Love is Shown, Not Spoken
The Unconditional Love Between Parents and Children
Rebecca Chu
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Professor Gerstel
Over the years, throughout society, the role of parents in life is to be the caregivers and protectors of their children, while the role of children is to respect their parents and give back to them when both children and parents grow older. As children grow older they become more independent and are able to care for themselves as well as others. When parents grow older, the rights and responsibilities of children and parents switch. After children mature and gain the independence to live on their own, it is their responsibility to care for their aging parents. At different times, parents and children owe each other in equal amounts to thank one another for support throughout life.

The relationships in Shakespeare’s play *King Lear* change throughout the play as parent-child relationships and love start at one extreme and end at the other. Throughout the play, parents realize the real emotions that each child has for them, and finds out which child truly loves them the most. King Lear and Gloucester find out the hard way that the children they trust the most and the children they believe love them the most are the ones that betray their fathers in the end.

In the first act, the main-plot begins as a father-daughter relationship between King Lear and his youngest daughter, Cordelia, becomes unbalanced. King Lear loves Cordelia the most out of his three daughters, and wants to give her the largest piece of the kingdom. Soon, Lear changes his mind after she answers his question about love. When Lear divides up his kingdom, he is not satisfied with Cordelia because he is convinced that she loves him the least. Lear asks Cordelia how much she loves him, and she does not have anything to say at first. Finally, after she pulls her thoughts together, Cordelia responds, “…you have begot me, bred me, loved me. I return those duties back as are right fit, obey you, love you, and most honor you…Haply, when I shall wed, that lord…shall carry half my love with him…I shall never marry like my sisters, to
love my father all” (Shakespeare 7). This shows that Cordelia still loves her father, even though she holds part of the love in her heart for her father and the other part of love to the man that she will marry. From this answer, King Lear becomes unhappy with his youngest daughter and gives does not give her a portion of the land. Cordelia proves Lear wrong and shows an act of love and appreciation towards her father when, out of Lear’s three daughters, Cordelia is the one that takes Lear in during a time of help.

King Lear eventually becomes homeless and is in need of shelter. Like many parents, King Lear goes to his children for help. By his surprise, neither Goneril nor Regan is willing to help their father and give Lear shelter for the time being. When Lear asks Regan for food and shelter, Regan refuses and replies, “Good sir, no more. These are unslightly tricks. Return you to my sister” (Shakespeare 60). This shows Lear that once he gave Regan a part of his kingdom, she accepted the land, and then betrayed him. After Lear leaves Regan’s kingdom, he goes to his eldest daughter for help. Surprised once again, Goneril does not help her father and give him food or shelter. Once Regan and Goneril both tell Lear to leave their kingdoms, Lear soon realizes that Regan and Goneril did not love him, but rather, they wanted his land. Both daughters know that the only way to get a large amount of land is to tell their father that they love him more than anything in the world. After asking both Regan and Goneril, King Lear has no choice but to ask Cordelia for help.

When Lear tells Cordelia that he needs food and shelter, Cordelia helps him immediately. Cordelia gives King Lear food to eat and a place to sleep. Through this generosity, Cordelia proves to Lear that she is really the daughter that loves her father the most. Out of the three girls, she is the only daughter that, at any time, is willing to take in her father when needed, and help him. Cordelia does this because she truly loves King Lear for who he truly is. Since King Lear
raised Cordelia well throughout her childhood, she feels that one way to pay him back is to respect him and help him whenever needed.

As the sub-plot begins, Edmund shows his father a letter that he found about planning Gloucester’s death, and claims that the letter is written by Edgar, when in fact, it is written by Edmund himself. Once Gloucester analyzes the handwriting in the letter and questions Edmund about Edgar’s behavior, Gloucester convinces himself that Edgar, his own son, plans to kill him one day to inherit Gloucester’s wealth and kingdom. Gloucester is not pleased with this letter of murder and becomes unhappy with his son, Edgar. To make matters worse and set up Edgar, Edmund tells Edgar that Gloucester is mad at him and tells Edgar “If you do stir abroad, go armed” (Shakespeare 22). Edmund sets up Edgar this way because if Gloucester sees Edgar with a sword every time Gloucester and Edgar meet, Gloucester will become more convinced that Edgar is out to kill him.

As the play continues, Gloucester finds out the truth about the letter. At his castle, Gloucester is physically harmed as Cornwall, Goneril, and Regan pluck out Gloucester’s eyes. In a way, this physical harm can be connected to the letter that convinces Gloucester that Edgar wants to murder him. Plucking out Gloucester’s eyes can make the murder more convincible because Gloucester may believe that his own son, Edgar, plans out this physical pain that is being done to Gloucester.

Gloucester soon realizes that Edmund lied to him and it is really Edmund that wrote the letter. After Gloucester’s eyes are plucked out and he becomes blinded, Edgar is the son that ends up caring for Gloucester. This shows that Gloucester made the wrong assumptions about his two sons and that Edgar cares for his father. When Gloucester asks to be brought up to the highest mountain, Edgar does so and lets Gloucester know when they reach the top of the
mountain. He tells Gloucester that the gods do not want Gloucester to die, and that “Thy life’s a miracle” (Shakespeare 112), meaning that Edgar is impressed by the way his father survived the eye plucking. Through this statement, it is clear that Edgar is the good son that truly loves his father and does not want to see his father die. Since Gloucester holds much love for Edgar, Edgar feels the need to help and protect his father when Gloucester is in pain.

Parents and children owe each other the same rights and responsibilities at various times throughout life. In the Shakespeare’s play, King Lear, not all children help their fathers when needed. Yet, the ones who do help their fathers, do the right thing, and for a similar reason, love. Cordeila and Edgar show the love and respect they both hold for their fathers when each of them care for their fathers when their fathers are in need. Cordelia and Edgar do anything for their fathers to prove the love they have for their fathers even though their fathers may not believe that their child loves them. Overall, parents and children are there to love, help, and support each other from the beginning. Throughout life, parents love their children unconditionally and expect from their children the same love and care they held for their children. The real, unconditional love is shown, not spoken.

**Bibliography**