustained manipulation, Lady Macbeth incites her husband to murder in the first act and then rapidly loses her influence over

him. Moreover, it is not obvious how to categorize her speech in terms of persuasion and manipulation, as she often shifts subtly between the two. Different productions over the centuries have differed wildly in their interpretations of Lady Macbeth's key scenes, from depicting her as a bully who cows her husband into submission to presenting her as a dutiful wife who reluctantly encourages him. In between are those which variably portray her influence over her husband as persuasion, manipulation, or seduction. These myriad interpretations of Lady Macbeth may stem from the numerous incongruities in her speech and actions throughout the play. She often fails to act in accordance with what she claims to believe, even when talking only to herself. While she acts as though she is ruthless and ambitious, she struggles with her conscience when it comes to actually carrying out her plans, and it is her conscience that ultimately destroys her. Though she demonstrates no compunction against manipulating others, she does not employ manipulative techniques consistently and is often unsuccessful in her efforts to influence others. Lady Macbeth occupies the very unusual position of aspiring to be morally worse than her personal conscience and social position will allow. External factors often restrict Lady Macbeth's ability to influence others directly, forcing her to turn to more subtle forms of manipulation, though this is never her default tactic. More often, she favours persuasion, or even simple instruction as her preferred method of influence. Consequently, Lady Macbeth engages in subtle shifts between persuasion and manipulation in her key scenes with her husband as a means of navigating the power imbalance between them.

Throughout the play's lengthy production history, two distinct views of Lady Macbeth have emerged: the domineering wife and the sympathetic victim. Georgianna Ziegler and Marvin Rosenberg have both written detailed accounts of how the popular image of the domineering Lady Macbeth originated in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Rosenberg argues

that the eighteenth century saw the play revised to reflect the values of the era, necessitating substantial alterations to the central character: “Macbeth needed more than ever to be lured – if not indeed driven – to do his killing. For the bloody tyrant was transforming into the familiar contemporary image of a man of sensibility – a hero who in anguish did wrong virtually in spite of himself” (73). The witches, having gradually lost their significance through generations of revision, could not provide a credible impetus for his crimes, so the blame largely shifted to Lady Macbeth (Rosenberg 73-74). Two actresses define the Lady Macbeth of this era. Hannah Pritchard (d. 1768) and Sarah Siddons(performed 1785-1812) both played her as a domineering woman against a meek and diminutive Macbeth. Rosenberg describes contemporary accounts of Pritchard’s performance with David Garrick as follows:

> Pritchard, even without her soaring head-dress, looms larger and more determined, fearsome; the smaller Garrick poises uncertainly on his toes, fearful. The contrast is even richer in the Fuseli picture that depicts Garrick, the daggers in his hands, horribly frightened, while the massive, controlled, almost smiling Pritchard, a finger to her lips, coolly quietens him. A verbal painting of the pictured moment emphasizes her ruthlessness, as opposed to his humanity. At 'Give me the daggers,' she seized them. (74)

Rosenberg also notes that Garrick made substantial alterations to the text of the play, eliminating Macbeth’s later crimes, including the murder of the Macduff family, as well as most evidence of Lady Macbeth’s remorse (75-76). Siddons, acting against John Philip Kemble, fully embraced Lady Macbeth’s fiend-like moniker. According to Rosenberg, Siddons wished to play the character as an “innocent-appearing, fair-haired woman,” believing that this was the most plausible way of corrupting “a character as brave, amiable, and honourable as Macbeth” (Rosenberg 76-77). This vision of feigned innocence masking malevolence would tend to closely

associate Siddons' Lady Macbeth with Vice figures like Iago. However, Siddons never performed this interpretation of the character, instead following Pritchard's lead in playing her as overtly evil (Rosenberg 76-77). Siddons' Lady Macbeth was reportedly a terrifying figure who treated the murder of the king without compunction, and even "wore a ghastly horrid smile" as she returned from planting the daggers on the two grooms (Rosenberg 77-78). Siddons' performance of Lady Macbeth was so overwhelming that a contemporary commentator described Macbeth as "her mere instrument" (Bell qtd. in Rosenberg 79). Despite this, Siddons did add a measure of vulnerability to the character that was absent from Pritchard's performance, adding "a touch of remorse" to Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking scene (Rosenberg 78). However, as Ziegler notes, critical reception of Siddons' performance put far more emphasis on her Lady Macbeth's ruthlessness and harmful influence over her husband than her attempt to humanize the character. In the years following her performance, it became commonplace to portray Lady Macbeth as both larger than life, and more than human: a "superwitch" to use Goethe's term (Ziegler 93). She was often depicted as a muscular woman, dressed in clothing of the classical era (Ziegler 92-93). Critics similarly drew comparisons between Lady Macbeth and various women of Greek tragedy, including Clytemnestra, Electra, and the child-murdering witch Medea (Ziegler 93). Another critical response in the same vein was to fully allegorize Lady Macbeth as an Eve figure who re-enacts the Fall of Man by tempting her husband (Ziegler 93-94). Yet another critical tradition sought to ground Lady Macbeth's actions in the cultural context of Medieval Scotland, making her an ancient barbarian filled with "an excess of that strong principle of self-interest and family aggrandisement, not amenable to the common feelings of compassion and justice" (Hazlitt qtd. in Ziegler 93). Ziegler adds to this, arguing that the focus on Lady Macbeth as a historical figure allowed nineteenth century audiences to disassociate her

from “’real’ women and their emotions” (93). The theatrical and critical traditions that began with Pritchard and Siddons helped to cement the popular conception of Lady Macbeth as the “fiend-like queen,” an image that remains prevalent in Shakespeare scholarship to this day.

Throughout the nineteenth century, however, a more sympathetic alternative reading of Lady Macbeth began to emerge, one which increasingly identified her as a victim based on her gender. The years after Siddons’ performance saw a series of increasingly feminine Lady Macbeths, while her husband regained a measure of agency. While Siddons’ Lady Macbeth clearly dominated her husband, later Lady Macbeths are reported to have used much more subtle means of persuasion and manipulation to drive him to murder (Rosenberg 80). A review, quoted by Rosenberg but not attributed to any author, complains of one such production that the female lead lacks Siddons’ “masculine energy” (80). Though many theatre critics initially rejected this more feminized Lady Macbeth, others began to push back against Siddons’ interpretation. One such critic, Anna Jameson, argued in 1832 that Lady Macbeth is an evil character, but not inhuman (Ziegler 97). Significantly, Jameson’s conception of Lady Macbeth’s humanity is inextricably tied to her womanhood, notably in the fact that she seeks advancement for her husband rather than herself (Ziegler 97). Rosenberg notes the existence of a similar critical view that conceived of Lady Macbeth as a victim similar to the Macbeth of Siddons’ version. This view holds that Lady Macbeth is a dutiful wife who recognizes her husband’s ambition and fosters it out of obligation even though her female nature balks at it (Rosenberg 80). To this view’s credit, the play does not offer any better explanation for Lady Macbeth’s ambition. This perspective on Lady Macbeth is closely tied to nineteenth century ideas of womanhood, casting her in a supporting domestic role to the ambitious Macbeth.

These competing views of Lady Macbeth form the battle lines of modern scholarship: there are those who, on the one hand, view Lady Macbeth as a monstrous villain and those who view her as sympathetic primarily on the basis of her gender. While the two categories of Macbeth interpretation largely remain unchanged, it is important to note that in the late twentieth and twenty first century, sympathetic interpretations of Lady Macbeth tend to focus on her constraint by, or rebellion against gender roles rather than her conformity to them as the reason to consider her a sympathetic character. However, not all scholars who focus on Lady Macbeth's gender non-conformance are sympathetic. Many view her primarily as an expression of Elizabethan cultural anxieties who serves to re-enforce patriarchal norms. In this view she is a demonized representation of rebellious women, but not sympathetic as an individual. In the less sympathetic category are scholars such as Catherine Belsey, Dennis Biggins, Rebecca Bushnell, Stephanie Chamberlain, Joan Larsen Klein, and Leah Marcus. Biggins, the earliest of these critics, identifies Lady Macbeth closely with the witches, citing her invocation of demons to be "dewomanized" and suggesting that she desires "to free herself from natural bonds of mutuality, tenderness, nurture, and all the other life-enhancing associations that the image of breast-feeding carries with it" (264). Biggins also argues that "Lady Macbeth's murderous appeal to Macbeth is couched in sexual terms" (264). Belsey also identifies Lady Macbeth with the witches, arguing that both are reflective of a "crisis in the definition of women and the meaning of the family" (248-249). Chamberlain has a similar perspective, characterizing Lady Macbeth thus: "Perhaps no other Shakespearean character better represents the threat of maternal agency than does Lady Macbeth, one whose studied cruelty nurtures social and political chaos" (79). Klein offers an interpretation in the same vein, but she focuses on Lady Macbeth as a wife rather than a mother.

For Klein, Lady Macbeth's actions are a perversion of what was considered the proper role for an Elizabethan wife. She writes,

> Only when husbands acted in opposition to divine law, said all the treatises, could their wives disobey them. Then, however, the chief duty of good wives was to try lovingly to bring their errant husbands back into virtuous ways. Lady Macbeth violates her chief duty to her husband and her God when she urges Macbeth to murder his king. (Klein 240)

Klein's view is perhaps the harshest indictment of Lady Macbeth, as it suggests that even if Macbeth is assigned all of the blame for the murder, she would still have failed in her duty by not trying to talk him out of it. Marcus, on the other hand, identifies Lady Macbeth as a scapegoat, designed to attack the legacy of Queen Elizabeth. She writes,

> We can read the figure of Lady Macbeth as a symbolic cancellation of the female dominance which had haunted [King] James throughout his early life, and which he particularly associated with Queen Elizabeth, who had presided over the execution of his mother and had demonstrated her superior political skills to James's humiliation on many occasions. Such a 'local' *Macbeth* would celebrate the Jacobean succession and blacken the barren female authority associated with the previous monarch. (Marcus 105)

A common theme among these interpretation is their focus on Lady Macbeth as a cultural product, reflecting a certain set of social anxieties or ideological and political agendas. Lady Macbeth's evil, then, is an expression of, and motivated primarily by, these external anxieties or agendas.

While many scholars view Lady Macbeth primarily as a scapegoat, other scholars, such as Christina Leon Alfar and Mark Thornton Burnett consider her actions in a more sympathetic light. Burnett argues that

> tradition has tended to take up a chastising stance toward the character, implicitly indicting her for failing to conform to established notions of womanhood. A dreadful and sublime woman who nevertheless shows traces of feminine weakness, a woman who becomes less than a woman and who offers an affront to our sensibility [...]. (1)

In regard to her notorious invocation of demons, Burnett offers the suggestion that this is actually "the attempt of a woman to realize herself using the dominant discourses of patriarchy as she lacks an effectively powerful counter-language" (2). For Burnett, Lady Macbeth is "a product and a producer of gender conflict, [who] emerges as a figure who demands attention as she strives for the achievement of self-definition and agitates for acknowledgement" (4). Alfar also identifies Lady Macbeth's need to operate within a patriarchal system of power as cause for sympathy. She argues, "that scholars frequently fail to sympathize with Lady Macbeth says more about our culture's moralized expectations of femininity and masculinity […] than it does about Shakespeare's own sense of gender" (Alfar 114). Alfar contends that "rather than embodying evil within the play, Lady Macbeth encourages her husband to seize the power requisite to a ruthless patrilineal order" (114). Alfar does not consider Lady Macbeth to have any real choice in her actions. Following in the nineteenth century model of Lady Macbeth as dutiful wife, Alfar suggests that Lady Macbeth is "subject to [Macbeth's] desire" and "compelled to reflect its fulfillment" (114). Contemporary *Macbeth* scholarship, as in the nineteenth century, is divided between those who view Lady Macbeth as unrealistically evil and those who seek to offset her guilt; those who view her as a scapegoat of patriarchy, and those who view her as a victim of it.

In spite of her reputation, Lady Macbeth generally displays a preference for good-faith communication over manipulation when engaging with her husband, but the success of her efforts is entirely dependent on Macbeth's willingness to engage with her. The couple's first

scene together in Act 1, Scene 5 hints at the power imbalance in their relationship, with Lady Macbeth consistently observing the Co-operative Principle, while Macbeth fails to do so except when they are discussing a topic of his choice. Having just learned of the witches' prophecy, Lady Macbeth excitedly greets her husband,

> Great Glamis, worthy Cawdor,
> Greater than both, by the all-hail hereafter,
> Thy letters have transported me beyond
> This ignorant present, and I feel now
> The future in an instant (1.5.54-58)

Macbeth does not match her enthusiasm, responding with the affectionate but straightforward and not immediately relevant statement, "My dearest love, / Duncan comes here tonight" (1.5.58-59). Whether or not Macbeth intends it so, Lady Macbeth appears to find an implicature in his words, stating a few lines later, "O never / Shall sun that morrow see" in reference to the king's intention to depart the following day (1.5.60-61). An implicature occurs when the pragmatic force of an utterance differs from its literal semantic meaning due to the speaker violating a maxim of the Co-operative Principle (Leech 31-33). Lady Macbeth assumes that her husband is observing the Co-operative Principle and thus interprets his statement as being relevant to her discussion of the prophecy, promptly drawing the conclusion that he intends to murder the king. Lady Macbeth attempts to advise him in this matter at length, directing him to "look like the innocent flower, / But be the serpent under't" and to "put / This night's great business into my dispatch" (1.5.65-66, 67-68). Here, as in Scene 7, Lady Macbeth attempts to take charge, giving her husband direction while giving herself the responsibility of planning on his behalf, however Macbeth is not receptive to her efforts. He replies tersely, "We will speak

further," effectively ending the conversation (1.5.71). Despite this, Lady Macbeth does not acknowledge his attempt to disengage, pushing forward with her conversational topic of choice:

> Only look up clear;
>
> To alter favour ever is to fear.
>
> Leave all the rest to me. (1.5.71-73)

Lady Macbeth's speech in this scene is merely instructive rather than manipulative. She tells Macbeth what she would like him to do, treating it as a foregone conclusion that he will comply. However, she is not successful at influencing Macbeth in this manner. This interaction foreshadows the breakdown of communication that is to come after Duncan's murder, with Macbeth retreating inward while Lady Macbeth is left futilely attempting to exert influence over him. This scene demonstrates that Lady Macbeth does not default to manipulation as a mode of discourse, but casts significant doubt on her ability to exert influence over her husband through good-faith engagement.

Despite Lady Macbeth doing the overwhelming majority of the talking – twenty lines of dialogue to Macbeth's four –Macbeth exerts conversational dominance in this scene, as he determines the direction of the discussion and disregards her conversational contributions when they do not conform to his topic of choice. Following Rudanko's definition, conversational dominance consists of the ability to issue instructions, introduce topics, reject topics, and to pose questions without resistance from one's interlocutor (42). Macbeth does not engage with either of the topics that Lady Macbeth attempts to introduce, substituting the first for one of his own, and disengaging from the conversation entirely rather than responding to the second. There is, in fact, nothing in Macbeth's four lines of dialogue to indicate that he is even listening to his wife. By contrast, when Macbeth changes the topic of conversation from the witches' prophecy to the

king's impending visit, Lady Macbeth follows suit, responding to his statement with a follow-up question: "And when goes he hence?" (1.5.59). When she attempts to bring the conversation around to the murder of the king, she does so by building upon what he has said, bridging the gap between topics with a transitional statement relevant to both. Despite this effort at good-faith engagement, Lady Macbeth makes no apparent impression on Macbeth, and she ends up futilely talking past him. Although earlier in the scene, Macbeth calls Lady Macbeth his "partner of greatness" (1.5.11), this first in-person interaction between the two demonstrates that there is a limit to that partnership. Macbeth ultimately chooses when and how to engage with her. This first exchange between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth establishes the fact that, despite Lady Macbeth's intention to "chastise with the valour of my tongue / all that impedes thee from the golden round," her actual ability to do so is limited by her husband's willingness to engage with her in co-operative discourse (1.5.27-28). Macbeth's effortless conversational dominance demonstrates the inherent inequality in his and Lady Macbeth's partnership.

Lady Macbeth temporarily inverts this unequal relationship in their second interaction by putting Macbeth on the defensive in order to shift the context of their argument from an ethical one to a personal one, thus circumventing his rational arguments against the murder of Duncan. Lady Macbeth's manipulation seeks to create an association between Macbeth's masculinity and his willingness to murder the king so that he will prefer a course of action that she favours over one that he has settled upon. She and Macbeth are equally conscious of the potential risks and rewards associated with either option, and Lady Macbeth does not attempt to change her husband's understanding of the facts. Rather, she seeks to alter his conception of himself so that he will be inclined to view the issue from her point of view. As Macbeth tries to justify his decision against killing Duncan to her, she counters,

Was the hope drunk

Wherein you dressed yourself? Hath it slept since?

And wakes it now to look so green and pale,

At what it did so freely? From this time

Such I account thy love. Art thou afeared

To be the same in thine own act and valour,

As thou art in desire? Wouldst thou have that

Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life,

And live a coward in thine own esteem,

Letting 'I dare not', wait upon 'I would',

Like the poor cat i'th' adage? (1.7.35-44).

This passage violates the Co-operative Principle, ignoring Macbeth's justification and instead attacking his character. This goes against the Maxim of Relation, which requires that a conversational contribution be relevant to the contribution that preceded it (Leech 8).

The passage is comprised of a series of what Leech terms "loaded questions:" questions that implicate both a desired and assumed response (167-169). For example, the phrasing of the question "Was the hope drunk?" invites a denial from Macbeth, yet implies that Lady Macbeth believes that the honest answer would be yes. Lady Macbeth bombards her husband with a series of such loaded questions, giving him no opportunity to counter her implicatures or to contest the fairness of her characterization of him. In each case the question offers a negative characterization of Macbeth, suggesting that he should deny it, yet implicating that Lady Macbeth believes the characterization to be accurate. This serves to put Macbeth on the

defensive and allows her to control the terms of the discussion and to shift focus from Macbeth's arguments against killing Duncan to what those arguments say about his character.

These jibes shift the context in which Macbeth considers his decision from one focused on his sense of honour and reputation to one focused on his masculine insecurities and his standing in the eyes of his wife. The language of the passage is calculated to prod at Macbeth's personal insecurities. Lady Macbeth uses language of cowardice and sexual impotence to goad her husband, implicitly equating the two and setting them up in opposition to the course of action she wishes him to pursue. Biggins writes,

> Here Lady Macbeth explicitly parallels sexual action with murderous action. She appeals to Macbeth's sense of his own virility, in sexual terms. The metaphorical complexity of the passage leaves the reference of line 38 ambiguous: *what* is partly the contemplated murder, but partly also an intoxicated act of sexual passion, shamefacedly repented. (266-267)

As in *Othello*'s Temptation Scene, ambiguity works to the advantage of the manipulator, suggesting rather than explicating the relationship between ideas; in this case Macbeth's virility, courage, and willingness to take what he wants by violent means. Greenblatt argues that Macbeth is plagued by sexual insecurity: "a compulsive need to prove his manhood, dread of impotence, a nagging apprehension that he will not be found sufficiently attractive or powerful, a fear of failure," which allows Lady Macbeth's taunts to drive him to murder (*Tyrant* 99). By equating Macbeth's reticence with impotence and cowardice, Lady Macbeth implicitly equates a willingness to murder the king with courage and virility. Additionally, as Lady Macbeth challenges her husband, she switches from the respectful *you* pronoun to the diminutive *thou*. This is notable as there is no other instance where she refers to him in this manner to his face,

even when she speaks to him in anger. Later, when she admonishes him, "Are you a man?" she maintains the respectful use of *you* (3.4.54-55). Thus, although Macbeth could reasonably view this use of *thou* as an unpremeditated expression of anger, this cannot be the case. Lady Macbeth has already expressed concern that he is "too full o'th' milk of human kindness," suggesting that her use of *thou* is an intentional attempt to belittle and provoke him in order to prevent him backing away from her plan (1.5.17). These personal attacks allow Lady Macbeth to constrain the context of their argument to exclude all considerations except those that benefit her position

In the face of his wife's criticism, Macbeth cedes conversational dominance and allows her to determine the parameters of the discussion. Though not immediately conceding to Lady Macbeth's argument, Macbeth does change the focus of his own argument to conform to the context she has established. Prior to this barrage of questions, his case against assassinating the king is based on rational and clearly articulated ethical and practical arguments:

> He's here in double trust:
> First, as I am his kinsman, and his subject,
> Strong both against the deed. Then, as his host,
> Who should against his murderer shut the door,
> Not bear the knife myself. Besides, this Duncan
> Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been
> So clear in his great office, that his virtues
> Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued, against
> The deep damnation of his taking off. (1.7.12-20)

Macbeth begins to explain his reasoning to his wife, stating "He hath honoured me of late, and I have bought / Golden opinions from all sorts of people" before she cuts him off (1.7.32-33).

When Macbeth is able to speak again he utters the far more personal, abstract, and ethically ambiguous statement "I dare do all that may become a man, / Who dares more is none" (1.7.46-47). In changing his argument from one specific to his circumstance to one about manhood in general, Macbeth tacitly allows her to define the context of the debate. By putting her husband on the defensive, Lady Macbeth is able to shift the context of their argument from an ethical one to a personal one, using his insecurities to gain dominance over him.

Lady Macbeth employs a two-stage manipulation, first tearing down Macbeth's sense of self-worth, then presenting her plan as a means of regaining it. Once Macbeth accepts her preferred set of contextual assumptions, she begins to rebuild his sense of manhood in the specific context of the proposed murder. At this point she begins to incorporate an element of persuasion as well as manipulation. This is not to say that she ceases to manipulate her husband, as the constrained set of contextual assumptions that she has established continues to colour their conversation. However, as her speech becomes more rhetorical, she begins to incorporate elements of good-faith persuasion. This is marked in the text by a change back to the respectful *you* pronoun, as well as a renewed engagement with the Co-operative Principle. In contrast to her response to Macbeth's initial argument, Lady Macbeth counters "I dare do all that may become a man" with "When you durst do it, then you were a man; / And to be more than what you were, you would / Be so much more the man" (1.7.45, 49-51). This is a direct response to Macbeth's expressed concern, and counters his position about what "may become a man" with her own. There is no particular reason to doubt that Lady Macbeth believes what she is saying; however, this statement is still manipulative because it builds on the context established by her previous line of questioning. The language of this passage presents a strong contrast to the language of the

previous one, with the phrase “Be so much more the man” providing a particularly resonant counterpoint to Lady Macbeth’s earlier allusions to impotence. Lady Macbeth then reminds him

Nor time nor place
Did then adhere, and yet you would make both:
They have made themselves, and that their fitness now
Does unmake you. (1.7.51-54)

Here for the first time in the conversation, Lady Macbeth seeks to expand the context in which Macbeth considers his options, reminding him of his desire for the crown, his previous willingness to take it, and the unique opportunity that currently presents itself with the king in his home. These reminders are better classified as persuasion rather than manipulation as they are both true and consistent within every relevant context, presenting a counterpoint to Macbeth’s earlier arguments rather than seeking to circumvent them.

In a final rhetorical push, Lady Macbeth demonstrates her own ability to abnegate her gender, thus recontextualizing her earlier manipulation as a call to action. Having torn down and then built back up Macbeth’s sense of his own manhood, Lady Macbeth engages in a hyperbolic display of aggression, declaring

I have given suck, and know
How tender ‘tis to love the babe that milks me:
I would, while it was smiling in my face,
Have plucked the nipple from his boneless gums,
And dashed the brains out, had I so sworn
As you have done to this. (1.7.54-59)

Since she has established a context in which Macbeth is focused on his insecurities, Lady Macbeth's aggression, in contrast to his reticence, reinforces the earlier manipulation and challenges Macbeth to prove himself as ruthless as she is. After this, the only objection Macbeth is able to raise is, "If we should fail?" (1.7.59). Lady Macbeth then has only to lay out her plan and have it accepted. It is telling that Macbeth's acquiescence to her comes with the imperative

> Bring forth men-children only;
>
> For thy undaunted mettle should compose
>
> Nothing but males. (1.7.73-75)

From the perspective of the Co-operative Principle, this would seem to violate the Maxim of Relation, having no logical connection to the topic immediately at hand, yet it is relevant to the context that Lady Macbeth has established. The fact that Macbeth responds to her plan in this manner shows how he has come to associate his sexual anxieties with Duncan's murder. Having undermined Macbeth's sense of manhood, Lady Macbeth offers him a way to redeem himself in her eyes, implicitly suggesting that it is the only way to redeem himself. Lady Macbeth effectively uses manipulation to circumvent her husband's moral objections by shifting the conversation to focus on his masculinity, undermining his sense of self-worth then offering acquiescence to her plan as a means of redemption.

Despite her success at manipulating Macbeth in this particular, controlled instance, Lady Macbeth shows herself to be a poor improvisor, and thus does not enjoy the same success when attempting to influence others under more chaotic circumstances. The banquet scene demonstrates how the same tactics Lady Macbeth employs in Act 1, Scene 7 can fail as the goals of her manipulations increase in complexity. While in the earlier scene, Lady Macbeth has a straightforward goal, convincing Macbeth to commit a murder toward which he is already

inclined, the banquet scene forces Lady Macbeth to simultaneously attempt to reign in Macbeth's strange behaviour, while also protecting his reputation with the assembled thanes. As Macbeth's behaviour becomes increasingly erratic during the banquet scene, Lady Macbeth once again attempts to take control of the situation, trying to placate the guests while regaining control of her husband:

> Sit, worthy friends; my lord is often thus,
>
> And hath been from his youth. Pray you, keep seat,
>
> The fit is momentary; upon a thought
>
> He will again be well. If much you note him
>
> You shall offend him, and extend his passion.
>
> Feed, and regard him not. [*to Macbeth*] Are you a man? (3.4.50-55)

Lady Macbeth attempts to quietly employ a manipulative tactic that has worked for her in the past. As Jonathan Culpeper notes this question "flouts the Maxim of Quality: it is obvious that Macbeth is a man. She implicates the impolite belief that he is so lacking in those characteristics that she perceives as male that his gender is called into question" (365). In the past, Lady Macbeth has successfully been able to use the context of Macbeth's insecurities about his manhood in order to undermine his conscience, but between Macbeth's agitated state of mind and the limitations on her ability to communicate in front of so many witnesses, it does not produce any result:

> Ay, and a bold one, that dare look on that
>
> Which might appal the devil. (3.4.56-57)

This time, Macbeth is defiant in the face of his wife's aspersions on his manhood rather than cowed by them. Lady Macbeth then shifts tactics, attempting to persuade her husband that the

ghost is merely a hallucination: “This is the air-drawn dagger which you said / Led you to Duncan […] When all’s done / You look but on a stool” (3.4.59-60, 64-65). In Act 1, Scene 7, this tactic of emotional manipulation followed by persuasive argument works because Lady Macbeth is attempting to circumvent Macbeth’s reason by appealing to his desires and insecurities, but these same tactics cannot restore him to rationality when he is gripped with terror. This instance of similar tactics with differing results suggests that in Shakespeare the specific tactics of a manipulator are less important than their improvisatory skill.

Lady Macbeth’s effectiveness as a manipulator is also inhibited by the fact that she is ultimately dependent on her husband and therefore cannot engage in any manipulative discourse that is damaging to him. While the thanes refrain from challenging her absurd lies out of politeness and respect for the authority that her husband’s position confers upon her, the fact that they largely turn against Macbeth in the aftermath clearly indicates that her efforts have no real impact. Though they are nothing more than blatant lies, Lady Macbeth’s attempts to reassure the thanes do constitute manipulation, as they seek to establish a specific context for Macbeth’s behaviour, namely that “my lord is often thus, / and hath been from his youth” (3.4.50-51). While this context is preferable to the truth, as it implies that Macbeth’s achievements occurred despite his affliction, it ultimately seeks to mitigate the damage that his outburst has done, rather than to improve his standing. The revelation that Macbeth suffers from periodic bouts of madness can hardly be expected to reflect well on him, even if it is preferable to the truth. Lady Macbeth’s lie is, notably, almost identical to Iago’s claim of Othello that

> The lethargy must have his quiet course,
> If not, he foams at the mouth, and by and by
> Breaks out to savage madness. (*Othello* 4.1.53-55)

Like Iago, Lady Macbeth fabricates an affliction in order to forestall potentially incriminating questions, however, Iago's lie is much more effective, as he is actively trying to sabotage Othello's reputation, while Lady Macbeth is trying to salvage her husband's. Iago's lie therefore must only protect him, while Lady Macbeth, as she is working in collaboration with her husband, must protect both their secret and his reputation. As the complexity of the narrative Lady Macbeth is trying to advance increases, it becomes virtually impossible for her to manipulate those around her.

Lady Macbeth's variable reliance on persuasion and manipulation stems from a need to navigate the complex power relationships that define her society and actively restrict her ability to exert influence by more direct means. Although she occupies a position of high status among the thanes of Scotland, Lady Macbeth's gender largely precludes her from exercising any real power. Like Othello and Iago in the previous chapter, Lady Macbeth exemplifies what Marianne Novy terms the "ambiguous insider/outsider situation" (95). Novy notes that women of Shakespeare's society, particularly aristocratic women, could be both insiders and outsiders, excluded from many aspects of public life, yet dominant within their own gendered spaces (70-71). Lady Macbeth is a respected member of the highest echelon of Scottish society, yet is simultaneously marginalized due to her gender. While operating in a domestic role, Lady Macbeth is treated with considerable respect. When Duncan first arrives at her home, he greets his hostess as a peer, using the respectful *you* pronoun: "Herein I teach you / How you shall bid God 'ield us for your pains, / And thank us for your trouble" (1.6.13-15). This is a courtesy Duncan does not extend even to her husband: "I have begun to plant thee, and will labour / To make thee full of growing" (1.4.28-29). While Lady Macbeth is highly respected within her

domestic sphere, she is consciously excluded from matters of political importance, as evidenced by the thanes' treatment of her after Duncan's body is discovered:

LADY. What's the business,

That such a hideous trumpet calls to parley

The sleepers of the house? Speak, speak.

MACDUFF. O gentle lady,

'Tis not for you to hear what I can speak:

The repetition in a woman's ear

Would murder as it fell. (2.3.81-86)

Due to her gender, Lady Macbeth is not considered fit even to hear what has happened in her own home. Despite her proximity to those in power, this stereotyping precludes Lady Macbeth from any direct influence over matters of state.

What power Lady Macbeth does have derives from her influence over her husband, and even this is subject to gendered limitations. Macbeth does not consistently include her in decision making. While Macbeth generally treats Lady Macbeth as a partner, it is not an equal partnership as he can ultimately choose to what degree she will be involved in decisions. Although the two communicate well while they are collaborating on the murder, Macbeth begins to withdraw from her again in Act 3, refusing to confide in her about his plans for Banquo, and telling her to "be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck" (3.2.46). Given the mental distress that both he and Lady Macbeth have suffered in the aftermath of Duncan's murder, Macbeth's reluctance to lay more murders on her conscience is understandable, yet it is indicative of the same condescending attitude that Macduff displays in the earlier passage. Macbeth's use of the diminutive, if affectionate, *chuck* further indicates his renewed dominance in the relationship.

Although relatively innocuous, this moment exposes the fundamental inequality of their partnership: Macbeth can act independently of Lady Macbeth, but she cannot act independently of him. Absent her ability to influence her husband, Lady Macbeth is powerless.

Lady Macbeth occupies an ambiguous, and often outright contradictory position within the play that defies easy categorization. She is not a straightforward villain, though she displays many villainous characteristics, resulting in a bifurcated theatrical and critical tradition where her character is concerned. This uncertainty surrounding her villainy (or possible victimhood) stems in part from her inconsistent use of manipulative tactics throughout the play. While at times a masterful manipulator – when, for example, she circumvents her husband's moral objections to regicide by demolishing and then tactically rebuilding his sense of self-worth – Lady Macbeth does not employ manipulation when other methods of influence are available to her, nor can she manipulate others with the same level of skill she displays with her husband. When Lady Macbeth turns to manipulation in Act 1, Scene 7, it is only after Macbeth has rebuffed her attempts at good-faith engagement, and she continues to favour more direct discourse in the aftermath of the murder. Lady Macbeth's variable use of manipulative discourse results from a need to navigate the power imbalance between herself and Macbeth. As an ambitious aristocratic woman she occupies an ambiguous position; she is held in high esteem yet she is simultaneously limited in what she can practically do, even by her husband who, although he treats her as his partner, is ultimately free to dictate the terms of their partnership. Additionally, Act 1, Scene 7 notwithstanding, Lady Macbeth demonstrates a limited ability to manipulate others when she is forced to improvise, as her implausible and damaging lies in the banquet scene demonstrate. This too is tied, ultimately, to her dependence on her husband, as any attempt to manipulate others must do so without damaging his reputation, greatly limiting what she can say. This need to

navigate societal norms results in Lady Macbeth attempting to influence others in a manner that is inconsistent in both method and effectiveness, and this can partially explain the bifurcated critical and theatrical traditions that have emerged around her.

Chapter 3. “Methinks there is much reason in his sayings:” Antony’s Complicit Audience

Julius Caesar presents a vision of a society brought low and reshaped by manipulative discourse. Shakespeare dramatizes the last days of the Roman Republic through the political manipulations that bring about its fall. Whether in private conversation between the conspirators or the public speeches that follow Caesar’s death, manipulation drives the plot of the play. Andrew Hadfield writes that “Shakespeare’s Rome represents a necrotic body politic that has abandoned its healthy republican institutions and values, allowing its citizens to lapse into vice […] secrecy, contempt for the citizenry, the decline of the art of persuasion, and so on” (182-183). While no party in the play is innocent of these vices, Marc Antony displays an exceptional ability to capitalize on this situation by manipulating the public to his own ends. While Iago is Shakespeare’s most notorious manipulator, Antony is arguably his most successful, considering the simple fact that Antony remains alive and well at the end of the play, having reshaped society to his own advantage. As Hadfield notes “Antony uses one of the most important cultural and political legacies of the republic, public oratory, to help destroy the republic” (181). Although Antony delivers his oration to a crowd rather than an individual, his tactics largely anticipate the individualized manipulations in Shakespeare’s later tragedies. While Brutus and Antony are both capable rhetoricians, Antony is a far superior manipulator, able to communicate ideas implicitly and draw his audience into discourse with him, putting them unknowingly in the position of making his arguments for him. Brutus decrees “believe me for mine honour,” but Antony tells the plebeians only “that which you yourselves do know,” (3.2.14-15, 217). Antony not only convinces the plebeians to mutiny against Brutus, but to believe that they came to the decision on their own, making them active participants in the downfall of the republic. Antony manipulates the plebeians primarily by exploiting the Politeness Principle, particularly the maxims of

Approbation and Modesty, feigning support for the conspirators while subtly shifting the context in which the plebeians consider Caesar's assassination in order to undermine Brutus's credibility and grant himself control of the mob.

Antony engages the plebeians in a mix of public oratory and dialogue; however, most recent scholarship has focused on the rhetoric of his oration rather than his interactions with the plebeians. Recent scholarship on the speech tends to focus on the question of why Antony's rhetoric triumphs over Brutus's, and the ethical implications of Antony's success for the art of rhetoric. Dominic Cheetham offers a detailed comparative study of Brutus and Antony's rhetorical strategies, emphasizing the similarity of the devices they employ but Antony's more "coherent, structured, and predictive" utilization of these forms (128). Philip G. Styrt on the other hand emphasizes Antony's implicit evocation of political factionalism in addressing his speech first and foremost to "friends" rather than "Romans" as Brutus does (296). Miranda Thomas and Xinyao Xiao are more critical of Antony in their respective interpretations, equating Antony's rhetoric with a theatrical performance complete with an array of affective gestures, props, and carefully timed pauses (Thomas 22, Xiao 278-279). These scholars' observations are largely consistent with a pragmatic, context-selection-focused reading of Antony's address, but they treat the plebeians as a passive audience to Antony's performance rather than active participants in his manipulative discourse. In *Rome and Rhetoric*, Garry Wills offers an analysis of Antony and Brutus's speeches which does take the plebeians into account to some degree. Wills is unusually sympathetic to Antony and harsh in his treatment of Brutus, writing "[Brutus's] rhetoric is so overdone that it approaches what is comic elsewhere in Shakespeare. And there is another thing to notice about it. It is all about himself. Antony's speech will be all about Caesar – what he conquered, how he loved, what he leaves his countrymen" (54). Wills

finds in Antony's rhetoric traces of the Socratic method[1], particularly in his employment of irony to raise doubt, noting "Antony reads his audience – he waits for the basis to take his next step. He moves with them, building on their reactions. He has engaged them in a joint enquiry" (86-88). However what Wills describes as joint enquiry bears a strong resemblance to Greenblatt's description of Iago's demonic sensitivity (Greenblatt, *Self-Fashioning* 235). Antony may present his interactions with the plebeians as joint enquiry, but in practice he is merely coaching them toward a predetermined conclusion. While pragmatic analysis and rhetorical analysis are complementary to each other, a rhetorical approach tends to situate the plebeians as passive recipients of Antony's discourse, whereas pragmatics allows for greater consideration of the plebeians as active participants in his manipulative discourse.

Shakespeare dramatizes Roman accounts of Antony's funeral oration, creating a scene that is influenced by historical sources, yet distinctly Shakespearean in its execution. Although Plutarch offers multiple accounts of Caesar's funeral, he dwells only briefly on Antony's speech in his *Lives* of Brutus and Antony:

> Perceiving that his words moved the common people to compassion, he framed his eloquence to make their hearts yearn the more; and taking Caesar's gown all bloody in his hands, he laid it open to the sight of them all, showing what a number of cuts and holes it had upon it. Therewithal the people fell presently into such a rage and mutiny that there was no more order kept among the common people. ("Life of Marcus Brutus" 129)

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[1] Wills' observation of the Socratic method at work in Antony's attempt to prove that Brutus is not honourable suggests that he is engaged in context-expanding persuasion rather than context-constraining manipulation; however the fact that Antony does not actually believe his own claim, evidenced by his later praise of Brutus's honesty (5.5.69-76), would seem to preclude this possibility. It may be, rather, that Antony uses elements of the Socratic method in a manipulative manner. This is another example of how similar good-faith discourse and manipulation often appear in Shakespeare's works (see ch. 1).

> When he saw that the people were very glad and desirous also to hear Caesar spoken of and his praises uttered, he mingled his oration with lamentable words and by amplifying of matters did greatly move their hearts and affections unto pity and compassion. In fine, to conclude his oration, he unfolded before the whole assembly the bloody garments of the dead, thrust through in many places with their swords, and called the malefactors cruel and cursed murderers. ("Life of Marcus Antonius" 188-189)

In his dramatization, Shakespeare makes two significant deviations from Plutarch's account of Caesar's funeral which enhance the sophistication of Antony's manipulation. Firstly, he moves the reading of Caesar's will to the climax of the scene, making it the master stroke that drives the plebeians to riot, whereas in Plutarch the will is read in advance of the funeral and invites sympathy for Caesar rather than anger toward the conspirators (Plutarch 128). Secondly, Shakespeare's Antony is more subtle in his accusations against Caesar's assassins, maintaining a veneer of politeness toward them and making the case that they are "cruel and cursed murderers" mostly implicitly. Aldo Setaioli argues that Appian's more detailed account of Antony's address is also a potential source for Shakespeare based on shared details not found in Plutarch (288). Setaioli writes,

> [Antony's] speech as reported by Appian is frequently interrupted by the description of Antony's gestures, of the audience's reactions, and of Antony's adapting his attitude accordingly – not unlike his behavior in Shakespeare's play. One capital element, however, seems to have escaped the scholars' attention, namely the evident and repeated theatrical references in Appian, which may have provided a direct inspiration for the playwright, who, so to speak, found the speech already cast in the mold of drama. (287)

Another detail from Appian of significance to Shakespeare's use of the Politeness Principle is Antony's retraction of controversial statements: "At these plaine speeches spoken agaynst the Senate, an vproare being made, Antony waxed colde, and recanted hys wordes" (Appian 43). Although the context is different, the tactic is the same, and Shakespeare employs it in a more expansive and sophisticated manner than Appian describes. Elements of Antony's manipulative strategy appear in both Plutarch and Appian, yet neither present anything as elaborate as the speech that Shakespeare provides.

In his funeral oration, Antony capitalizes on the restrictions that the conspirators and plebeians have placed on him, using the limitations placed on his speech as cover for his manipulative tactics. Brutus has granted Antony permission to speak at Caesar's funeral, but under strict conditions that he

> Shall not in your funeral speech blame us,
>
> But speak all good you can devise of Caesar,
>
> And say you do't by our permission […]
>
> In the same pulpit whereto I am going
>
> After my speech is ended. (3.1.245-251)

Antony could not speak his mind openly to the plebeians if he wanted, nor would it be wise to do so. Brutus's final condition, that Antony speak after him, ensures that Brutus will control the context in which the plebeians hear Antony's speech. Indeed, Brutus's speech endears him to the plebeians to such a degree that they are prepared to "let him be Caesar" (3.2.51). Antony cannot openly criticize anything that Brutus has said lest they turn against him, as they are already inclined to do, with one plebeian exclaiming that "'Twere best he speak no harm of Brutus here" (3.2.68). Instead he works within the conditions that Brutus has set, claiming that "I come to

bury Caesar, not to praise him" (3.2.75). Antony uses these restrictions to his advantage, holding strictly to the pretense that he is in support of Brutus and Cassius while gradually undermining them. When Antony speaks critically of the conspirators, he does so under the guise of raw emotion straining against the restrictions to which he is subject. He pauses often and tries to back away from claims that he has made, allowing the plebeians to interpret them as genuine outbursts driven by grief rather than manipulative tactics. Such is the case when Antony shames them for their fickleness in turning against Caesar:

> You all did love him once, not without cause:
> What cause withholds you then to mourn for him?
> O judgment, thou art fled to brutish beasts
> And men have lost their reason. Bear with me.
> My heart is in the coffin there with Caesar
> And I must pause till it come back to me. (3.2.103-108)

While this pause primarily serves to give the plebeians a chance to consider his words, it also provides cover if any take offense. As Caesar's grieving friend, Antony invites sympathy, and by apparently losing his train of thought, he creates the impression that he lacks "the power of speech / to stir men's blood," as he will later claim (3.2.215-216). In so doing, Antony lowers the plebeians' defenses while reminding them that they too have cause to grieve for Caesar. Unable to challenge the conspirators openly, Antony instead works within the conditions that they and the plebeians have set out, presenting himself as a grief-stricken friend (which he genuinely is) trying to work through what has happened, rather than a cynical manipulator (which he also undoubtedly is). As Michael E. Mooney notes, "he is simultaneously acting and not acting" (44). Antony uses genuine grief to quell the hostility of the plebeians, providing cover for and

reinforcing his manipulative tactics. Antony thus is able to undermine the context that Brutus has established, while maintaining a façade of sufficient ambivalence to avoid offending Brutus's sympathizers.

In keeping with his feigned ambivalence toward the conspirators, Antony keeps his early utterances ambiguous, relying on the double-meaning of his words to create plausibly deniable implicatures. Gilbert offers a particularly useful analysis of Antony's strategic exploitation of the Co-operative Principle's maxims of Quantity and Manner in order to create ambiguity in the first segment of his funeral oration:

> The manner of this opening utterance is obscure, although it appears to be unequivocal in sense. Antony places together, throughout the speech, incompatible statements whose implications have a deliberate rhetorical effect. 'I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him' appears to mean, in its position in the utterance, 'I am here to pronounce the funeral address, that is all; I have no intention to glorify Caesar or pretend that he was any better than he was.' […] However, his technique here is to obscure the connection between these short simple assertions, and so develop alternative meanings for them. What *is* the evil that survives a man's death: is it merely the evil actions he has done, or the memory of them, as Brutus appears to have suggested, or is Antony referring, in an oblique way, to the assassins themselves […] The assassins survive Caesar; the good actions of Caesar are forgotten and buried with him. Is this covert criticism of Brutus and the assassins? (312-313)

While Antony's words are seemingly straightforward, they demand sufficient interpretation to allow for alternative, more politically dangerous meanings. This works to Antony's advantage in dealing with the still-hostile plebeians. His words may mollify those in support of Brutus, but

they also subtly encourage his audience to rethink their assessment of Brutus's motives, a topic that Antony will address with growing explicitness as the speech progresses. The statement "The evil men do lives after them; / The good is oft interred with their bones" also serves to refocus the context of Antony's speech by reminding the audience that Caesar did do a great deal of good for Rome, laying the groundwork for another central theme of the speech. Additionally, Antony's use of ambiguity early in the speech captures the attention of his audience, who must engage actively in interpretation of his speech, rather than passively listening, as they did with Brutus. By subtly violating the maxims of Quantity and Manner, Antony hints at doubts about Brutus's integrity and motives, setting the stage for more explicit criticism later in the speech.

Antony's manipulation relies on exploitation of the Politeness Principle as much, if not more so, than the Co-operative Principle, as the social expectation that he will preserve polite beliefs about Brutus provides cover for his manipulative tactics. As Leech notes, the Politeness Principle acts as a corrective to the Co-operative Principle, balancing the need for clear communication with the need to avoid causing offense (80). However, Gilbert notes that manipulators can also take advantage of this principle to cover up malicious violations of the Co-operative Principle (310). Under the premise of maximising polite beliefs about Brutus, Antony is able to cast him as the dishonest party rather than himself. Antony does this particularly by exploiting the maxims of Approbation, to "maximise praise of [the] other," and Modesty, to "minimize praise of self" or "maximise dispraise of self" (Leech 135-136). Antony insists upon his respect for Brutus, and his own inferiority as an orator, two claims which are patently false, yet justifiable in compliance with the maxims of Approbation and Modesty. Moreover, Antony is deliberately ostentatious in his adherence to the Maxim of Approbation, which Gilbert argues helps to instill the very impolite beliefs Antony claims to be trying to avoid. He gives the

example of Antony's insistence that "I speak not to disprove what Brutus spoke, /But here I am to speak what I do know" (3.2.101-102). Gilbert argues that Antony

> denies the implication that everyone listening to the speech can recognise: that he does in effect deny what Brutus has said. His appeal here to the Politeness Principle, attempting to fend off impolite beliefs, only focuses on them more clearly, because of this appeal to the maxim of quality. (314)

By drawing attention to the fact that politeness prevents him from saying all that he would like, Antony strengthens the credibility of that which he can say and draws attention away from the fact that his arguments thus far consist primarily of speculation rather than substance.

Antony exploits the Approbation Maxim in order to produce an effect opposite to the maxim's intent. The more he insists upon Brutus's honour, the more he implicitly undermines the view of Brutus as an honourable man, and the more credible he makes himself appear in contrast. As Antony's criticism of the conspirators becomes more overt, so too does his insistence that polite beliefs be maintained about them above all else:

> If I were disposed to stir
> Your hearts to mutiny and rage,
> I should do Brutus wrong, and Cassius wrong,
> Who (you all know) are honourable men.
> I will not do them wrong. I rather choose
> To wrong the dead, to wrong myself and you,
> Than I will wrong such honourable men. (3.2.123-128)

This suggestion that both Caesar and the plebeians are being wronged to the benefit of Brutus and Cassius erases any lingering ambiguity about what side Antony is on, signalling to the

plebeians to disregard his claims that the conspirators are honourable as mere politeness rather than sincere support, and clarifying that his earlier ambiguous statements were indeed critical of Brutus. Additionally, as the plebeians know that he speaks only with Brutus's permission, the suggestion Antony wrongs himself and them implies that his praise of Brutus is at least partially coerced, creating a context in which he appears more trustworthy than the conspirators.

A significant corollary to Antony's exploitation of the Approbation Maxim is his use of irony as a means of shifting the context in which the plebeians consider his and Brutus's remarks. Sonia S'hiri argues that "Marc Antony, thus, continues to recontextualize the utterance 'Brutus is an honourable man' as the speech proceeds, leading the audience ultimately to perceive it as ironical on the seventh mention and reject it of their own accord" (131). With each repetition the phrase "honourable man" becomes less impactful, an approbative affectation of the speech rather than an expression of sincere belief. On top of this, in each occurrence of the phrase after the first, Antony contrasts it with an utterance that undercuts the claim:

> He was my friend, faithful and just to me;
>
> But Brutus says, he was ambitious,
>
> And Brutus is an honourable man.
>
> He hath brought many captives home to Rome
>
> Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill:
>
> Did this in Caesar seem ambitious?
>
> When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept:
>
> Ambition should be made of sterner stuff:
>
> Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;
>
> And Brutus is an honourable man.

> You all did see that on the Lupercal
>
> I thrice presented him a kingly crown,
>
> Which he did thrice refuse: was this ambition?
>
> Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;
>
> And, sure, he is an honourable man. (3.2.86-100)

Each of these loaded questions brings out the irony of the accompanying statement. This manipulation operates at two levels, undermining first the idea that Caesar was ambitious, and second that Brutus is honourable. In each case, Antony gives an example of a good thing Caesar did and challenges the plebeians to say that it was ambitious, with each example being more difficult to answer yes to than the last. Caesar's many military conquests could certainly have been driven by personal ambition, but in framing them in terms of their benefit to Rome, Antony precludes his audience from considering them in that light.[2] Likewise, Caesar's compassion for the poor has no logical relation to whether or not he was ambitious, yet by claiming "ambition ought to be made of sterner stuff," Antony exploits the Maxim of Relation to implicate a connection between these two ideas. Together, these two claims suggest an image of Caesar as a dutiful and compassionate citizen rather than the aspiring tyrant that Brutus has made him out to be. Finally, Antony cites his only concrete example of Caesar behaving unambitiously, which when taken in the context that he has established, appears as irrefutable proof that Caesar was not ambitious. With each question, Antony further constrains the context in which the plebeians consider Caesar's ambition. His (presumably true) claims about Caesar establish a pattern of behaviour incompatible with Brutus's portrayal of him, but which consciously excludes any contradictory evidence, such as Caesar's putting to silence of dissident tribunes (1.2.285). The

[2] This claim by Antony is distinctly at odds with Plutarch's attribution to Caesar of "an insatiable desire to reign, with a senseless covetousness to be the best man in the world" ("Life Marcus Antonius" 182).

use of loaded questions further strengthens the context that Antony is trying to establish, putting the onus on the plebeians to disprove what he is saying. All of this serves to recontextualize Brutus's earlier speech, raising doubts about the truth of his central claim, that Caesar was dangerously ambitious: a claim which the plebeians at the time considered self-evident enough to accept without Brutus having to provide proof. All of this underpins Antony's overarching goal in the passage, which is implicitly to attack Brutus's character by ironizing the phrase "Brutus is an honourable man." As he undermines the plebeians' confidence in their belief that Caesar was ambitious, Antony continually returns to the fact that "Brutus says he was ambitious." Through the repetition of this phrase, Antony implicates, falsely, that there is no evidence of Caesar's ambition beyond Brutus's word. Additionally, by equating Brutus's word with his honour, Antony implicitly suggests that if Caesar were not ambitious, then Brutus cannot be an honourable man. As Antony proceeds to demolish the central premise of Brutus's argument, his adherence to the Approbation Maxim takes on an increasingly ironic tone, suggesting more strongly with each repetition that Brutus has lied to the plebeians.

Antony uses the Modesty Maxim in an opposite manner, portraying himself as humble and honest in contrast to Brutus. While Antony intentionally calls attention to his own use of the Approbation Maxim so as to encourage the plebeians to doubt its truthfulness, he is more subtle in his use of the Modesty Maxim, as he wishes his self-deprecatory statements to be taken literally. He wants the plebeians to believe that he is less cunning than he really is, that

> I am no orator, as Brutus is,
>
> But, as you know me all, a plain blunt man
>
> That love my friend, and that they know full well
>
> That gave me public leave to speak of him.

For I have neither wit, nor words, nor worth,

Action, nor utterance, nor the power of speech

To stir men's blood. (3.2.209-216)

Incensed as they are by the sight of Caesar's wounds, the obvious falseness of Antony's claim is lost on the plebeians. Antony evidently has great power "to stir men's blood" but there is a kernel of truth in the claim that he is not an orator like Brutus. As Don J. Kraemer points out, Brutus relies far more heavily on rhetorical figures of speech than Antony, who although rhetorically skilled, is much more understated in his use of rhetorical forms (171). Brutus employs figures of speech skillfully, but with "thought-numbing uniformity," according to Kraemer (171). Brutus, as well, carefully avoids making any implicature, while Antony makes his point almost entirely through implicature (Kraemer 171-172). Antony speaks plainly and shifts the intellectual labour of interpreting his ideas onto the plebeians, allowing it to appear that he has not employed any rhetorical tactics at all and the plebeians have come to their own conclusion. Antony can thus believably claim that

I tell you that which you yourselves do know,

Show you sweet Caesar's wounds, poor poor dumb mouths,

And bid them speak for me. (3.2.217-219)

Antony guides the plebeians to the conclusion that he wants, but carefully avoids telling them what to think. Antony uses the Modesty Maxim in order to downplay his own skill as an orator which allows him to cast himself as a more trustworthy figure than Brutus.

Antony's exploitation of the Modesty Maxim works in conjunction with the Approbation Maxim to allow Antony to cast Brutus, rather than himself, as a manipulator. Having successfully portrayed himself as the inferior orator, Antony weaponizes this perceived

difference in their rhetorical skills against Brutus, casting Brutus as a manipulator and himself as non-threatening, honest actor:

> But were I Brutus,
>
> And Brutus Antony, there were an Antony
>
> Would ruffle up your spirits and put a tongue
>
> In every wound of Caesar that should move
>
> The stones of Rome to rise and mutiny. (3.2.219-223)

By minimizing belief in his own rhetorical skills, while maximising belief in Brutus's, Antony is effectively able to reverse their roles. This exploitation of the Politeness Principle serves to distract from his own manipulative discourse by drawing attention to Brutus's more readily identifiable rhetorical strategies, while simultaneously pre-empting any counter-argument by the conspirators whom the plebeians are now inclined to distrust. This latter goal is particularly evident in Antony's claim that the conspirators "will no doubt with reasons answer you" (3.2.208). That the conspirators would offer reasons to justify Caesar's assassination is both obvious and unsuspicious but in the context Antony is establishing, it takes on a more sinister implication: that the skilled orator Brutus and his compatriots will try to manipulate the plebeians into supporting them. Antony uses the Approbation and Modesty Maxims in a manner quite contradictory to how Leech describes them, using the guise of politeness to sow distrust toward Brutus and win the plebeians over to his cause.

Throughout his oration, Antony avoids making any direct argument, instead guiding the plebeians to his desired conclusion while maintaining the pretense that they are fully in control of the situation. Antony's manipulation stands out among Shakespeare's theatrical manipulations

for the fact that the playwright directly shows the reasoning of the manipulatees as they are brought under the sway of the manipulator:

> 1 PLEBEIAN. Methinks there is much reason in his sayings.
>
> 2 PLEBEIAN. If thou consider rightly of the matter,
>
> Caesar has had great wrong.
>
> 3 PLEBEIAN. Has he, masters?
>
> I fear there will a worse come in his place.
>
> 4 PLEBEIAN. Mark ye his words? He would not take the crown,
>
> Therefore 'tis certain he was not ambitious. (3.2.109-114)

The plebeians here make the arguments that they themselves had previously forbidden Antony to utter, seizing upon the slim evidence that he has provided to refute Brutus's claims. The plebeians fully believe that they are rationally approaching the matter at hand, although as Mooney points out, "there have been few reasons in Antony's speech, and the plebeians do not 'consider it rightly.' […] Antony has appealed first to his audience's feelings of 'love' and only secondarily to its 'reason'" (45). Mooney's contention that in *Julius Caesar* "intellect often finds reasons to justify emotional decisions" rings particularly true in this scene (38). Antony has not presented an argument, but rather recontextualized the subject of the assassination to focus on Caesar's better qualities and shamed the plebeians for their hasty judgement of him. He has laid out some evidence to support his implicit position but made no effort to draw an explicit link between these points. That work he leaves to the plebeians. The latter three plebeians explicate Antony's implicatures from the first segment of the speech: that Caesar was not ambitious, that he was murdered unjustly, and that a worse ruler, presumably Brutus whom the plebeians have

already offered to make Caesar, will succeed him. Antony lays out the points he wishes to make in a heightened emotional context and leaves it to his audience to argue his case amongst themselves.

Antony further encourages the plebeians to argue the point he wishes to make by offering performative, but deliberately ineffectual opposition to the plebeians in order to put them on the defensive and further inflame their anger toward the conspirators. Antony achieves this primarily using Caesar's will, the promise of which keeps the plebeians engaged and argumentative. Antony introduces the will in the second segment of his speech, after some of the audience have begun to argue in his favour but before they are wholly swept away by emotion. The context in which Antony presents the will is carefully cultivated to elicit a strong reaction from the plebeians:

> Let but the commons hear this testament –
>
> Which, pardon me, I do not mean to read –
>
> And they would go and kiss dead Caesar's wounds. (3.2.131-133)

Antony builds up the significance of the will, even while insisting that he will not share its contents. The plebeians willingly take Antony's bait, demanding to hear the will (3.2.139-140). The dispute over the will puts the plebeians in the unusual position of being on the defensive while seemingly in control of the situation. Antony justifies his reluctance to read the will first out of concern for the plebeians themselves, arguing "It is not meet you know how Caesar loved you," and second out of concern that he not "wrong the honourable men / whose daggers have stabbed Caesar" (3.2.142, 3.2.153-154). This puts the plebeians in the position of having to argue against these two justifications. The former claim also informs the context of the latter, contrasting Caesar's love for the Roman people with the explicit defence of his murderers.

Significantly, it is the fourth plebeian, up to this point the most vocal supporter of Brutus, who answers Antony that "they were traitors: honourable men?" (3.2.154). In setting himself against the plebeians even while controlling the context of the conversation, Antony further ensures that they will make his arguments for him.

Despite achieving complete conversational dominance over the plebeians, Antony holds firmly to the pretence that they are still in control of the situation, thereby allowing them to believe that they are drawing their own conclusions. Although Antony forces the plebeians to argue against him, he also maintains an attitude of deference toward them throughout the exchange:

> You will compel me then to read the will?
>
> Then make a ring about the corpse of Caesar,
>
> And let me show you him that made the will.
>
> Shall I descend? And will you give me leave? (3.2.156-160)

Antony's formal deference masks the fact that by this point he has achieved complete conversational dominance. Having fixed his audience's attention on the will, the answer to both questions must be affirmative. Antony simply uses them to gain the support of the plebeians for what he already intends to do. The plebeians, by contrast, unquestioningly comply with Antony's imperative sentences, even repeating his instructions to each other:

> ANTONY. Nay, press not so upon me. Stand far off.
>
> ALL. Stand back. Room, bear back. (3.2.165-166).

Whatever deference Antony may show them is nothing more than a performance, a disarming tactic to put his audience off their guard as he works to set up the context for his eventual reading

of the will. While Antony allows the plebeians to believe that they have all the power, his ability to control the context of their dialogue ensures that they will comply with his wishes.

Antony goes beyond merely achieving the outpouring of violent anger he desires, instead prolonging his manipulation until he has fully established his desired contexts and thus focused the plebeians incoherent rage firmly on the conspirators. Although his display of Caesar's wounds accompanied by vivid, and most likely invented, descriptions of each conspirator's role in the murder is sufficient to bring the plebeians to a state of incoherent and murderous rage, still Antony maintains the pretense of trying to hold them back. Even though such an outpouring of violence is precisely the goal of Antony's manipulation, he twice more implores them to refrain, first reminding them that "they that have done this deed are honourable," and then by reminding them that "you have forgot the will I told you of" (3.2.205, 231). This gives Antony an opportunity to secure his dominance over the plebeians, pre-empting the possibility of counter-manipulations by the conspirators. The final two passages of his oration conclude the implicit arguments made throughout: the penultimate passage makes the point that Brutus cannot be trusted, and the final emphasizes Caesar's love for the Roman people through the contents of the will. With each successive passage, the plebeians' desire to do violence to the conspirators becomes more specific, and more in line with the narrative that Antony is trying to establish. When Antony shows the wounds of Caesar, "marred as you see with traitors" (3.2.195), they are incoherent with rage:

> Revenge! About! Seek! Burn! Fire! Kill! Slay!
>
> Let not a traitor live! (3.2.199-200)

Yet after Antony speaks again, the plebeians become more articulate and focused in response to his suggestion that Brutus, in his position, would "move the stones of Rome to rise and mutiny"

(3.2.222-223). Antony offers the plebeians a target for their rage, and a carefully worded non-suggestion as to the actions they might take. The plebeians seize on Antony's implicature, declaring

ALL. We'll mutiny.

1 Plebeian. We'll burn the house of Brutus. (3.2.224)

Antony's approach also helps to further conceal his role in inciting the plebeians to riot, allowing them to make the final decision themselves, over his apparent opposition. While their first two attempts to riot are preceded by clearly inflammatory language on Antony's part, the final passage of his oration is focused entirely on the generosity of Caesar's will, and concludes simply "Here was a Caesar: when comes such another?" (3.2.243). This again subtly shifts the context in which the plebeians view the conspirators, and further focuses their violent intentions:

We'll burn his body in the holy place,

And with the brands fire all the traitors' houses.

Take up the body. (3.2.245-247)

The plebeians do not substantially change their plan, but broaden its scope and alter its context so that the destruction that follows becomes a quasi-religious honouring of Caesar rather than a mere act of revenge; an ironic inversion of the conspirators' own desire to be "sacrificers, but not butchers" (2.1.165). In their fervor, the plebeians forget Antony entirely, leaving him behind as they carry the body away. Although Antony has clearly incited the riot, he does not participate in it, nor has he openly encouraged it. In his reading of the will, Antony refrains from the inflammatory language that characterizes the earlier passages, effectively distancing himself from the decision to which he has coached the plebeians, and relying on the emotive power of the will in the context he has already established in order to spur them to action.

The success of Antony's funeral oration lies not only in his knowledge of rhetoric, but in his understanding of the plebeians' as active participants in his discourse. While Brutus' rhetoric is successful in winning over the plebeians for a time, Antony quickly turns the crowd inexorably against him. Given that both characters employ a litany of rhetorical devices, rhetoric alone cannot adequately explain why Brutus fails to triumph over Antony. Pragmatics reveals another layer of Antony's discourse that is invisible to rhetorical analysis. Antony recognizes the agency of his audience, and understands how to engage them in a way that is beneficial to himself. He is sensitive to how the plebeians react to his words and can thus subtly shape the context in which they consider the matter of Caesar's assassination. Antony does this primarily through exploitation of the Politeness Principle, using a façade of support for the conspirators as an opportunity to undermine their arguments in his funeral address. Although the plebeians are not at all inclined to hear Brutus criticized, Antony is able to circumvent their hostility by employing the Approbation Maxim in an ironic manner, condemning Brutus with excessive praise while recasting him as the manipulative party rather than Antony. Antony uses his sincere grief at the death of his friend as cover for his attacks against Brutus, disguising his criticisms as emotional outbursts from which he promptly tries to distance himself. Antony treats the plebeians not as a passive audience but as interlocutors to be engaged. He approaches them cautiously, observes how they react, and builds upon those reactions in order to draw them into a dialogue, the context of which he can control. By exploiting the Politeness Principle, and in particular the maxims of Approbation and Modesty, Antony is effectively able to undermine Brutus and gain control over the mob without appearing to do so. In so doing, Antony makes the plebeians complicit in the downfall of the republic.

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