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TRAGEDY AND THEODICY: THE ROLE OF THE SUFFERER FROM JOB TO AHAB
BY NORA CARROLL

A master's thesis submitted to the graduate faculty in Masters of Arts in Liberal Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New York

2018

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by

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in satisfaction of the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Tragedy and Theodicy: The Role of the Sufferer from Job to Ahab

A Case Study

By

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Abstract

The character of Job starts in literature, a trope and archetype of the suffering man who potentially gains wisdom through suffering. Job's characterization informs a comparison to Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, Shakespeare's *King Lear*, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and finally Melville's *Moby-Dick*. These versions of Job rally, fight, and rebel against a universe that was once loving and fair towards a more chaotic and nihilistic one. Job's suffering is on the mark of all tragedy because he not only experiences a downfall, he gains wisdom through universalizing his torment. The Job trope not only stresses the role of suffering, it links theodicy ("the problem of suffering") with tragedy, in which the Job character experiences a progression from innocence to experience, foolishness to wisdom, blindness towards exaltation. As this trope progresses, author's like Milton and Melville complicate the role of the sufferer by presenting false Job's, who experience suffering but learn nothing from it. Scholars like William Empson, Harold Bloom and Stanley Fish provide insight into the theological and literary underpinnings of the Job archetype in literature, which illuminates the connection between theodicy and tragedy.

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Introduction

Tragedy, as described by Aristotle, with Sophocles in mind, happens to characters that fully understand their own suffering. The effect of tragedy on the audience inspires “horror and pity at the incidents.”(Aristotle 358) While tragedy is of a different literary style than theodicy, the two share one element in common: suffering. In understanding how tragedy compares to theodicy, *The Book of Job* is essential. Each new tragic protagonist in literature is a version of Job. That is, Job provides and defines the archetypal foundation of men who suffer greatly and demand answers for their torment. Job haunts Sophocles Oedipus, Shakespeare’s King Lear, Milton’s Satan, and Melville’s Captain Ahab. His mark is on all tragic suffering, in which there is an immense schism between a benevolent and loving cosmology and chaotic and cruel universe. *The Book of Job* spiritualized unjust suffering and made it more sympathetic to the reader because Job rallies against a cruel and unjust God. In a dramatic context the poet of *Job* displays a great range of mood, from despair and bitterness to exalted insight. Job is the father of all theodicy and to an extent tragedy, where the stress is on the inner dynamics of man's response to destiny and the cruelty of the cosmos, a theme that is related to theodicy.

This thesis explores the connection between theodicy and tragedy in *The Book of Job*, *Oedipus Rex* and *Oedipus at Colonus*, *King Lear*, *Paradise Lost*, and *Moby-Dick*. This thesis argues that Job begins a tradition in literature of the suffering male who gains potential wisdom in his suffering. This trope, starting with Job, offers a comparison to Oedipus Rex, the fallen king of Thebes, Shakespeare’s King Lear, Milton’s Satan and finally Captain Ahab. All these characters suffer greatly and are pawns in a larger cosmic chess game. Yet, their pain and torment allows the reader to fully empathize with them. Most importantly, their flaws and failures make them appear completely human. The similarities and differences of these

characters are analyzed as well as their literary functions, and their shared themes: the existence of evil and sin, suffering, experiencing moral degradation through changes of the body and new values that are learned from suffering.

The theological problems that arise from suffering are centuries old and writers in the past and present struggle with the rectifying the benevolence of God with the realistic suffering of the world. These writers, from Sophocles to Melville wrestle with the same questions as the author of *The Book of Job* in that suffering exacerbates mental anguish and human dilemma instead of emphasizing individual suffering. For both Melville and Milton the relationship with God becomes more radical and antagonistic and the role of the sufferer becomes more angry and volatile towards God. Yet, these sufferers whether they are a captain of a whaling vessel or a fallen angel illustrate the same dilemma and theological concerns of Job; how can God remain good and loving when there is suffering in the world?

Chapter One Job: the Father of Theodicy.

The Book of Job is a literary model for underserved suffering. Richard Sewell stresses Job's importance in the literary canon. "More than Prometheus or Oedipus, Job is the universal symbol for the western imagination of the mystery of underserved suffering." (Sewell 9)

Underserved suffering implies that there is a just universe and cosmological order which insures a balance between rewards and punishments. When that suffering cannot be explained and feels underserved questions about justice, the nature of the universe and a benign and loving God are raised. This chapter explores how *The Book of Job* originated the importance of theodicy, the role of the sufferer, and how suffering can create anger, bitterness and even rebellion against a just and loving cosmological order. Most importantly, this chapter expresses how Job, unlike previous theodicies potentially gains wisdom through his suffering.

Job in the prologue and epilogue (which is in prose) is depicted as a patient and understanding man. However, the majority of the book is in poetry in which Job curses the day he was born and passionately demands justice from God. The stylistic change of Job from the prose to the poetic sections complicates the moral understanding of the world for not only Job but for the reader as well. Carol A. Newsom argues that Job is introduced through a didactic narrative, which presents its characters as simply and accessibly without complications. "The aesthetic devices of such a narrative (repetition, idealized exaggeration, simple binary character oppositions, strongly evaluated narrator, etc.) create a moral world of clear values and simple truths. "(Newsom 18) When these simple and rudimentary narrative devices set in for the reader, the author suddenly shifts gears and continues "the story with a form of literary and moral conversation that is much more sophisticated (both aesthetically and in terms of the complexity of its moral vision)". (18) These changes are reflected stylistically; from prose to poetry but more

importantly they require and demand a heightened mental acumen for the reader and for Job himself.

The Book of Job is a theodicy, in which the goodness of God is juxtaposed with a world that is overflowing with suffering. The structure is a wisdom dialogue in which the main character expresses his dissatisfaction and unwarranted suffering towards others, even God himself. The reader too is part of these dialogues and is assigned a complicated and rigorously demanding role. *The Book of Job* as a wisdom dialogue does not act as a user manual for the reader. There is no omniscient narrator who tells the reader what to do, think or feel about Job's dilemma. Nor, do these dialogues seek to answer why God allows evil to exist or suffering to occur. The moral turmoil experienced by Job is reflected back on the reader who like Job demands answers from a higher power. Therefore, *The Book of Job* acts as a double theodicy, for its main character and for the reader alike. Carol A. Newsom juxtaposes the *Book of Job* with the *Babylonian Theodicy* and explores their differences and similarities. She writes:

The Babylonian Theodicy begins straightforwardly with an explicit appeal by the sufferer to his friend... the words of the sufferer that follow are already dialogical, since they are framed in relation to another and in expectation of hearing a response.

(92)

Like Job, the role of suffering is of the utmost importance in *The Babylonian Theodicy* in which the protagonist explains his suffering through anguish and despair. Yet, the functions of these dialogues are vastly different in *The Book of Job*. First, Job does not intend to start a dialogue with his friends. It is initiated by Eliphaz who realizes that he was not invited to speak. These speeches of Job's friends reveal questions and concerns about the omni-benevolence of God as

well as the nature of the universe. speeches of Job's friends reveal questions and concerns about the omni-benevolence of God as well as the nature of the universe.

The author of Job shows a cruel and unforgiving universe in which the protagonist, is forced into psychological exile where he finds no solace or comfort from those closest to him. Job begins to question the goodness of God and the nature of sin and evil when he is physically inflicted with sickness and plague. Before God physically torments him, Job possesses no understanding of suffering, sin or even himself. In Chapter 2, Verse 10, Job rebukes his wife claim to "Blaspheme God and die!" (*The Jewish Study Bible Job 2:10*) He responds, "You talk as any shameless woman might talk! Should we accept only good from God and not accept evil?" (Job 2:10) He suggests that it is foolish to relate to God the basis of any condition, be it good or evil. Job, when sickened by plague, physically embodies sin through affliction and therefore must be displaced. When Job responds to his wife, he is found sitting atop a trash-heap outside the city in Chapter 2, verse 8, where broken pots, ashes and other garbage is dumped. His location is important because it places him with the rejected and destitute and situates him in a place with things that have no place in society.

In chapter 3, Job takes a drastic turn. His anger has percolated to the surface and instead of offering pious phrases, he rages against what he sees as a lack of moral order in the universe. His friends attempt to console him and offer answers as to why he suffers. Eliphaz argues that the world's moral order is fair and just, and if Job repents for his sins that caused his suffering, God will restore his life; Bildad argues that Job needs to universalize his torment in which his insignificant life does not matter much, but the overall well-being of the world does; and Zophar argues that Job cannot know anything about God, since God is transcendent, and thus Job should stop thinking about his suffering and quickly repent. His friends reinforce the idea that the

universe is moral where sinners are punished and the righteous are rewarded, and God is all-loving and just. In chapter 34, Elihu tells Job, “For He pays a man according to his actions, and provides for him according to his conduct; For God surely does not act wickedly.”(Job 34.11-12) Again, Elihu, represents a just and fair moral order, where God is good and benign. Yet, what Job and none of his friends know is that Job’s suffering stems from a wager between God and the Satan, a wager that may come from a capricious and potentially wicked place. More importantly the problem of what Carol A. Newsom calls “the addressable other” (92) highlights the distinction between *The Book of Job* and previous theodicies. When Job breaks his silence he curses the day he was born and finds no solace in his friend’s advice. Carol A. Newsom writes, “The imagery of Job’s curse with its evocation of reversal of creation and its excessive development of the concluding lament into a baroque transvaluation of life and death, suggests that Job’s curse on the day of his birth cannot be decoded as a tacit appeal for rescue”. (93) The dialogue between Job and his friends diminishes when Job begs for death. Furthermore, Newsom’s analysis suggests that there is no dialogue at all between Job and his friends because there is no “addressable other” and Job finds no solace or understanding from his friends words. It’s as if Job is experiencing a deep-seated depression due to the suffering he’s experienced. Those events have become inscribed in his psyche and have consolidated into one composite feeling: anguish.

While Carol A. Newsom’s analysis of Job and how it relates and differs from *The Babylonian Theodicy* is astute and endlessly fascinating, she ignores the problems addressed by Job’s friends. That is Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar play men of faith in that they only understand God through divine retribution: reward and punishment. In short, his friends believe that Job has sinned and is being punished for that transgression. For James L.

Crenshaw, Job's friends believe that "God wounds and heals in disciplinary action." (Crenshaw 96) Whereas, Job states his innocence and logically concludes that God must be unjust and bitterly proclaims that his once loving deity is now lost.

But if I go East, He is not there; West,
 I still do not perceive Him;
 North, since He is concealed, I do not behold
 Him;
 South He is hidden, and I cannot see Him. But
 He knows the way I take; (Job 23:8-10)

Carol A. Newsom states how Job's death wish emphasizes an end to his suffering. Yet, in these dialogues with his friends, Job realizes that death would not allow any vindication for his punishment. In these dialogues Job takes on the role of a lawyer or logician who resolutely believes his suffering is unjust and demands that he present his case before God, like a lawyer before a judge:

Would that I knew how to reach Him,
 How to get to His dwelling-place.
 I would set out my case before Him,
 And fill my mouth with arguments. (Job 23:3-5)

These dialogues between Job and his friends reveal one of the most important aspects of theodicy, the problem of suffering and why God allows that suffering to exist. Job's anger and bitterness towards cosmological injustices, and his demands for answers from God Himself, establish Job as one of the earliest examples of the sufferer who begins to question the fairness of the world. This is perhaps the biggest difference between *The Book of Job* and *The*

Babylonian Theodicy in that “Job is not simply the magnitude of his suffering, but its quality” (Newsom 96). That is Job’s suffering is experienced internally as a form of psychological anguish and torment. Furthermore, the author of *The Book of Job* allows its main character to explicitly address God and ask why He allows underserved suffering to exist.

The divine speeches of God are confounding in that the creator of the world offers no comfort and resolution for Job’s suffering yet it implicitly allows Job to gain wisdom and understanding of his suffering. Also, the role of God is revealed through natural images. He speaks through a tempest that seems to reiterate the power and mystery of God. In His first divine speech God tells Job:

Where were you when I laid the earth’s Foundations?

Speak if you have understanding.

Do you know who fixed its dimensions?

Or who measured it with a line? (Job 38:4-5)

For some scholars, like James L. Crenshaw, God’s first divine speech reads like a mocking harangue, in which there is no reprieve or compassion for the sufferer. Crenshaw writes, “The absence of any explicit reference to humans in the entire speech is calculated to teach Job the valuable lesson that the universe can survive without him. (99) Crenshaw’s assessment that the world does not need Job underestimates and ignores the complex moral insights of these divine speeches. God’s use of natural imagery reveals a latent wisdom for both Job and the reader. That is, Job and by extension all of humanity is incapable of understanding the majestic and sublime power of the world from the terrestrial seas to stars in the heavens. The lack of other humans does not reflect God’s cruelty and indifference towards Job it merely reiterates the mystery and

wonder of the universe, which only God can fully comprehend. Furthermore, these speeches reveal the narcissism of the sufferer, in which pain and torment creates a self-centered and potentially egotistical psyche. That is, when we suffer, like Job we are only capable of experiencing our own torment in myopic insight. Arthur S. Peake writes,

God bids the self-centered sufferer to look away at the wide universe, then he will come to a more juster estimate of man's place. But even if he looks at the sentient life of the world, he will realize that man is only one among many of God's concerns.(Glatzer 203)

The natural imagery that God uses seemingly suggests the insignificance of Job. Yet, the individual case of Job's suffering is of little interest or significance when applied to the whole world. How can an almighty deity understand Job's torment when he is charged with experiencing the entire universe? In short, Job's anguish is insignificant for God. The natural imagery that God evokes echoes the enigmatic nature of Him. These images become increasingly abstract, from the description of hail and rain to "the path where light dwells... and the palace of darkness."(Job 38:9-10) These images convey a sense of wonder and enigmatic bewilderment. Perhaps the poet of Job has God speak in natural images to allow for the reader to understand the role of suffering. A flood does not care if you are pious. A hailstorm can strike those who have not transgressed and a maelstrom can vanquish all that one cherishes no matter how righteous they are. Nature is cruelly indifferent to human suffering and God in *The Book of Job* has little patience to comfort the agony of one man. Furthermore, the evocation of nature suggests that there is an order to the universe; it's just beyond humanity's comprehension. In God's first divine speech after every act of natural creation, He uses words like "line", "limit", "fixed", and

“tilt”. Each natural image is phrased by a rhetorical question suggest that there is an ordered universe, but that order belongs to God alone and humanity is devoid of total understanding of it. At the end of God’s speech, Job meekly states, “Indeed, I spoke of without understanding/of things beyond me, which I do not know. (Job 42:3) Perhaps, Job understands that the role of suffering is as mysterious as the universe itself and that the torment of the sufferer does not imply that God is unjust. It is interesting to note that in God’s speech He never refers to himself as all loving, or all good. Instead He rhetorically asks Job “would you impugn My Justice?”(40:8) God, in *The Book of Job* is not a personal and omnibenevolent deity. He is supreme Justice who can “see every proud man and bring him low./See every proud man and humble him.”(Job 40:11) He is not your friend or personal savior; he is the father of the whole world. Job is not guilty of excessive wickedness as Eliphaz suggests, nor has he committed a serious transgression. Perhaps God’s reminder that he can strike down a proud man suggests that Job’s transgression is one of pride. During the prologue Job demands that his children sanctify themselves through burnt offerings and this implies that Job is arrogantly pious for he believes that his children, not himself, have sinned and will continue to sin. This suggests that Job’s suffering was not the result of a wager between God and the Satan, but by his own arrogant assumption that his righteousness would prevent him from experiencing God’s wrath. Yet, Job’s suffering allowed him to meet his maker and receive, momentarily, an understanding of the cosmos.

The Book of Job is perhaps one of the most confounding and important piece of world literature because it establishes the role of suffering, the importance of that suffering and how one can gain wisdom through suffering. Most importantly, Job starts an archetypal tradition in literature, in which the sufferer begins to question the fairness and justness of the universe and

even begins to rebel against his respective deity. Job's suffering and his anger geared towards the universe at large offers a comparison to other tragic figures in literature; from Sophocles Oedipus to Melville's Captain Ahab. Each character is marked by the suffering and rage of Job.

Chapter Two: Sophocles Oedipus: A Tragic Theodicy

Greek tragedy depends on the role of suffering, especially when characters fully understand their fall from grace. This typically occurs at the end of the drama. Oedipus is tragic in terms of suffering but his actions and environment differ so greatly from Job's. Oedipus has no loving God, he is aware of his part in his downfall, and repents his existence. Job's sufferings are not tragic, but they emphasize the tragic characteristics of Oedipus. Furthermore, Oedipus is a flawed individual filled with hubris and hamartia, a trait all tragic heroes possess. Conversely, Job lacks hubris and is depicted as a good and righteous man. Yet, what both men have in common is their shared sense of suffering and their anger geared towards God and the universe at large.

In discovering the theodical themes of tragedy, *The Book of Job* and *Oedipus Rex* are immensely important and must be read comparatively. That is when combining theodicy with tragedy, Job and Oedipus provide and define the archetypal foundation of men who suffer greatly and demand answers for their pain. This chapter explores the connection between theodicy and tragedy in *The Book of Job*, *Oedipus Rex* and *Oedipus at Colonus*. While both Oedipus and Job have differences, they share a common trait: suffering. Both men suffer greatly and are pawns in a larger cosmic chess game. Yet, their pain and torment allows the reader to fully empathize with them and their flaws and failures make them appear completely human. I will analyze the similarities and differences between Job and Oedipus' character, their literary functions, and their shared themes: the existence of evil and sin, the nature of suffering, and wisdom that is gained from suffering.

Job and Oedipus begin their journey in an exalted state. Oedipus, the more prideful and hubristic character, tells a group of suppliants, "Here I am myself-/ you all know me, the world

knows my fame:/I am Oedipus.”(Sophocles 7-9) Oedipus’ fame and role as King of Thebes came when he solved the riddle of the Sphinx. Arrogance and hubris define Oedipus and his role, as king of Thebes, is tantamount to the gods. The play opens with a group of suppliants begging Oedipus to remove the plague from their city, as if he were a god. The first words of the priest express Oedipus’ god-like authority he has over his people. “Oh Oedipus, king of the land, our greatest power! /You see us before you now, men of all ages/clinging to your altars.”(16-18) The connection between his rule and that of the gods is further established by the Priest a few lines later when Oedipus is informed that the rest of the population is waiting at the shrines of Pallas and Apollo. Therefore the palace of Thebes is seen as another place of deific aid like the temple of the gods. After informing Oedipus of the plight of his city, the Priest states, “we implore you, all of us on our knees:/ Perhaps you’ve heard/ the voice of a god or something from other men.”(51-53) The idea that the gods are easily accessible to Oedipus cements his god-like rule in Thebes. The irony of the plague and Oedipus’ attempts to help his people is that the plague is a direct result from his acts of transgression: the murder of his father, and having sex with his mother. Walter Kaufman provides an interesting definition of hubris, one that relies heavily on the action or inaction of the tragic hero. He writes, “Hubris is not pride in one’s own accomplishments and worth. It is not, like pride, something one feels (or takes) but rather something that involves action.”(Kaufmann 65) Kaufmann’s definition of hubris emphasizes the importance of action and plot that drives all tragedies and pushes the tragic hero closer to his fate.

Unlike Oedipus, Job is not hubristic or guilty of committing a specific act of transgression. Job is a man who is “blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil.”(Job. 1.1) Job’s fear of God is so intense that he continually makes sacrifices for the potential sins of

his children. “for Job thought, “Perhaps my children have sinned and blasphemed God in their thoughts.” This is what Job always used to do.”(Job 1.5) This act is therefore crucial for grasping Job's fear of God upon which the Satan casts his shadow of doubt. The Satan, which may mean adversary in Hebrew, claims that Job’s piety stems from his blessings, his wealth and his possessions. But, if all he loves and cherishes is stripped from him “he will surely blaspheme You to Your face.”(Job 1.11) While Job lacks the hubristic intensity of Oedipus, he shares a different type of arrogance: pious pride. Some critics, such as Arthur S. Peake and Gilbert Murray argue that Job is authentically humble and refuses to grant the Satan’s challenge to God any credibility. If the Satan is credible than Job’s excessive sacrifices are selfish and are outward expressions of his inner conviction that he has a contract with God. In this view, if Job remains pious by sacrificing for his family’s sins he will remain productive and protected. Job’s flaw is his certainty that through sacrifice, he will never know suffering or provoke God to anger. Ironically, throughout Job’s suffering and tribulations, the wager between God and the Satan is never revealed to him.

The major difference between Job and Oedipus is the literary use of fate. *Job* makes no reference to prophecy, sooth-saying or destiny. Whereas, *Oedipus Rex* deals with man’s inability to avoid fate and the bitter cruelty of prophesy. Oedipus’ suffering and torment is due to his own transgression and hamartia. Oedipus stresses guilt of hubris, incest and murder. Yet, the use of prophecy and fate highlight the stark realities of the Greek cosmology: no one can equal the gods. While there is no mention of fate or prophecy, Job’s agony too is a reminder that suffering can occur to anyone, for the righteous and wicked alike. Fate in *Oedipus Rex* reflects the Greek tradition of tragic drama. Greek tragedy combines fate that is set forth by the gods and the characteristic flaws of men. Tragedy, stresses man's fate, but it does not deny him freedom to

choose, act or make mistakes. Dramatic action relies on freedom; without it no tragedy could be written. The Greek hero moves towards his destiny (a theme which Greek tragedy stresses but *The Book Job* does not). Yet, he remains a free man who, though fated, could have not acted at all. And Sophocles too shows that prophecy foresaw Oedipus' future, but it did not determine it. Had Oedipus wished to escape his future, he might have killed himself, never killed a man, or never married at all. The fact that he acted explains his guilt. At the end of *Oedipus Rex*, Oedipus says, "Now I've exposed my guilt, horrendous guilt, /could I train a level glance on you, my countrymen?"(1516-1517) Oedipus is not asking for the citizens of Thebes to judge him. Rather, his guilt is felt internally and he blames himself for his actions. In the same speech he says, "My troubles are mine/ and I am the only man alive who can sustain them."(1548-1549) Oedipus presides over that mode of tragedy that reflects the cruel reality of the world in which the gods are not loving, nor are they understanding and the tragic hero bitterly accepts his fate.

Job is not a tragedy because it does not intertwine fate and fatal characteristics. Also, its protagonist is not fully aware of his fall, his torment and guilt. The narrative of *Job* suggests that he experiences a reversal of fortune, in that he loses all he loves only to have his possessions, health and children return to him in the end, which is not a fall from grace. It was previously mentioned that Job does not explicitly transgress or possess any fault, but his inexplicable suffering by God generates his spiritual and emotional demand for answers. The literary function of *The Book of Job* is of theodicy, not tragedy. Theodicy is defined as an attempt to reconcile the divine characteristics of an omnibenevolent, omnipotent and omniscient God with the occurrence of evil and suffering in the world. While *Oedipus Rex* deals with the latter, *The Book of Job* is the authoritative source of the problem of evil. Larry D. Bouchard argues that "Theodicy has less to do with the fathoming the presence of evil than with saving the face of divinity, which is

rarely the issue in Greek tragedy.”(Bouchard 52) While Bouchard’s definition of theodicy is correct, he fails to link “the problem of evil”, or “the problem of suffering” with a supposedly benign and just universe or cosmos. While the Greek gods can be capricious and potentially malicious towards mortals, human suffering, for the gods comes from a place of justice, not punishment. The question this raises is: does humanity deserve to suffer?

The Greek tragedies and *The Book of Job* brought to the literary cannon a challenge against a just and normative universe. They did not seek to answer why suffering exists, they illuminated it. The *Oedipus* plays and *The Book of Job*, stress anxieties and doubts of the human condition authors and poet’s centuries later would reflect and attempt to express with more complexity. Melville, Shakespeare and Milton have all borrowed from the Greeks and *The Book of Job* because they presented a view of the universe, of man's destiny and his relationship with all of humanity, in which suffering, is ever-present. They explored the nature of suffering, and the madness of the human mind. They examined the role of cruelty, failure, frustration, and loss, with tonic honesty and thoughtful acumen. They showed how relentlessly cruel the world can be when men suffer. Sophocles confirms the cruelty of the gods when mortals transgress. When Oedipus realizes he has already fulfilled his destiny he says, “what man alive more miserable than I? / More hated by the gods? (901-902). He continues, “And all these curses I- no one but I/brought down these piling curses on myself!”(906-907) Oedipus simultaneously blames the gods and himself. He views himself as an “abomination - heart and soul.”(911) That is why he demands exile as a form of punishment. Evil and sin are embedded in his being and that sin has manifested itself as a physical reality, the plague in Thebes. Yet, it’s impossible to not ignore Apollo’s responsibility in Oedipus’ fate.

When the Chorus asks who compelled Oedipus to cut out his eyes he says, “Apollo, friends, Apollo-/he ordained my agonies - these, my pains on pains. /But the hand that struck my eyes was mine”(1467-1469). Oedipus, in part, blames Apollo for his actions. Yet, Oedipus chose to gouge out his eyes. He internalizes his guilt and inflicts it on his body. He may blame the “deathless gods”(1480) for his cursed life, but blind Oedipus, can now potentially see and understand the nature of his transgression. Luke Howard Judkins writes, “To understand *Oedipus Tyrannos* we must examine Sophocles intentions for both the nature of Oedipus and the nature of the gods, as though we were the Greek audience”(Judkins 54) That is, the tragic hero must inspire pity and fear in the audience. More importantly, the tragic hero possesses freedom to act and choose while simultaneously moving closer towards his fate. Again, Ludkins writes “through allowing Apollo’s oracle to state fact of future events, enacting his prophetic nature, rather than curse the House of Laius, Sophocles prepared the character of Oedipus to act of his own free will.”(57) Therefore, Sophoclean tragedy differs from Aeschlyean tragedy because Oedipus acts freely and is not the product of a cursed family like Orestes in Aeschelyus’ *Oeresteia*. Furthermore, the gods in the entire *Oedipus Cycle* are concealed and shrouded in mystery, but are still a presence for the characters in the play. Whereas, the god’s in the Aeschylean traditon play a critical role in the fate and outcome of its characters. Athena is detrimental in the *The Eumenides* because she saves Orestes from being killed by The Furies by staging a trial for him therefore preventing any suffering Orestes might receive.

In the *Oedipus* plays and in *The Book of Job*, this theme of the “the problem of suffering” appears in layered and varied degrees. The range and power of suffering in *The Book of Job* and the *Oedipus* plays establishes torment and mental woe as the informing element of tragedy. Tragedies give the utmost description of what torments and mystifies humanity. Oedipus is a

tragedy about “man’s radical insecurity”(Kaufmann 23) because Oedipus represents all humanity. Readers may question Oedipus’ actions, and imply that his suffering is deserved but that ignores the important themes within *The Oedipus Cycle*: human blindness, as well as justice both mortal and divine. The theme of blindness is ironically deployed in *Oedipus Rex* because Oedipus mocks Tiresias’ literal blindness even though Tiresias sees what Oedipus fails to see and when Oedipus finally acknowledges his transgressions, he blinds himself. Walter Kaufmann distinguishes “physical blindness” from “spiritual blindness”(117) Oedipus is initially spiritually blind to not only his own identity but he is blind to the ones he loves most; his family. And once he is aware of the agonizing truth of his transgressions (patricide and incest) he physically blinds himself. It’s as if the moral degradation of his transgressions must be inflicted on his body. Like Oedipus, Job too begins to question the fairness and justice of the universe when he is physically inflicted with pestilence and plague. Furthermore, the physical and spiritual degradation of both of these characters leads them to both literal and psychological exile. Walter Kaufmann argues that “Sophocles’ Oedipus is a paradigm of alienation from nature, from himself, and from society.”(25) When read comparatively Job and Oedipus raise the question of injustice, physical, spiritual and moral degradation as well as the nature of suffering, which is a theodical issue.

Sophocles and other tragic playwrights of antiquity present not only what torments man but what illuminates him. They write about man in all his complexities. They exalt the riddle of the world, the riddle that Oedipus once solved. Oedipus is simultaneously fearful of the gods and prophecy as well as flawed and hubristic man. Oedipus flees Corinth because he is terrified of prophecy and the god Apollo. Yet, in the opening of *Oedipus Rex*, he is overtly arrogant and his kingship is viewed as being tantamount to the gods. Job is pious and righteous, yet he is arrogant in his belief that God won’t punish him if he cleanses his family

of sin. Yet they both rely on their own choices. Oedipus chooses to leave Corinth and Job chooses to perform sacrifices to cleanse his family of sin. Yet, that freedom leads to suffering which is not only physical (although for Oedipus and Job this can be part of it) but psychological and spiritual which, prompts feelings of injustice at the universe, yet they are justified in their anger. In *Oedipus at Colonus*, justice and injustice are blended together when Oedipus defends his act of patricide to Creon. “if, by an oracle of the gods, /some doom were hanging over my father’s head/that he should die at the hands of his own son, /how, with any justice could you blame *me*?”(1106-1109) He goes on, “I’d come to the world of pain, as come I did,/blind to what I was doing, blind to whom I killed/-how could you condemn that involuntary act/ with any sense of justice? (1113-1117) Oedipus claims he killed a man in self-defense, not knowing he was his father. So how could anyone condemn that act without any sense of justice? R. Drew. Griffith argues that Oedipus’ transgressions, patricide and regicide result from a deed not a character flaw that “proceeds but also paves the way for his suffering”(Griffith 195). Griffith’s analysis implies that Oedipus is potentially innocent of his crimes. He supports his argument by contextualizing Athenian law. Athenian law defined three different types of killing. The first is the unintentional killing of an innocent. The second is justified homicide and the third is intentional homicide. (196) Although Oedipus acknowledges his transgression, murder, he claims he is not guilty of regicide or patricide. Griffith’s analysis places the Oedipus tragedy into the realm of human justice. That is, he acknowledges the importance of Athenian law within the play but he ignores how Oedipus was unjustly treated by those closest to him. After years of reflection, Oedipus realizes he was not treated fairly by the people of Thebes, by his own sons, and by Creon in particular. They took advantage of his misery and banished him forever, in his moment of greatest agony he let

them, even asked them to banish him. Now, stung and angered by Creon's insults, Oedipus turns to the question of justice and of his suffering.

Job too feels anger and injustice, not by mortal hands, but by God's. In response to his friends, Job argues that his particular situation is not well explained by these teachings. He experiences God as overbearing, ambivalent to moral differences between humans, and capricious. He exclaims to his friends, "On my part I will not speak with restraint; I will give voice to the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul." (7.11) Job claims that his personal experiences force him to disagree with traditional wisdom. Rather than repent, Job imagines that he may instigate a court case with God, with the hope that God would receive something akin to a restraining order. Job, like Oedipus in old age, begins to question, pontificate and mentally act upon and understand the nature of suffering, the existence of justice in a universe that is overwhelmingly cruel and unjust.

This kind of suffering that Job and Oedipus endure requires that they fully understand their actions, their mistakes and their torment. For Sophocles, as well as the author of *Book of Job*, only the strongest natures could endure this kind of suffering, which does not annihilate them, it gives them purpose in spite of doubts, fears, advice of friends, and sense of guilt. Only the tragic hero suffers in this peculiar and ultimate way. The others remain passive observers, like Job's friends or even the people of Thebes. Job and Oedipus' transgressions, no matter how slight or large, are dignified by their understanding of their suffering. Cedric Watts writes,

"At the heart of Oedipus legend is the enigma presented by the paradoxical story of a man who did evil through striving to avoid evil, who brought harm though he came as a redeemer,

though he came as a redeemer, and who was a cripple, king and blind outcast. (Watts 195)

Perhaps the biggest paradox is Oedipus' decision to blind himself, not take his own life. This decision reveals Oedipus' ability to endure his suffering and potentially learn from it. In the opening of *Oedipus at Colonus*, he has become the blind seer, the prophet Tiresias whom he initially mocked. His suffering through his blindness allows him to access the knowledge of the universe he previously lacked in youth.

The suffering of Job and Oedipus not only prove their capacity to endure torment but also how suffering leads to exalted insight about the world. This is not to say that they recommend suffering. Job never glories in his tribulations, and no Greek hero happily embraces his destiny. He is characteristically stubborn and resentful. Job "cursed the day he was born"(3.1) and Oedipus in *Oedipus Rex* rhetorically asks, "Wasn't I born for torment?"(910) Job and Oedipus show that suffering has a dark and destructive side. Yet, that suffering, when universalized, leads to virtuous understanding. That is immense pain not only prompts the growth of empathy and sympathy for others, but also the discovery of a higher level of understanding. Therefore Job's challenge to God, for which his friends shun him, opened up realms of knowledge even truth of which his friends were ignorant. Even God himself proclaims that Job's friends "have not spoken the truth about Me as did My servant Job."(Job 42.7) While *The Book of Job* addresses theodicy and the problem of evil, there are no clear answers about why there is suffering in the world. Yet, it occupies a unique place in the Tanakh (The Hebrew Bible) because it obstructs divine law of reward and punishment. That is, the belief that the righteous are rewarded and blessed and the wicked are punished. *The Book of Job* changes the value of suffering by rebuking and questioning the concept of reward and punishment. Perhaps, what can be learned from *The Book*

Job is that there is no explanation for suffering. Bad things happen to good people and suffering affects everyone, no matter how blameless they are. Job in all his pontificating and soul-searching becomes more aware of the existence and nature of suffering.

Oedipus' pride and hubris in *Oedipus Rex*, which makes the Chorus fearful, led him to discoveries, both human and divine, which make their moralizing seem petty and trivial. In *Oedipus at Colonus*, he tells Theseus, "only the gods can never age,/the gods can never die. All else in the world/almighty Time obliterates, crushes all/ to nothing."(686-689) In his conduct regarding the gods, Oedipus unfailingly accepts that the gods' dictate a profound change from his youthful attempts to thwart the prophecies of the Delphic oracle. Although, Oedipus is still prone to rage and outburst towards people, in old age, he accepts his coming death, and so his last moments of life are filled with calm and acceptance. In *Oedipus Rex*, his life was one of misery and pain; in his final hours he realizes "All rests/ in the hands of a mighty power."(2000-2001) While *Oedipus at Colonus* is still a tragedy, it contains elements of theodicy in that it examines man's existence and death in a universe that may or may not be fair.

Tragedy, as defined by the Greeks stresses irretrievable loss, often signified by death. Job lives prosperously at the end of his narrative. Yet, suffering (in both tragedy and theodicy) has a structure, which shows progression towards new values of understanding and wisdom about the universe. Therefore the suffering of Job and Oedipus shapes important themes and ideas that affect all men: the nature of suffering, justice, injustice, and the potential wickedness of God or the gods. Job and Oedipus cement literature's understanding and treatment of suffering. They are the archetypal fathers of the alienated, the isolated, and the tormented. Both characters haunt Shakespeare, Milton, Melville, and other writers of poetry and tragedy. Their suffering allows us to question our own place and possible powerlessness in the universe at large.

While *The Book of Job* is a theodicy, it contains elements of tragedy in that it explores the nature of suffering at the hands of an almighty power. *Oedipus Rex* and *Oedipus at Colonus* are tragedies; but they contain elements of theodicy in that they explore the existence of injustice in a world that is supposed to be just. When both literary genres combine together they thematically explore, the existence of sin and evil, the nature of suffering and values that men learn from suffering.

Chapter Three: *King Lear*: A Shakespearean Theodicy

Many scholars have drawn parallels between Shakespeare's *King Lear* and Job because both characters suffer greatly due to an unforgiving and relentlessly cruel universe. Scholars like Harold Bloom, Howard Felperin, Robert Carballo and Michael Keefer examine the similarities between *The Book of Job* and *King Lear* and how those similarities emphasize a Shakespearean theodicy. Yet, Job also shares the same characteristics as Oedipus. They are both fallen kings who suffer endlessly and their kingdoms are left in the hands of cruel and wicked tyrants. Furthermore they are both spiritually and emotionally blind to those who are closest to them. While *King Lear* builds off of the Job archetype, it should also be read comparatively with Sophocles *Oedipus Rex*. This comparison further defines the relationship between tragedy and theodicy.

This chapter explores the parallel between *King Lear* and the *Book of Job*, the archetypal example of underserved suffering and how *King Lear*, as a tragedy evokes similar themes to *Oedipus Rex*. What will be discussed is how *King Lear* is primarily a Job story, how the theological themes in *King Lear* are similar to *The Book of Job* and finally how the Job parallel emphasizes the attempts of critics to explain the suffering in the play which often has theodical concerns. Literary themes such as blindness, literal and metaphorical, relationships with children and foolishness also inspire a comparison to not only Job, but Oedipus as well.

Firstly, *King Lear* is a Job story because of its depiction of the problem of suffering. Many critics who draw parallels between *Job* and *King Lear* cite the similar themes that are raised in both texts. Eugene Goodheart writes, "The only modern writer who has affinities with Job is Shakespeare and particularly the Shakespeare of *King Lear*." (Goodheart 98). Kenneth Muir also establishes a connection between Shakespeare and *Job*. He writes, "There is no doubt

that Job was much in Shakespeare's mind when he was writing *King Lear*."(Hamlin 307). The relationship between *Job* and *King Lear* is a familiar one. But why does *King Lear* bring *The Book of Job* to mind for so many scholars? Perhaps it is because both texts relate to themes of divine justice, the problem of suffering and the cruelty of the universe. James Driscoll notes that Shakespeare's audience "would have been conscious of important similarities between Lear who has lost everything and the Biblical Job."(Driscoll 162) That is, both pieces of literature explore theological themes through the suffering and anger of its primary characters. Yet, Shakespeare, like Sophocles, explores the problem of suffering in tragic form in which the innocent die and the wicked rule. Perhaps this is why Samuel Johnson found the ending of *King Lear* troublesome. He writes,

But since all reasonable beings naturally love justice, I cannot easily be persuaded, that the observation of justice makes a play worse; or, that if other excellencies are equal, the audience will not always rise better pleased from the final triumph of persecuted virtue.(Hamlin 305)

While Johnson's critique is one of horror, he establishes the theological theme that runs throughout the play: underserved suffering. Shakespeare does not offer a Hollywood ending in which the righteous are rewarded and the wicked are punished. He reflects the reality of the world where cruelty, malice and suffering are ever-present. Perhaps Johnson is responding to startling difference of *King Lear* in comparison to Shakespeare's previous tragedies, where the state is restored through the death of its primary characters. The ending of *King Lear* enforces a Sophoclean sense of tragedy in that the state is tarnished as well. That is, the state is now occupied by tyrannical and wicked rulers. Like the ending of *Oedipus at Colonus* in which

Creon claims his rule over Thebes, Lear's wickedly cruel daughters, Goneril and Regan establish their rule at the end of the play. *King Lear* is Jobean and Sophoclean because it reflects the reality of the world where the innocent suffer and the wicked rule.

Other scholars have addressed the problem of suffering by comparing *The Book of Job* and *King Lear*. Harold Bloom argues that Job's suffering is worse because it is entirely underserved. Bloom states that Lear "is un-Job like either in his earlier sufferings (which he greatly magnifies) or in his relationship to the divine." (Bloom 197) Bloom falsely assumes that Job's suffering is worse and unjust because he has not sinned and possesses no fatal characteristics like Lear. Job is defined as being "blameless and upright" but as established in earlier Chapter 1 and 2, Job is fearful that his children have sinned and will continue to sin. He wholeheartedly believes in his own righteousness and therefore purifies, not himself, but his children. Lear too has faults that are associated with his children. The play opens with a mistake and Lear continues to be capricious and self-indulgent throughout it. In Act I he demands, "Let me stay a jot for dinner./Go get it ready." (Shakespeare 1.1.4) He is also vengeful towards Goneril, cursing her with sterility and wanting terrible things to happen to all who have wronged him. Yet, like Job, Lear bitterly claims that "he is more sinned against than sinning." (3.2.60) Lear makes a mistake, which initiates his suffering, but it is not out of capricious cruelty, but rather from the foolishness of an old man who wants to retire from his kingly duties. He is prone to false flattery, sycophantic behavior and he is susceptible to the sly manipulations of those closest to him. While Lear has faults and makes mistakes the extent of his suffering seems unequivocal to the mistakes he made. He is foolish, but his daughters are cruel. He is proud, but his daughters are malicious. He is a stubborn old man, but his daughters are wicked. He makes mistakes but his daughters, Goneril and Regan are unjustifiably cruel towards their

father. Like Oedipus, Lear's mistakes and errors in judgment set forth a chain of events that end in misfortune and death. Yet Lear's suffering outweighs his actual transgressions. Unlike Oedipus, he has not committed an act of homicide or incest, instead, Lear's mistakes are due to the ignorance of an elderly king.

Lear, Like Job and Oedipus as well, loses everything. He begins as a king, who has absolute power and authority. But after he loses his power and prestige he becomes a pathetic and foolish old man. This is established when Goneril's servant does not show him the usual respectful titles, calling Lear "My lady's father.", instead of "My king." He is also shown disrespect when Reagan and Cornwall put his messenger to the stocks. When Lear demands to see him, he is told that the Duke is unmovable. What would have been seen as a royal demand is treated as a common annoyance. Lear's power and dignity is stripped from him by the cruelty of his daughters. He initially claims to avenge them, which would be tantamount to "the terrors of the earth."(2.4.278) But his desire for vengeance lacks power because he is no longer a king; he is a foolish old man. Lear not only loses power, he is stripped of the most basic necessities: clothing, shelter, safety and comfort. And in a Job-like moment, Lear is cast into a tempestuous storm by his daughters.

Like Job, Lear is vulnerable to the elements, and nature takes on a cosmic role. In the wind and rain, Lear is an every-man, albeit a distraught and old one, who "tears his white hair."(3.1.7) Due to the power of the storm, he is reduced to a "poor, infirm, weak and despised old man."(3.2.20). Yet, like Job, Lear learns wisdom in the storm. He had formerly enjoyed the privileges of royalty, but now a hovel is precious and sacred to him. Lear remarks that, "The art of our necessities is strange./and can make vile things precious. (3.1.76-77) Amongst the

elements, Lear's mortality and vulnerability is exposed. Yet, the storm opens up a portent of wisdom. Lear's meditation on wisdom is continued in Scene 4.

Take physic, pomp.

Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel.

That though may'st shake the superflux to them And

show the heavens more just. (3. 4.38-41)

Lear's declaration to "show the heavens more just" emphasizes what Michael H. Keefer calls "interventionist theodicy" (Keefer 153) That is Lear is not philosophizing on divine justice, rather he is desiring to act on his own injustices and demand justice for himself. Lear's protest reveals one of the plays many paradoxes. That is, humans cannot make the heavens more just and Lear's "attempts to make human society more just are likely to entail fictive consequences." (153)

Lear's desire to act on injustice, not pontificate on it reveals a paradoxical theology in Shakespeare's tragedy. Howard Felperin also remarks on *King Lear's* relationship with theodicy. He argues that in Shakespeare theodicy is often revealed through poetic justice and the characters in *King Lear* "actively search for theodicy, for some sign or evidence of divine justice in their world, but the ending of the play leads us to suspect that their search is in vain." (Felperin 112) Felperin is correct in that the ending of *King Lear* is terribly bleak, even by Shakespeare's standards. After all, what wisdom can Lear gain in death? Yet, theodicy often deals with the bleak and cruel reality of the universe. Yet, the wisdom gained from suffering acknowledges that reality. Theodicy is by definition a paradoxical paradigm that explores, and acknowledges the problem of suffering. It is not merely poetic justice, it is cosmic justice in which the sufferer gains wisdom and universalizes their torment. Lear's desire to "feel what wretches feel" emphasizes his newfound empathy for others. The shift in tone is significant as well because

Lear moves away from his interior pain towards the suffering of others. Greg Maillet writes, “Shakespeare seems thus to offer another of the play’s many contrasts between the wisdom of this world and the wisdom of humility.”(Maillet 62) If Lear never erred or made mistakes he would never have learned to empathize with others. Perhaps, *King Lear*, like *The Book of Job* creates and sustains a theodicy for the audience who then can pontificate and philosophize on the nature of suffering. Furthermore, Felperin ignores the wisdom gained by Lear and how it establishes another paradox: wisdom in foolishness. The storm scene highlights Lear’s wisdom which is then forwarded by the singing of the Fool who too reiterates how Lear “Must make content with his fortunes fit,/Though the rain it raineth every day.”(3.2.83-84) The connection between the Fool’s song and Lear’s wisdom emphasize the plays tendency to create paradoxical themes: wisdom in foolishness, sanity in madness and order in chaos.

Scholars like Harold Bloom, Howard Felperin and Michael Keefer acknowledge the similarities and differences between *King Lear* and *The Book of Job*. Yet, they all ignore the similarities to Sophocles *Oedipus Rex* and by extension the important relationship between tragedy and theodicy. Shakespeare, like Sophocles, dramatizes *The Book of Job* and translates it into tragic verse. Also, like Sophocles tragedy, *King Lear* shares many of its themes: foolishness, blindness and a descent into madness. These themes are often expressed in dialectical tension. For instance, the theme of ignorance and madness is reflected in the plays chaotic and seemingly unjust finale and a number of characters demonstrate the gradual transfiguration from wisdom into foolishness, or contrarily, foolishness into wisdom. These transformations not only mark the fragility of the human mind, but also the true obsolescence of humans, whether they are kings or peasants, in the eyes of nature and the universe at large. The dialectical tension between these themes illustrate how *King Lear* presents itself as a theological paradox. That is *King Lear* is not

simply about a tragic fall from grace it is a theological examination of suffering, justice and the cruel indifference of the universe. Greg Maillet analyzes how Shakespeare's tragedy is representative of Christian theology. He writes,

The plays opening two acts are studies in spiritual error, but error cannot be known without a clear standard of truth, and Shakespeare's *King Lear* provides this standard not only through key characters, but also through familiar imagery profoundly presented as theological paradox.(Maillet 1)

That is, the plays theology reveals itself through paradoxical extremes. Blindness becomes insight, foolishness becomes wisdom which are found in not only Lear but in Edgar and Gloucester as well. These paradoxical themes are perhaps why *King Lear* is read comparatively with Job and should be read comparatively with Oedipus.

King Lear begins the play metaphorically blind to the truth. Like Oedipus he is blind to his mistakes, and blind to those closest to him. He orders his daughters to declare their love for him so that the "largest bounty may extend / Where nature doth with merit challenge."(1.1.57-58) He is deceived by Goneril and Regan's insincere and exaggerated declarations of love. Goneril claims that she loves him more than "word can wield the matter", (1.1.60) and Regan declares, "I am alone felicitate / In your dear highness' love."(1.1.83-84) Only Cordelia's love is honest. She says, "I am sure my love's / More ponderous than my tongue"(1.1.86-87), and yet she is banished. Lear's blindness to the truth is emphasized by his ignorance of Kent's interruptions. "Peace, Kent!"(1.1.135), and the fact that he mistakes Cordelia's honesty for pride. "Let pride, which she calls plainness, marry her." (1.1.145) Kent even calls Lear mad, foreshadowing the play's later events, and accuse him of hasty rashness. Kent's insight "Nor are

those empty-hearted whose low sounds / reverb no hollowness”(1.1.172-73) also foreshadows Goneril and Regan’s cruel treatment towards Lear. Kent is simply suggesting that Cordelia’s humble protestation of love is sincere, and that Goneril and Regan’s are not because they are sycophantic liars. Lear’s metaphorical blindness is also demonstrated by his demands for both Cordelia and Kent to leave his sight, to which Kent replies: “See better, Lear; and let me still remain / The true blank of thine eye.”(1.1.180-181) Shakespeare is clearly highlighting the foolishness of Lear’s decisions, his blindness to the truth, and his impudence towards others. But do those decisions justify his suffering? Greg Maillet suggests that the drama of *King Lear* is whether “the ‘good’ characters [will] be engulfed by the evil world around them, or will divine gifts of grace redeem [their] suffering.”(55) Lear’s treatment of Cordelia is not evil; it is foolish. His anger towards his daughter does not stem from a malicious place. Rather it is from the hurt pride of an old king.

Like Lear, Oedipus too is quick to anger and often reacts foolishly or with hostility, especially towards Tiresias. Yet, Oedipus is concerned with the state of his kingdom. After helping a priest to his feet, Oedipus states, “I am ready to help,/I’ll do anything./I would be blind to misery not to pity my people kneeling at my feet.”(line 13-15) This not only establishes Oedipus as a benign and sympathetic ruler, it also foreshadows Oedipus literal blindness and misery. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Oedipus’ rule is tantamount to the gods. In the context of *King Lear*, kingship too is understood as god-like in both power and authority. Yet, Lear, unlike Oedipus is politically foolish in that he is placing the future of his kingdom in the wrong hands. Oedipus is merely ignorant of his connection to the plague, but Lear is foolishly disregarding the future of his kingdom. The foolishness of Lear is best understood by the Fool.

The Fool's strange and occasionally incomprehensible speeches help the King to slowly realize his mistake. The Fool seems to implicitly know that Lear was wrong because he claims that "wise men are grown foppish". (1.4.171) He goes on to say:

Then they for sudden joy did weep, And
 I for sorrow sun
 That such a king should play bo-peep, And
 go the fools among. (1.4.177-182)

Their roles have been reversed. While the Fool knows the truth, Lear is still ignorant and therefore has become the Fool. The King then begins to question why his daughters are treating him so cruelly, saying: "Does any here know me? This is not Lear: / Does Lear walk thus? speak thus? Where are his eyes?"(1.4.231-232) and like Oedipus this reference to his eyes emphasizes his previous blindness. He then admits: "I did her [Cordelia] wrong"(1.5.24) and his blindness is slowly lifted. Moreover, Lear's argument with Kent in Act 2 Scene 4 shows his realization of his daughters' cruelty. His repeated exclamations "You!" and "Return with her!" when talking with Regan and Goneril demonstrate his surprise and outrage. The Fool's wisdom exacerbates Lear's mistake and suggests that, despite being a king, Lear can still be a fool. In fact, the Fool says to Lear: "Thou should'st not have been old till thou had'st/ been wise." (1.5.43-44) The dialogue between Lear and the Fool are similar to the opening scenes of *Oedipus Rex* in that they both establish and foreshadow the theme of blindness. Lear, like Oedipus is blind to the truth as well as his errors and willingly ignores Tiresias' claim that he killed his father and married his mother.

Lear's realization of the truth and emergence from his metaphorical blindness is, however, accompanied by his slow descent into madness. The first hint of the threat to his sanity

comes with his exclamations: “O! let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven; / Keep me in temper; I would not be mad!” (1.5.45-46) Furthermore, in Act 2 Scene 4 the King ironically says to Goneril: “I prithee, daughter, do not make me mad...”(2.4.252) and that is exactly what his daughters’ cruelty does. The storm that Lear is inevitably forced to face in Act 3 not only represents the chaos and madness of his mind, but also the chaos that his kingdom has descended into. Now that Lear has given up his authority, the country is at the mercy of the play’s villains. Lear, in response to Kent turns vengeful and demands in self-righteous anger to bring the forces of the gods on his behalf. “Let the great gods./That keep this dreadful pother o’er our heads,/ Find out their enemies now.”(3.2.49-51) Lear’s desire for “unwhipped justice”(3.2.56) juxtaposes Lear’s psychological madness with emotional madness. That is, Lear’s emotional madness precedes his psychological madness during the storm scene. Lear’s descent into madness becomes even more obvious throughout the storm scene, beginning with his refusal to enter the hovel “this tempest in my mind/Doth from my senses take all feeling else/Save what beats ther/ filial ingratitude!”(3.4.15-17) He goes onto exclaim: “O that way madness lies! let me shun that; / No more of that”(3.4.24-25) and his swift change of mind again shows the turbulence of his thoughts which matches the turbulence of the storm. When Edgar appears Lear is completely overtaken by madness, asking Edgar whether he too gave all his possessions to his daughters.

His speech then becomes incomprehensible. Yet, Lear’s madness is marked by his sensitivity and empathy to other people, possibly caused by his exposure to human cruelty. For example he prays to the gods to help “poor naked wretches, wheresoe’er you are, / That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm.”(3.4.32-33) He corrects his former mistakes, and attempts to tear his clothes off to show that clothing offers no protection from suffering. He realizes that

garments mark the difference between a king and a beggar like Edgar, and that everyone must face the world's cruelties no matter their station in life. Moreover he sympathizes with the Fool, asking him if he is cold, saying: "I have one part in my heart / That's sorry yet for thee."(3.2.79-80) Lear has moved from arrogance and pride, to humility and empathy. Like Oedipus, Lear's reversal of fortune nullifies hubristic tendencies. In many ways Lear is growing wiser, rather than more foolish. For instance, despite his mad ramblings he is still able to determine the cause of his woe and to differentiate the storm of his thoughts from the physical storm around him. In fact, Edgar notes that Lear's apparent ramblings are "matter and impertinency mixed! / Reason in madness!"(4.6.192-193) For example, it is only in his madness that Lear realizes, "They flattered me like a dog/To say 'aye' and 'no' to everything that I said!"(4.6.115- 118) Most importantly, he realizes no amount of clothing or power can protect you from life's cruelty, therefore flattery and praise will not protect him from torment and suffering. "Through tattered clothes small vices do appear; / Robes and furred gowns hide all."(4.6.180-181) Oedipus too gains wisdom in his suffering and removal of his royal lifestyle. In *Oedipus at Colonus* he remarks that "Never honor the gods in one breath/ and take the gods for fools the next."(298-299). Through suffering and torment, Oedipus in old age is transformed from a king with hubristic power to "someone filled with piety and power."(312-313) The power that Oedipus speaks of is not kingly or royal power, but transcendent and wise power. Lear, like Oedipus experiences moments of clarity but it is only in his madness that Lear actually speaks wisdom. Now that he is released from the trappings of wealth, he can gain a new understanding of the world.

The themes of foolishness and blindness, which predicate suffering not only affect Lear. Gloucester, too, begins the play in metaphorical blindness and his suffering parallels Lear's. For

instance, he is tricked by Edmund's forged letter and manipulative plans. Edgar truly loves his father and Gloucester's great error is made clear by Edmund's words:

A credulous father, and a noble brother,
 Whose nature is so far from doing harms
 That he suspects none; on whose foolish honesty My
 practices ride easy!"(1.2.186-190)

Both Lear and Gloucester mistake the unloving for the loving and consequently banish their loyal children making their cruel children their heirs. Edgar, tricked by Edmund, is then forced to flee into hiding, while Gloucester is completely fooled by Edmund's manipulations. Again Shakespeare is demonstrating that despite Gloucester's wealth and title, he can still be foolish and prone to the unfairness of life. Just as Lear realizes his mistake as he turns mad, Gloucester only discovers Edmund's trickery once he is blind. Gloucester's gruesome blinding marks a turning point in the play. Cruelty, betrayal and even madness are reversible and correctible, but blindness is not. After his eyes have been gouged out, Gloucester ironically calls: "Where's my son Edmund?" (3.7.104) Regan then reveals that it was Edmund who was the treacherous and plotting son, saying, "Thou call'st on him that hates thee; it was he / That made the overture of thy treasons to us, / Who is too good to pity thee."(3.7.108-110) Therefore as he is made blind he simultaneously sees the truth. He exclaims: "O my follies! Then Edgar was abus'd."(3.7.111)

Both Lear and Gloucester's errors are epitomized in Gloucester's words. "I stumbled when I saw. Full oft 'tis seen,/Our means secure us, and our mere defects/Prove our commodities." (4.1.20-22) Gloucester's literal blindness is also similar to Oedipus' in that Gloucester, while blind can see Edmund's manipulations just as Oedipus can see the truth in blindness.

Edgar too is another character who moves in and out of sanity, although he is pretending to be mad. After his banishment, Edgar assumes the identity of poor mad Tom who is haunted by devils. However Edgar's ravings are so convincing, and the environment of the plain so unusual and haunting that we are unsure whether his madness is really feigned. Nature is not rendered sublime, as in the storm scene, rather, it seems unnerving and nearly supernatural. Perhaps this is because of the similarities between his and Lear's, who actually is mad, sufferings. In fact, Edgar says: "He childed as I fathered." (3.7.120) Both have been exiled, albeit for different reasons, one by their father, the other by their children. It is Edgar's nakedness that aids Lear's humanization, and indeed Lear takes an immediate liking to Edgar, possibly due to their shared madness and shared suffering. He says: "With him; / I will keep still with my philosopher." (3.5.189) Before he tried to kill himself, Gloucester saw life as nothing but a game of the gods. "As flies to wanton boys, are we to th' gods; / They kill us for their sport." (4.1.41-42) This is similar to Oedipus' claim that "There is no escape, ever, / not for a single godless man in all the world." (lines 303-304) Gloucester and Oedipus proclamations about the gods reinforce the theodical elements of both texts. Mortal life may be a game for the gods, but through suffering and torment the foolish man gains wisdom. This is established when Gloucester accepts Edgar's explanation that the gods have preserved him, and he resolves to endure his blindness and suffering. The play's subplot of Edgar and Gloucester shows that anybody can be a fool, and that it is only once foolishness is realized that true wisdom is found.

Shakespeare uses the wisdom-foolishness parallel in order to reinforce the play's ultimate message: that all are equal to nature and even the most powerful are susceptible to the cruelty of others and the universe at large. This truth is only realized by King Lear in the midst of his madness, and indeed both Lear and Gloucester only realize the truth once they become "fools".

Lear and Gloucester begin the play as fools thinking they are wise, but end the play wise, in the knowledge that they are fools. The Fool, however, is wise throughout, and there is truth in his seemingly silly ramblings. It seems as if only those whose speech is incomprehensible actually speak any reason. It is only once they realize that they are under nature's control and have escaped the trappings of power and wealth that they begin to speak truth. Like Oedipus and Job before them, Lear and Gloucester learn wisdom through suffering and sanity in madness. As Edgar notes, there is reason in madness.

King Lear shares many themes with *The Book of Job* in that both explore a cruel and uncaring universe in which mortals suffer endlessly at the hands of a higher power. They both present men who experience undeserved suffering for the slightest of transgressions yet paradoxically gain wisdom in their torment. While many scholars have explored the relationship between Lear and Job, and whether or not *King Lear* is a true theodicy, they have ignored the similarities with *Oedipus Rex*. While *The Book of Job* is similar to Lear's in that it explores the nature of suffering, like *Oedipus Rex*, *King Lear* depicts a tragic fall from an exalted and kingly state due to their own foolishness and blindness. Job is the everyman who does not live in opulent wealth, whereas Lear and Oedipus are transformed into universal figures of suffering through their own tragic faults. It is through their reversal of fortunes these men change from kings to beggars and therefore garner more sympathy and relatability for the reader. More importantly, Lear and Oedipus' experience of suffering, banishment and cruelty underpins the theodical elements of tragedy. Perhaps the biggest difference is that *King Lear* is about the cruelty humans inflict on others. Lear is not a cog in the god's machinery like Job, nor is he a victim of fate or prophecy like Oedipus. Rather, Lear's suffering is due to the cruel abandon and malicious greed of his daughters. This is what makes *King Lear* an interesting example of

theodicy because Lear's torment is not due to the machinations of a deity; it stems from those who are closest to him. Yet Lear, like Oedipus and Job before him internalizes his suffering and subsequently universalizes it through empathizing with others.

Chapter 4: *Paradise Lost*: A Theodicy in Epic Prose

John Milton's epic poem *Paradise Lost* is one of the most unique pieces of global literature because it blends different types of genres. It is an epic poem in terms of structure, style and scope. Yet, it thematically blends elements of both tragedy and theodicy and attempts to answer the problem of evil. Milton's poem is not only an epic, it is a theodicy, an attempt to "justify the ways of God to men." (Milton 1.26) The poem's characters are rich, layered and make complicated choices in the face of an omnipotent and omniscient deity. While the reader is aware of the poem's basic story, Milton as a poet, is not simply re-writing Genesis, nor is he providing a biblical exegesis. Rather, Milton's poem explores deep-seated theological issues: the problem of suffering, the innate goodness of man, and the providence of God. Milton shows us how evil is born out of suffering by placing the reader inside Satan's head which allows for the reader to fully sympathize and empathize with him. Yet, the power of *Paradise Lost* lies in how Milton's God allows his creation to choose, err and make mistakes, reflecting the overall justness of His authority.

This chapter explores the theological ramifications and themes in John Milton's *Paradise Lost* and how Milton's poem is primarily a theodicy, which blends tragic elements. That is, Milton blends genres to emphasize and highlight important theological problems. Such as, the problem of suffering and how that suffering can create evil (i.e. Satan) or goodness (i.e. Adam). This chapter analyzes how Milton's poem has been received by literary critics and scholars, and how Milton combines both tragic and theodical themes in his characters. Finally, what will be explored is how Milton presents a false Job through Satan and how the poem's true hero and Jobean archetype is Adam.

Scholars have wrestled with *Paradise Lost*'s theological themes and are often divided

on whether Milton's God is wicked or good and if Satan is the hero in Milton's epic. The reception of Milton's epic poem from both contemporary and readers of the 17th century has sparked many debates on how Milton explores theodicy through God and Satan. Another point of interest for scholars was how Milton's political interests were reflected in the poem, which heightens Milton's theodicy. With the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, Milton fled England. As a staunch republican, a supporter of Cromwell and an apologist for the regicide, he was lucky to escape execution for treason. His unorthodox views on various sensitive subjects, including divorce was well known. Milton was an active writer of political pamphlets as well as a poet, and he had many influential enemies. England in the 1640's was an exciting time both politically and religiously. With the execution of Charles I, and the establishment of the Commonwealth of England, Milton's Republican ideals were tethered with Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector of England's new republic. Yet, as Cromwell became more militaristic and dictatorial, Milton's zeal and excitement for the Commonwealth began to wane and eventually shattered when Cromwell's death reformed the monarchy. Milton's political beliefs heighten the theological issues of *Paradise Lost*. C.A. Patrides writes that Milton's epic poem reveals a disenchantment of England's political state, which is understood through Satan's speeches. He writes, "The principle, applied in *Paradise Lost*, issues in Milton's invitation that we discriminate sharply between Satan's seductive eloquence and his ambition to ruin man"(Patrides 255) Perhaps, Satan in his grandiosity and political cunning is tantamount to Cromwell's ascent to power. That is, the satanic figure is a dictatorial one, and the reader is both seduced and cautious of Satan's language. Milton's loss of faith in his country was matched with personal loss. In 1652, Milton lost his son, wife and eyesight and perhaps his personal and political suffering is why he turned *Paradise Lost* into a theodicy. In 1667, *Paradise Lost* was hailed as a work of genius by readers

and critics alike, even by Milton's political adversaries. (Maltzahn 481) Perhaps, the expression of the nature of suffering and the theological underpinning of the poem resonated with a Post-Reformation audience and Milton who had recently lost his Eden, *The Commonwealth*, turned towards the problem of suffering.

At the end of the eighteenth century and the start of the nineteenth, the complex poetic response to *Paradise Lost* turned to the figure of Satan. Milton was hugely important for the Romantic poets, for his political stance as well as the model of his writing. Though some writers, notably John Keats, were uneasy under his influence, Milton was widely read and highly regarded. William Wordsworth opens his sonnet on London, "Milton! thou shouldst be living at this hour:/England hath need of thee" ("London, 1802 line 1-2) William Blake voiced a thought that had been troubling readers since the poem's publication. Noticing that Books I and II are rather more absorbing than Book III, Blake concluded: "The reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels and God, and at liberty when of Devils and Hell, is because he was a true Poet and of the Devil's party without knowing it"(Blake 1433) Whatever Milton's intention was, the power of his poetry glamorizes the figure of Satan at God's expense. Shelley went further, ignoring the theological constraints of Milton's ambition. He decided that Satan was far more intriguing in comparison to God, Michael and other heavenly beings. He writes, "Milton's Devil as a moral being far superior to his God". (Shelley 27) For Shelley, Satan's noble fight against a deific adversary had greater appeal than God's cold certainty of his preordained plan of both Satan's fall and Man's inevitable destruction. He writes, "And this bold neglect of a direct moral purpose is the most decisive proof of the supremacy of Milton's genius". (27) The Romantics focused on Milton's Satan and believed that he best represented the Romantic spirit because he

rebels against his maker and desires to create a Republic in Hell reflecting the revolutionary spirit of the 18th and 19th century.

The Romantics established Satan as the central figure of *Paradise Lost* but the years that followed saw a new iteration of the old dispute over the interpretation of its characters. In *Milton's God* (1961), William Empson concludes, after a demolition of God's motives and actions that God is wickedly dictatorial and Satan is the true hero of the poem, reiterating the concerns of the Romantics. The critical battle lines were firmly drawn, and no negotiation seemed possible. Either Milton was on God's side and any attempt to suggest otherwise was un-Christian and perverse, or *Paradise Lost* was a veiled critique of the heavenly hierarchy, and Satan's charisma and plausibility was a result of Milton's sympathy for his plight. For Empson, Milton's God is not a copy of Virgil's and Homer's Zeus because his intent is "to cut out everything between the two ends of the large body of Western thought about God." (Empson 612) This implies that Milton writes of God in a complex and nuanced way. Yet, Empson sees Milton's God as a tyrannical brute, who inflicts cruelty and suffering on his creation, especially Satan. Empson compares God to Joseph Stalin because they both possess "the same patience under an appearance of roughness, the same flashes of jovialty, the same thorough unscrupulousness, the same real bad temper." (Empson 53). Empson's comparison of God to a genocidal dictator is both egregious and false. First, God is not mortal and therefore negates any comparison to another human being. Second, Empson conflates God's goodness for God's justness. That is, like Zeus in *The Illiad*, God in *The Book of Job* and Apollo in *Oedipus Rex*, Milton's God represents absolute justice, implying that He is neither good nor wicked, He is God. Furthermore, Empson ignores the overall intention of Milton's epic; "to justify the ways of God to men." (1.26) For Empson, *Paradise Lost* is reduced to a Manichean and dualistic epic,

where God is wicked and Satan is the hero. His analysis ignores the theological complexity Milton conveys. Yet, his scholarly insights re-centers Milton's poem away from Satan and back towards God.

In 1967, Stanley Fish published *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost*, which tried to reconcile these opposing viewpoints by arguing that the true hero of the poem is in fact the reader. He argues that seeing God as malevolent or Satan as attractive is simply an indication the readers fallen state, and part of the poem's purpose. By the 1960's, there were two warring camps in Milton studies. Those like the Romantics who believed that Satan was the true hero of the poem. And those like C.S. Lewis who argue that Milton's God is fundamentally good and Satan is wicked. Stanley Fish argues that *Paradise Lost* recreates the fall for the reader and must overcome the temptation of Satan's rhetoric. Fish states that Milton's epic is to not teach but entangle the reader in the powerful persuasions of Satan which are later corrected by far more authoritative voices: God, Michael, Raphael and the Son. He writes that "the reader is brought to a better understanding of his sinful nature and is asked to participate in his own reformation." (Fish 10) That is, *Paradise Lost*, like *Job* acts as a double theodicy for the reader and characters who are left to contemplate the nature of suffering in a universe that is overflowing with evil.

Scholars like William Empson and Stanley Fish present intriguing arguments about the role of God in *Paradise Lost* who is arguably the least interesting character, but the most important in terms of Milton's theodicy. Milton reminds the reader of God's importance in Book III in which God speaks about the imminent fall of Adam and Eve. He states:

I made him just and right ,

Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall.

Such I created all th' ethereal Powers

And Spirits, both them who stood and them who failed Freely

they stood who stood and fell who fell. (1.98-102)

God's speech in Book III has been a source of interest for contemporary scholars. Denis Danielson argues that God's speech reflects the Free Will Defense. That is, God's creations are free to disobey him and God cannot manipulate the free will of humanity and angels. Danielson argues that God is simply defending himself like a mortal would before a jury. He writes, "The obvious problem that results is anthropomorphism, of God sounding like a human being vociferously defending his own actions." (Danielson 149) Danielson suggestion that God is defending himself ignores the nuanced complexity of Milton's language. God does not speak in persuasive rhetoric or discourse. His language is that of absolute wisdom and foresight which harkens back to God's divine speech in *The Book Job*. Time is conflated when God states "Freely they stood who stood, and fell who fell." implying that God is capable of understanding past, present and future events. Danielson also ignores the importance of structure in *Paradise Lost*. Books I through II introduce the reader to Satan who is sublimely awesome, battle-proud and deeply convincing. Satan's language is the opposite of God's in that he relies heavily on rhetoric and persuasion to ignite passion in both the reader and his fallen brethren. In Book I Satan addresses his fellow comrades and argues that Hell can be turned into a new Paradise; where all are equal. He states:

The mind is it's own place, and in itself Can

make a heav'n of hell, a hell of heav'n. What

matters where, if I be still the same, And what
 should I be, all but less than he
 Whom thunder hath made greater? Here at last We
 shall be free; th' Almighty hath not built Here for
 his envy, will not drive us hence; Here we may
 reign secure, and in my choice To reign is worth
 ambition though in hell:

Better to reign in hell, than serve in heav'n. (1.254-263)

Milton immediately establishes Satan as a master rhetorician who can easily convince and sway the reader and his fallen brethren into understanding his plight and ambitions. He is the opposite of Job, Oedipus and King Lear because he is already fallen and no longer lives in an exalted state, i.e. Paradise. Furthermore, Satan's language is so drastically different than God's. Satan relies on hyperbolic discourse to convince the reader, against their better judgement, to not only trust Satan but to believe in him. By Book II Satan's political manipulations are revealed as well as the appearance of fallen reason, which can make evil appear good. Milton introduces Belial as fair but also "false and hollow"(2.112) within. Milton refers to Belial's speech as "words clothed in reason'sgarb" (2.226), implying that Satan's fallen brethren possess warped reason. Milton's depiction of fallen reason is stressed in Belial's speech, but Satan's cunning manipulations are revealed when Beelzebub speaks, because he speaks for Satan. His argument to attack God by corrupting Man is Satan's argument. Satan has intended this plan all along and simply uses Beelzebub to present it. The entire pandemonium is a ruse, which promises Republican ideals but is designed to reinforce Satan's plan, a plan that also allows Satan to leave Hell and potentially return to Paradise. The fallen angels have seemingly been given a choice within a democratic

council, but this choice was an illusion because they have all been orchestrated to do Satan's bidding. Book's I and II demand close reading from the reader, who can subtly acknowledge Satan's treachery, as well as his manipulations. A.J.A. Waldcok writes, "As we read through Books I and II we do not check at such lines and remind ourselves that Satan is a liar. We feel the element of bravado in the language." (Waldock 78) Satan's skill at deceiving the reader highlights how Milton orchestrates and demonstrates his skill as poet. That is, Satan's words tempt and seduces the reader against their better judgment.

Book's I and II center on the character of Satan and his skilled tongue, but by Book III Satan's arguments are nullified by God's omniscience and omnipotence. Stanley Fish argues that God's language in Book III not only diminishes Satan's thrall over the reader it reinforces God's wisdom. He writes, "As we read, God is innocent of Satan's skill; his eloquence is not eloquence at all, but the natural persuasiveness that is inseparable from wisdom." (Fish 76) That is, God may lack the luster and bombastic language of Satan, but His speech reminds and corrects the reader of siding and sympathizing with Satan. The power and importance of God's speech is due to the structure of the poem. By interrupting Satan's machinations in Hell, Milton is reminding the reader that God, not the Devil is at the center of the poem. Furthermore, Gods Speech highlights the theodical elements of the poem, which not only reflect the importance of free-will, they remind the reader of the fallibility and mortality of humanity. He states:

I formed them free, and free they must remain, Till
 they enthrall themselves: I else must change Their
 nature, and revoke the high decree Unchangeable,
 eternal, which ordained

Their freedom, they themselves ordained their fall. The
 first sort by their own suggestion fell,
 Self-tempted, self-depraved: man falls deceived By
 the other first: man therefore shall find grace, The
 other none: in mercy and justice both,
 Through heav'n and earth, so shall my glory excel,
 But mercy first and last shall brightest shine. (3.124-134)

God, through Milton's words, highlights the theodical issues of the poem. That is that humanity has free will, and that humanity has the power to resist temptation, but ultimately makes a choice to give in to temptation. God's foreknowledge that humanity will fall in no way indicates predestination. God simply knows what humanity will do; He does not cause humanity to do it. God made humanity fallible and capable of making choices, which allows for humanity's progression from innocence to experience. Perhaps the most striking aspect of God's speech is that man's free-will predicates suffering. That is, Adam and Eve are free to choose, just as Satan chose to wage war in Heaven, which resulted in pain and torment. Yet, God reminds the reader that humanity can find grace within themselves and by learning to endure the suffering and misery of the world. God allows the fall to happen so humanity can turn away from Edenic innocence towards a broken yet potentially graceful world. Milton, like Shakespeare before him is reflecting the reality of the world, where choices often result in complicated and painful consequences, yet wisdom and grace are achievable in those moments of strife. God as a character is not a cruel Machiavellian ruler; his Divine Justice requires suffering. Yet, suffering, when it's universalized allows humanity to achieve solace in that wisdom.

Satan ponders the problem of suffering in Book IV and connects his torment with free-will. He states:

But heav'n's free love dealt equally to all? But
then his love accursed, since love or hate, To me
alike it deals eternal woe.

Nay cursed be thou: since against his thy will Chose
freely what it now so justly rues.(4. 68-73)

Satan's progression from a battle-proud and convincing rhetorician to a woeful, miserable and fallen being are emphasized in Book IV. Book's I and II introduce Satan as a cunning wordsmith to the reader. By Book IV, the reader is inside Satan's head, garnering sympathy towards his suffering. His words of misery are strikingly similar to Job, Oedipus and King Lear when he states in hyperbolic tension "myself am hell; And in the lowest deep a lower deep/Still threat'ning to devour me opens wide,/To which the hell I suffer seems a heav'n."(Bk 4. 75-78) Milton deliberately allows for the reader to sympathize with Satan because his suffering is so human and startlingly mortal. Satan literally internalizes Hell, the source of his pain and suffering and even ponders returning to Paradise. "But say I could repent and could obtain/By act of grace my former state."(Bk.4. 93-94)This line rectifies Satan's earlier desire to disrupt God's plans by corrupting humanity; revealing another falsehood. That is, he is not a proud warrior or zealot commander. He is a deeply wounded sufferer who inspires sympathy in the reader. Yet, there are limits to this sympathy. Milton writes, "Thus while he spake, each passion dimmed his face/Thrice changed with pale, ire, envy and despair."(4.114-115) Milton presents Satan as a false Job, who internalizes his suffering, but doesn't universalize it, therefore learning nothing from it. Satan conceals his anger and pain "with outward calm"(4.120) and channels that pain

towards vengeance. Satan's progression is the opposite of Job's because he learns nothing from his pain.

Who then is the true Jobean archetype in *Paradise Lost*? It cannot be Satan because he is too selfish and cruel towards others. It is Adam who possesses Jobean characteristics because like Job, Oedipus and Lear he begins his journey in an exalted state, experiences suffering and torment due to a fault in character, and universalizes that suffering. Adam is fallible and like Job is not immune to suffering. This is emphasized when Raphael says "God made thee perfect, not immutable."(5.524) Before the fall, Adam is nearly perfect. He is mentally adept and spiritually profound. In Eden he is the apex of the hierarchical pyramid. Only Eve can compare to him, and that is only in physical beauty. Like Satan, Adam pontificates on his nature and made him when he asks Raphael:

But say,

What meant that caution joind, 'if ye be found Obedient'?

can we want obedience then

To him, or possibly his love desert

Who formd us from the dust, and plac'd us here Full

to the utmost measure of what bliss

Human desires can seek or apprehend?(5.512-518)

Adam's language and questions are strikingly different from Satan's who in the same book insists that he made himself. In an attempt to convince Abdiel of his plan to usurp God's throne, Satan states, "When this creation was? rememberst thou Thy making, while the Maker gave thee being?/We know no time when we were not as now;/Know none before us, self-begot, self-rais'd(5.857-860) Satan's argument before Abdiel is based on empiricism, not faith in God's

omnipotence and justice. That is, before Satan's fall, he already possessed fallen reason.

Interestingly, Abdiel is the only character who is not seduced by Satan's rhetoric. "Distinguish not: for soon expect to feel/His thunder on thy head, devouring fire./Then who create thee lamenting learn,/When who can uncreate thee thou shalt know."(5.892-895) Abdiel is not only foreshadowing Satan's fall, he is reminding the reader that knowledge of God is not based on empiricism; it is based on faith. That is Satan possesses fallen reason even before the War in Heaven because he refuses to act on faith. Unlike Satan, Adam acknowledges and accepts that God made him. He cannot believe he made himself, but must be made "by some great Maker."(8.278) Like Satan, Adam does not know of his origin, the nature of his birth, or his purpose, but unlike Satan, Adam takes a necessary leap of faith and of acceptance that he must have been created by something.

Another stark difference between Adam and Satan is how they use language and converse with others. Before Book X the conversations between Adam and Eve before is that of civilized discourse. These conversations reflect their innocent nature as well as their Edenic surroundings. Adams and humanity's values are reflected in his attitude, which is revealed through his speeches to Eve, Raphael, and to God. In each instance when Adam speaks, he shows proper courtesies and customs to the being with whom he converses. While he is superior to Eve and inferior to Raphael and God, there is still no hint of haughtiness in his discussions with Eve, or of subservience in his talks with the angel and God. He accepts his placement within the hierarchy of the universe and has no desire to rebel against his maker. Adam always shows respectful mores in graceful speeches and manners. When Adam sees Raphael's approach to Earth, he tells Eve, "go with speed, /And what thy stores contain, bring forth and pour / Abundance, fit to honor and receive / Our Heav'nly stranger" (5.313-316). Eve replies, "Adam,

earth's hallowed mould, / Of God inspir'd, small store will serve, where store, / All seasons, ripe for use hangs on the stalk" (5.321-323). Their exchanges are overly formal. Yet they reveal the loving and respectful relationship of Adam and Eve. Adam is in charge, but his request for Eve to prepare a meal is not a dismissive command, it is a genial request. Their brief dialogue is a discussion between near equals who understand their responsibilities to each other, to the garden and to the world.

Adam's conversation with Raphael is similar and marked by the same courteous and respectful tone. Adam welcomes Raphael graciously but in a manner that acknowledges the superiority of the angel. Furthermore, Adam uses his time with the angel to learn about angels, about the war in Heaven, about creation, and about God's justice. Adam's curiosity and intellect are revealed. Likewise, Adam informs Raphael about Adam's and Eve's creation and about their relationship. Man and Angel have information for each other, and they present this information within the formalized structure that establishes their relationship. Adam remains curious about his surroundings and his nature and the power of God, yet humble as well. The bucolic environment of Eden match Adam's innocence just as Hell heightens Satan's suffering. While Adam possesses curiosity about himself his knowledge of the world and its inevitable suffering is masked by his pastoral surroundings. While addressing Eve he states, "Then let us not think hard/One easy prohibition, who enjoy /Free leave so large to all things else, and choice/Unlimited of manifold delights."(5.432-435) Adam's desire to "not think hard" is in reference to God's command that they may not eat from the Tree of Knowledge. He wants to distract himself with the beautiful and agrarian world of Eden. Yet these lines reveal the limitation of Adam's character. Like Job, Adam is naïve in his understanding of the world because knowledge is learned from suffering and from making poor decisions.

After the fall, Adam, like Job begins to question and pontificate on his suffering. “Why do I overlive,/Why am I mocked with death, and lengthened out/ To deathless pain? How gladly would I meet mortality my sentence,”(10.883-776) The fall propels Adam towards a life of suffering and pain. Yet, unlike Job he does not blame God for his torment. “Thy punishment then justly is at his will./Be it so, for I submit, his doom is fair,/ That dust I am, and shall to dust return.”(10.768-770) However, after the fall his conversations with Eve become querulous. He blames her, and she blames him. Milton describes their fallen state in a similar tone to that of Satan’s. “Love was not in their looks, either to God./ Or to each other, but apparent guilt,/ And shame, and perturbation, and hate, and guile.”(10.111-114) It takes an enormous apology from Eve to rekindle Adam's love for his wife and to reestablish their proper relationship, which relinquishes Adam’s anger and ire towards her. “Creature so fair his reconcilment seeking,/ His counsel whom she had displeased, his aid; As one disarmed, his anger all he lost,/ And thus with peaceful words upraised her soon.”(10.942-946) While Adam reconciles his relationship with, the relationship between Man and Angel has changed. Michael is stern but compassionate. He presents the vision of the future to Adam, but there is little, if any, friendship between the two. Michael reprimands Adam for unleashing sin, evil and vengeful caprice on humanity which is contextualized with the murder of Abel by Adam’s son Cain.

Adam, now open thine eyes, and first behold
 Th’ effects which thy original crime hath wrought
 In some to spring from thee, who never touched
 Th’ excepted tree, nor with the snake conspired,
 Nor sinned thy sin, yet from that sin derive
 Corruption to bring forth more violent deeds.(11. 423-428)

Michael's visions for Adam relentlessly remind Adam and the reader of why God allows death, sin, war and murder in the world, and it is only through providence and grace that humanity can be saved.

While Adam's transgression may have unleashed evil unto the world, his sin comes from a loving place. If Adam has a flaw before the fall, it is uxoriousness. That is, he loves his wife and is willing to disobey God because of Eve. Adam tells Raphael that Eve's beauty affects him so much "that what she wills to do or say, / Seems wisest, virtuousest, discreetest, best; / All higher knowledge in her presence falls / Degraded" (8. 549-552). Even though Raphael warns Adam that this attitude toward Eve is improper and that Satan could use her to tempt him, Adam eats the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge precisely because he cannot bear to be without Eve. Adam's transgression is as benign as Lear's, Oedipus's and Job's in that it is not coming from a malicious or vengeful place. Moreover, unlike Satan, the false Job, Adam universalizes his suffering once he forgives Eve. As a nearly perfect human, Adam is ruled by reason in providence and faith. He immediately understands Eve's sin in eating from the Tree of Knowledge, but he willfully ignores that understanding and eats because of his love for her. Adam's uxorious attitude toward Eve leads directly to his fall. After the fall, Adam is prey to self-doubt, to anger, sullenness, and to self-pity. Adam after the fall develops a new understanding of love for Eve, and he now possesses a knowledge of the world that was previously unknown to him. That is suffering, pain and torment allows him and Eve to access grace, humility and potentially wisdom through their love of each other. The fall may have "brought death into the world" (1.3) but it also brought compassion and empathy for others. Milton ends his poem with the reminder of that wisdom.

Some natural tears they dropped, but wiped them soon; The
world was all before them, where to choose
Their place of rest, and Providence their guide; They
hand in hand with wand'ring steps slow, Through Eden
took their solitary way.(12.645-649)

Adam and Eve, and by extension all of humanity cannot stay in the metaphorical Eden forever, but through their suffering they perhaps have learned to universalize their pain through understanding, grace and wisdom.

John Milton's *Paradise Lost* expresses theodical themes in epic prose and verse. Its characters possess tragic characteristics, such as hubris for Satan and uxoriousness for Adam. Milton utilizes the structure of classical epic poems, like *The Odyssey* and *Aeneid* and surpasses them thematically. That is, *Paradise Lost* explores important and difficult theological issues, such as, the problem of suffering, the justice of God and the potential grace and wisdom of humanity. Furthermore, Milton complicates his theodicy by making Satan the most intriguing and persuasive character who inspires awe and sympathy from the reader. Yet, the true Jobean archetype in *Paradise Lost* is Adam because he learns to universalize his suffering, not internalize it.

Moby-Dick: Melville's Theodicy

As in *The Book of Job*, *The Oedipus Cycle*, *King Lear*, and *Paradise Lost*, the question of underserved suffering is essential to Melville's *Moby-Dick*. However, unlike the previous literary works, the Job parallel is explicit in Melville novel. Ishmael, the narrator, frames Captain Ahab's hunt for The Whale in a Job-like fashion. "Here, then, was this grey-headed, ungodly old man, chasing with curses a Job's whale round the world." (Melville 203) The Job parallel is explicit and Ahab's "grand, un-godly, god-like" characteristics illuminate a comparison to Lear, Oedipus and Milton's Satan as well. That is, Captain Ahab is tantamount to God in terms of sublimity, but he is not God because he is painfully mortal. Melville even traces Ahab's suffering back to Adam. "He piled upon the whales white hump the sum of all the general rage and hate felt by his whole race from Adam down." (200). Ahab is not a singular man. Rather, he is the personification of humanity's evil and suffering. Yet, like Milton's Satan, he does not universalize his suffering. He relishes in it and turns it into an unachievable goal which, results in the destruction of The Pequod and himself.

This chapter explores the theodical issues raised in Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*. That is, Melville deepens the issue of underserved suffering by portraying it as meaningless and random. That is, Job, Oedipus, Lear and Satan have all performed a precipitating act that resulted in their suffering. Yet, Ahab's suffering is portrayed as meaningless because he has not transgressed. This chapter furthers the Jobean archetype through a thorough character study of Ahab and how he compares with other versions of Job. Furthermore, this chapter addresses how critics have wrestled with the theodical themes of *Moby-Dick*.

Many critics have interpreted *Moby-Dick* as representative of Melville's own quarrel with Christianity. Lawrence Thompson argues that Melville's novel represents not only the suffering

of humanity, but the tyranny of God. He writes that Melville's "ultimate goal was to tell a story which would illuminate, obliquely, his personal declaration of independence not only from the tyranny of Christian dogma but also from the sovereign tyranny of God Almighty." (Thompson 147) Yet ironically, Melville turns to the Bible, in particular *The Book of Job* for answers.

Perhaps, what perplexed Melville was how Job blames his God for all his woe and suffering. *The Book of Job* even refers to a whale through the symbol of the Leviathan. Thompson argues that both the Leviathan in *The Book of Job* and The Whale in *Moby-Dick* represent the indifferent cruelty of God and the universe at large. He writes, "God used the image of the whale to serve as a symbol of God's own indomitable and inscrutable attributes." (149) Is the Leviathan in *Job* representative of God's cruelty? Or is the Leviathan the personification of the sea which rebels against and is ultimately subdued by God's power? God's rhetorical question in the 40th chapter of the *The Book of Job* "Can you draw out Leviathan by a fishhook" (Job 40:25) depicts the full power of God. Yet, it implies that the Leviathan is not God. Instead, it is an agent of chaos that must be subdued by God but never completely destroyed.

While Lawrence Thompson's analysis of *Moby-Dick* is interesting, his assumption that Melville was writing an anti-Christian tome seems generalized. Perhaps, Melville was not criticizing all of Christian Dogma, instead, he was attacking Calvinist beliefs. According to William Braswell, Melville was born into the God-fearing and strictly dogmatic Dutch Reformation. His religious background extends to his great-great- Grandfather who served as a Clergyman in the Church of Scotland. (Braswell 4) Furthermore, Melville and his siblings were forced to attend church services "to hear the word of God. (5) Melville's strict religious upbringing is perhaps why he turned to the question of theodicy in *Moby-Dick*. Interestingly, none of the characters are Calvinists and Captain Ahab himself is a lapsed Quaker. Perhaps

Melville did this to show how even a pacifistic Quaker can become vengeful through an act of underserved suffering.

Perhaps Melville's novel is not anti-Christian. Instead, it is representative of his own strive for a theology devoid of the strict dogma of religion. Ray B. Browne argues that Melville should be called a "skeptical humanist." (Browne 4). According to Browne, "Melville's power, however, was the probing of his all-curious mind into the unfathomable and unutterable profundities of existence." (1) Browne's argument is immensely important because God is absent in *Moby-Dick*. Like *King Lear* and even *Oedipus Rex*, Melville's novel is about questions of existence, suffering, and madness in a world that is no longer just or fair. It is not an epic about God vs. Man, or Man vs. God. It is about the suffering of humanity in the absence of God. In the progression of the Job trope through literature, this archetype becomes increasingly rebellious and the Job-like characters suffering becomes more random and nihilistic. Ahab, like all other iterations of Job suffers immensely and raises the questions about the justness of God. Yet, Melville's novel raises the possibility that God might not exist and therefore questions whether life has meaning at all. Melville focuses on the suffering of the human dilemma rather than the suffering of one man. Captain Ahab's quest to hunt and kill The Whale is very personal and monomaniacal. In fact it prompts Starbuck to say "Madness! To be enraged with a dumb thing, Captain Ahab seems blasphemous." (178) Ahab's feud with the Moby-Dick represents the calamity of the whole world. That is, Ahab does not simply hate Moby-Dick, he hates what The Whale symbolizes: underserved suffering. His reply to Starbuck represents not only his hatred of the Whale, but the whole of creation.

That inscrutable thing is chiefly what I hate; and be the white
whale agent, or be the white whale principal, I will wreak that hate

upon him. Talk not to me of blasphemy, man; I'd strike the sun if it
 insulted me. For could the sun do that, then could I do the other;
 since there ever is a fair play herein, jealousy presiding over all
 creations. (178)

This speech from Ahab is similar to Job's rallying against an unjust and cruel God. Yet, Captain Ahab's speech before his crew is strikingly similar to Satan's in Book II of *Paradise Lost*. Except, Starbuck sees through Ahab's vengeful exterior and decries his plan to kill the Whale. For William Thompson Starbuck's quarrel with Ahab represents Melville's own anti-Christian beliefs. He writes, "Ahab gradually overrides and undermines Starbuck's Christian belief until that belief proves futile. "(173) For Thompson Starbuck is simply a Christian stereotype whom believes that Ahab's battle against Moby-Dick is blasphemous because it symbolizes a war with God. Contrarily, Starbuck's argument is not based on dogma; it is based on reason. He states, "Vengeance on a dumb brute that smote thee from blindest instinct." (178) Starbuck is there to remind Ahab that his wound is not personal because it was not based on a premeditated act. That is, nature and by extension the Whale, is cruelly indifferent to our suffering and it's illogical to personalize that suffering. Starbuck, like Abdiel in *Paradise Lost* is there to provide a contrary argument to the false Jobean figure.

This argument is further explored in Chapter 100 when Captain Ahab encounters another who endured an injury from Moby-Dick. Captain Boomer, like Ahab, after losing his arm desires to hunt and kill the Whale. But after failing to kill the beast he relinquishes his vengeful goal. He tells Ahab "No more white whales for me; I've lowered for him once, and that has satisfied me. There would be great glory in killing him, I know that; and there is a ship-load of precious sperm in him, but, hark ye, he's best left alone." (482) While Captain Boomer's

statement is not nearly as accusatory as Starbuck's, it still contains the same wisdom. That is, what would killing Moby-Dick prove? Would it fully satisfy ones vengeful desires? Or would such a quest end in vain?

The combination of Ahab's suffering and monomaniacal plan for vengeance complicates the Job archetype. That is he is both terrifying and sympathetic for the reader. Ahab is Job-like because he is a good person who has suffered from a terrible injury, both physically and spiritually. Yet, his quest for vengeance inspires terror and awe from the reader. Jonathan A. Cook notes how Melville draws upon another biblical source, King Ahab, who outraged god than any other ruler. Therefore Captain Ahab's namesake complicates the Job archetype. Cook writes,

As a literary descendent of his chief biblical prototypes, Ahab thus exemplifies the deuteronomic principle of divine punishment for human sin; yet as a morally embattled Job figure, Ahab's character also embodies a radical critique of the traditional equation of sin and suffering. (Cook 33)

Like Job before him, Ahab in *Moby-Dick* rejects the notion of Divine Justice. That is, behaving righteously is not a safeguard against suffering or torment. While Jonathan A. Cook's argument is vastly important, Ahab is not only a descendent of biblical prototypes, he is alarmingly similar to Milton's Satan. Leslie E. Sheldon highlights the similarity between Melville and Milton. She writes, "Melville's artistic reaction to *Paradise Lost*, was of course individual as it was profound, revealing itself through a deft conflation of diverse scenes, opposing characters and specific imagery from the epic."(Sheldon 29) In one comparison, Ahab's scar is similar to Satan's. Ishmael compares Ahab's scar to a "lofty trunk of a great tree, when the upper lightning tearingly darts down it."(134) This is comparative to Milton's description of Satan's face

covered in “Deep scars of Thunder.”(1.601) Ahab’s bodily disfiguration is also similar to Job’s, but his vengeful monomania is tantamount to Satan’s pride. And like Satan, Job refuses to universalize his suffering. In Chapter 37 he states,

Oh! Time was, when as the sunrise nobly spurred me, so the sunset
soothed. No more. This lovely light, it lights not me; all loveliness
is anguish to me, since I can ne’er enjoy. Gifted with the high
perception, I lack the low, enjoying power; damned, most subtly
and most malignantly! Damned in the midst of Paradise! (182)

Ahab’s soliloquy is similar in tone to Satan’s ennui in Book IV of *Paradise Lost* in that Ahab inspires sympathy and empathy from the reader. In short, Ahab’s suffering is our suffering. And perhaps his suffering is greater than Satan’s because he is mortal. Yet, like Satan, Ahab refuses to accept his suffering and in turn universalize it like Captain Boomer.

Captain Ahab is not only similar to Milton’s Satan, his characterization is similar to both King Lear and Oedipus. In Ahab’s soliloquy his mad musings conflate Lear’s madness with Oedipus’ prophecy.

They think me mad – Starbuck does; but I’m demoniac, I am
madness maddened! That wild madness that’s only cam to
comprehend itself! The prophecy was that I should be
dismembered; and – Aye! I lost this leg. I now prophesy that I
will dismember my dismemberer. Now, then, be the prophet and
the fulfiller one. That’s more than ye, ye great gods, ever where.
(183)

Like Lear, Ahab's declaration that he is "madness maddened" exacerbates his suffering. Yet, unlike Lear, Ahab does not possess wisdom in madness; he caters to vengeance in madness. He fully submits to the tempest of warring winds inside his mind and finds no solace or comfort from others. He begets sympathy and empathy and gives in to his darkest ambition. His sin is that of stubborn and myopic pride. He never listens to those who challenge him, nor does he empathize with those aboard the Pequod. His tragic flaw results in not only his own death, but everyone around him. He is not a foolish old king, he is driven mad by his own stubbornness. Also, Ahab's desire to be his own prophet perverts the image of Oedipus because Ahab refuses to submit to a higher power. In *Oedipus at Colonus*, Oedipus, now an old prophet accepts his place within the universe. In a Job-like manner, Ahab rages against the cruelty of the world but in an un-Job like fashion he dares to defy the gods, and by extension the whole universe. His monomaniacal plan of vengeance selfishly results in the destruction of the Pequod and himself. In his last moment Ahab refuses to relinquish his vindictiveness. In chapter 135 Ahab proudly proclaims "Towards thee I roll, thou all-destroying but unconquering whale; to the last I grapple with thee; from hell's heart I stab at thee; for hate's sake I spit my last breath at thee."(623) The last three chapters of *Moby-Dick* resemble the War in Heaven in *Paradise Lost*. The chase between Ahab and the Whale lasts three days and results in calamitous disaster for those involved. Furthermore, it highlights the distinction between the Job archetype and Captain Ahab. That is unlike Job, Oedipus and Lear, Ahab never finds wisdom in his suffering. Like Satan, he dwells in it and utilizes it for his own selfish vengeance.

Conclusion

The question of underserved suffering is centuries old and the Job archetype helps to understand the role of the sufferer in relation to a normative and loving universe. Job's torment and woe haunts literature. His mark is on the tragic falls of Oedipus, King Lear, Milton's Satan and Melville's Captain Ahab. The Job trope illuminates the comparison between tragedy and theodicy. While *The Book of Job* is not a tragedy it deals with a tragic progression from an exalted state to a degraded one. Similarly, there are theodical elements in tragedy, in that it deals with nature of suffering and torment. The importance of the Job trope lies in how the sufferer learns from his suffering, and gains wisdom from it. While Job may rant and rebel against his maker, he finds solace when he universalizes his torment. Like Job, both Oedipus and King Lear learn to accept their suffering and in turn find solace in it. Yet, as the Job trope grows more sophisticated and mature, the role of the sufferer becomes increasingly complex. That is, both Melville and Milton complicate the Job archetype by presenting false Job's. Both Satan and Captain Ahab suffer immensely. Yet, they stubbornly refuse to accept their suffering. They personalize it; not universalize it. Therefore wisdom is replaced with petty vengeance and malicious cruelty.

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